The Impact of the Labour Unrest, 1910-14, on the British Labour Movement

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"The first thing we discussed was the title to give the paper. The Hero of Forte Pia wanted the kind of title they have in towns, like The Messenger, The Tribune, and so forth, but Raffaele Scarpone, who had inherited Berardo's ways, told him to shut up. 'In our paper we shan't imitate anybody,' he said. 'This is the first paper there ever has been!'

Michele Zompa proposed a good title, Truth, which meant a great deal. But Scarpone wouldn't hear of it. 'Truth?' he said. 'Who the devil knows the truth?'

'We don't know it, but we do want to know it,' Michele answered. 'And when you've got it, what are you going to do with it - make soup?' asked Scarpone.

That was the way he used to argue.

General Baldissera had another good title: Justice. 'You're mad,' said Scarpone. 'Hasn't justice always been against us?'

To understand what he meant you must bear in mind that for us 'justice' always meant the gendarmes. To fall into the hands of justice meant to fall into the hands of the gendarmes. To work in the cause of justice meant to be a spy, an informer of the gendarmes.

'But it's real justice I mean,' said the old cobbler, losing his patience. 'Equal justice for everybody.'

'You'll find that in Paradise,' Raffaele Scarpone said. There was no answer to that.

Sorcanera's suggestion for the paper's title was The Peasants' Clarion, but nobody took any notice of her.

'What are we trying to do?' said Scarpone. 'We must find a good title,' said the Hero. 'You make a suggestion.'

'I've already made it: What are we to do?'

Ignazio Silone Fontamara
SYNOPSIS

This thesis examines the dynamics of the interrelation and interaction of the labour unrest, 1910-14, with the organised labour movement in Britain, and the material and ideological factors influencing class and historical consciousness among British workers of the period.

The contribution and special problems of Marxist methodology in labour history are considered (Chapter 1), and the concepts of spontaneity and consciousness as evaluated by Lenin in What is to be done? analysed and applied against the British experience. Chapter 2 explores the relationship between economic pressure on the working-class of the period and the resulting ideological and organisational forms. The process of rejection of revolutionary Marxism is considered (in Chapters 3 and 7) in relation to the growth and survivals of opportunism and revisionism, and to the adoption of pluralistic, gradualist, and reformist modes. The transformation of the dominant ideology in crisis, its response to working-class demands, and the militarisation of its modes and policies is analysed in Chapter 4. The morphology of Syndicalism is described in Chapter 5, with special reference to the reactions of Beatrice Webb and her critique of the doctrine, to her categories of bureaucrat and anarchist, and to her counter-proposal to capture the commanding heights of the administration to bureaucratisate and radicalise the proletariat. Tom Mann's embodiment
of a Marxist-based militancy is examined in Chapter 8, and the advantages and limitations of "aggressive tailism", considered in this context, as is his rejection of workers' state and party. The processes whereby a sudden expansion in working-class political consciousness, organisation, and efficacy was institutionalised and interpreted within the structure of the National Amalgamated Union of Labour in such terms as to frustrate the emergence of a broad-based revolutionary populism or Socialism, instead blending the union's policy into traditional political culture and the modes of dominance of an alien class, are distinguished in Chapter 6.

The specificity, as well as the complexity, of such a dynamic movement, created fresh methodological problems - especially those arising from the interaction of methodology, ideology, and material conditions - which are recalled in the Conclusion.

It is argued that the rejection of revolutionary socialism left the proletariat without the theoretical means and the consciousness required to dépasser its role as a subject or residual class in liberal-democracy. The development of pluralist arguments and policies, as well as changes in the economic and social infrastructure sharpened the theoretical prevision of British Marxists especially under the influence of Lenin, while their political influence was increasingly restricted. The political impact of spontaneity, and the role of spontaneous movements in conferring legitimacy on socialist doctrines and leaders decreased rapidly after the pre-war unrest. The impacted
revolutionism of 1910-14 remained in an occluded form within the pure consciousness of the proletariat in its historic role of revolutionary class, but without the spontaneity, even, with which this consciousness might be raised to the level of political efficacy under favourable conditions.
Index to organisations referred to in the text by their initials.

AEU Amalgamated Engineering Union
ASE Amalgamated Society of Engineers
ASRS Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants
BSP British Socialist Party
CPGB Communist Party of Great Britain
CGT Confédération Générale du Travail
GFTU General Federation of Trade Unions
GLNC General Labourers' National Council
ILP Independent Labour Party
ISEL Industrial Syndicalist Educational League
IWGB Industrial Workers of Great Britain
IWW Industrial Workers of the World
MEA Municipal Employees Association
MFGB Miners' Federation of Great Britain
NAUL National Amalgamated Union of Labour
NFGW National Federation of General Workers
NTWF National Transport Workers' Federation
NUG& M National Union of General and Municipal Workers
SDF Social Democratic Federation
SWMF South Wales Miners' Federation
T & NLU Tyneside and National Labour Union of Great Britain and Ireland
Chapter One

"Marxism is the theory of the proletarian movement for emancipation."

This chapter examines some of the problems arising from the use of a Marxist methodology in analysing the development of Marxism. Ideally, what is required is a theory of the kind described by Althusser, which is at once methodology and critique of methodology. But in fact the tasks which Gramsci suggests for historians may imply that methodology is itself in a continuous process of becoming ideology. It is Gramsci who illuminates the problems of specificity, and the contemporaneity involved in describing past events.

Therefore, in considering the British labour unrest of 1910-14 in relation to its deviation from Marxist and Leninist forms, one is seeking a self-critical methodology. But one is studying the history of methodologies, methodologies as ideologies and forms of false consciousness. Historically these ideologies underlie and condition one's own methodology. In the same way, the study of material conditions involves ideologising in two ways. For the material conditions of 1910 produced an ideology which in turn influenced the material conditions and their ideological forms in 1968.

Perhaps by this argument, all statements about methodology become themselves ideology, forming in outline new, specific kinds of false consciousness. To break out of this circle, it is possible to consider the relation in history between ideology and specific material conditions, and, on a wider scale, between changing perceptions of consciousness and spontaneity and the political potential of the working-class movement. In the British case, it is argued that the failure to bring the proletariat to revolution before 1914, although many prerequisites for this
appear to have been present in the productive forces, profoundly limited and determined the kinds of politics in which working-class organisations could subsequently indulge. Thus economism became pseudo-economism, and "evolutionary" socialists counter-revolutionaries.

At the end of December, 1918, Rosa Luxemburg maintained that events compelled her to take her stand "upon the ground occupied by Marx and Engels in 1848". The 1872 revision of the Manifesto, denying that there could be a simple takeover of the machinery of the bourgeois state, and Engels's insistence in 1895 on the "nothing-but-parliamentarism tactic", seemed indeed to have become sources of "substitute Marxism." The old problem of the legitimacy of a violent revolution in a society where the workers had the vote, the problem of the relation of leaders to a spontaneous movement of the working-class, seemed also suspended, if not resolved, by events. The strike now seemed "the focus of the revolution". Spontaneity conferred legitimacy on the revolutionary leaders, and appeared to materialise, to actualise, exactly both Marxist theory and practice. The need for socialist education was past. "The workers, today, will learn in the school of action" - that is, in street fighting, spontaneous strikes, and workers' councils: all that the revolutionary leader had to do was follow, follow the workers and stay close to them. This "Luxemburgism" stands in relation to socialist politics, and to politics in general, in much the same way that Syndicalism before the first world war stood to the economic system. Rosa

2 ibid.
3 Indeed, strikes would become "the central feature and the decisive factors of the revolution, thrusting purely political questions into the background." p.15.
4 ibid. p.21.
Luxemburg wished to use the political modes of universal suffrage in much the same way as Syndicalists and industrial militants in general hoped to use industrial spontaneity as it activated into socialism the forms of mass, democratic trade unionism in liberal capitalist society. Why, and to what extent, did both attempts fail?

The attraction of such ideas is obvious. There can be no betrayal of the working class by socialists, since the workers appear to be in a state of what Marx called "pure consciousness" - or so the argument runs. The organisational forms of liberal democracy are transcended by the direct participation and ad hoc democratic forms of workers' political and economic control. Because "the mass" of the population is held to be acting to destroy capitalism, there is no problem of raising levels of political class-consciousness, or even of directing this spontaneous upsurge. "Storming heaven" requires no justification. As by osmosis, previous propaganda and prophecy seem borne out by the elation of mass action, the rapid transfer of political power to working-class bodies - the inversion of pre-existing forms of dominance. This "movement-centred" theorisation of "spontaneous outbreaks" does indeed run through Marx and Lenin, as well as those voluntarists and spontanists like Bakunin who assumed a complete identity between individual and collective wills, and the Economists and "Sociologists of the left" for whom the only purpose in theory was the translation into "abstract", or as Marx would say "ideological", language.

The contribution to theory of Marx and Lenin, however, lay beyond the


6 On the use of "sociologism" to diagnose Trotsky's theoretical deficiencies, see N.Krasso, Trotsky's Marxism, New Left Review no.44 (July August 1967). It is suggested throughout this chapter that the phenomenon of "sociologism" long antedates Trotsky's own contribution.
discovery of a vocabulary to describe social forces, pressures on the masses and so forth. It lay beyond the discovery or employment of sociological methodology and concepts to measure such forces, or the development of philosophical mystifications to establish mental interconnections between the phenomena of different social movements — for instance, the study of "violence", "social integration", "dichotomy". It was critique of methodology, critique of ideology — and critique of the ideology of sociologism.

This critical attitude to what may be called "Theory" as opposed to "theoretisation" is to be found in attitudes towards "spontaneity", and also in those movements which have frozen, died away at the stage of spontaneity, or imprisoned party, class, intelligentsia or whatever, in "subservience to spontaneity." Lenin described the stages of spontaneity and its morphology in "What is to be done?" as follows: "the "spontaneous element", in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an embryonic form."

Indeed, one might add that in those cases where dominant and determinant factors coincide, a revolutionary Marxist may well find his place simply in the "school of action." But to expect such a conflation of dominant and determinant factors is over-optimistic, and perhaps marks no more, in Rosa Luxemburg's case, than a reaction against the somewhat stilted and quiescent forms of Kautsky's proposals for socialist education, and his increasingly empty and eventually self-destructive cult of party loyalty. As a theory, "left spontaneity" constantly points to the development in the proletariat of Marxism simulacra, or Marxist tropisms, thus demonstrating the "accuracy" of some part of Marxist programme.

7 In the 1936 edn. of Selected Works, (Vol.2.) p.52.
8 Luxemburg, op.cit. p.21.
empirically, experientially. But this sociologism often enough leads to a re-mystification: for the "theory" demands the importation and magnification of non-Marxist elements in social movements. Fanon, for instance, perceives a dichotomous situation which he relates not only to a "class war", but also a post-colonial war, a dialectic of counter-racialism, and a discussion of "violence" not as symptom of dichotomy, but as a philosophy for the movement.9

Sociologism, then, with its emphasis on the movements of whole classes, the development of new and apparently autonomous and dissociated social forces, a succession of culturally virgin revolutionary vanguards, may indeed identify these forces accurately as potential. Except where determinant and dominant are conflated in an effective (for Marxists) direction, however, sociologism will always be open to such counter-arguments as that of the Webbs. They maintained, for instance, that the working-class must be raised to political consciousness, or rather, social and political effectiveness, by passing through the same process of radicalization involved in the efforts of the white-collar workers, the progressive sections of the "expert" bourgeoisie, to capture the bureaucracy.

For Lenin, the way to break out of the vicious circle from economism to sociologism — a political progression so often made in the reverse direction, and so explicity, by European socialists and trade unionists — was through crystallisation of spontaneity in the Party, itself preparing the working-class for proletarian dictatorship. He said of political and economic strikes:

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“Unless these forms of strike are closely interlinked, a really wide mass movement — moreover a movement of national significance — is impossible. When the movement is in its early stage, the economic strike often has the effect of awakening and stirring up the backward, of making the movement a general one, of raising it to a higher plane.”

It is thus through "politics" that the spontaneous movement acquires direction, autonomy, and persistence: "politics" involves, in this sense, a widening of social horizons, not a string of parliamentary candidatures.

For "the spontaneous development of the labour movement leads to its being subordinated to bourgeois ideology...the spontaneous labour movement is pure and simple trade unionism, is Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei, and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie.”

The spontaneous uprising represents a challenge to the dominant class — it is only marginally itself in the form of a challenge. Thus in 1911, the railway union leaders seem to have had no awareness of the possibility of defeating the government on an issue of foreign policy (the Agadir crisis), or of developing this political influence, so dramatically demonstrated, in anything but an organisational, potential, form (the Triple Alliance, the NUR). Tom Mann clung to militancy and "left spontaneity" and survived after some cliffhanging encounters with the Church of England and Havelock Wilson to accept from Lenin's own mouth the lesson that "politics" and Parliament were not co-extensive. It was to some extent Mann's mobility, his capacity for sniffing out a militant movement, which rescued him from simple charges of "tailism". Mann came reluctantly to believe that spontaneity and workers' organisation was no more than it appeared to be: it lacked transcendance, the sense of direction enabling


11 Lenin, What is to be done? sup.cit. p.62.
it to re-order "les données immédiates de la conscience".

So the labour movement could be, in Britain, torn between the movement leftwards of a militant and often large minority, sustained by the loyalty of what was frequently a majority of trade unionists, but based on a theory of "sociologism" - a philosophy of "sufficient unto the day" - and arguments like those of the Webbs. The growth of a union bureaucracy, the association of unions with government agencies, the interchange of functions (mostly away from the unions) between unions and government, encouraged men to believe that the Webbs' policy was applicable not merely to the bourgeois expert, but to working-class institutions. Beatrice Webb found in the Soviet Union a proof - apparently - that the workers could indeed be fully associated with society at large, with the political nation and its policies - but in Britain there was really no evidence that what worked for the white-collar workers and administrators (action by and through the existing political and administrative system) would be acceptable to, or in the interest of, union leaders and their rank and file.

If the British left, then, was subservient to spontaneity, and the trade union right being exhorted to follow a policy explicitly of embourgeoisification and radicalisation, advocated by the Webbs, but none the less dictated by institutional, economic, and social pressures, there must here be a connection with the divergence between British and European socialist experience. The most complete rejection of Leninism,

12 These remarks allude to the discussion of Mann and the Webbs in later chapters.

13 This refers to the proposals of Beatrice Webb for the radicalisation of subordinate classes and strata through a process of politicisation by the action of welfare administration and the insertion of cadres of experts within the bureaucracy.
and of Leninist forms seems in part to stem from this three-part attraction to the British labour movement. This was: the "sociologism" of the militant union left before 1914, with its strong overtones of voluntarism, utopian automatism: the economism of pure and simple trade unionism: and the demands of a government and progressive bourgeoisie that the working-class should reject a spurious and unavailing militant independence and pursue its salvation, or disintegration, along the paths indicated already by the petite bourgeoisie. Without a Leninist model, Britain lacked a vanguard which was not sectional. The old vanguard of the labour aristocracy was overthrown and replaced by institutional forms, the "blocs" of large craft, industrial and general unions. Britain lacked too a party capable of assuming the leadership of a mass movement, let alone of creating one, and an intelligentsia close to the workers and yet perceiving that the emancipation of the intellect was organically connected with the political victory of the workers.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1902, Lenin made the point that if the masses were unconverted

"We must blame ourselves, our remoteness from the mass movement; we must blame ourselves for being unable as yet to organise a sufficiently wide, striking, and rapid exposure of these despicable outrages. When we do that (and we must and can do it), the most backward worker will understand, or will feel, that the students or religious sects, the muzhiks and the authors are being abused and outraged by the very same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life, and, feeling that, he himself will be filled with an irresistible desire to respond to those things, and then he will organise cat-calls against the censors one day, another day he will demonstrate outside the house of the provincial governor who has brutally suppressed a peasant uprising, another day he will teach a lesson to the gendarmes in surplices who are doing the work of the Holy Inquisition, etc."\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} This deficiency should not, of course, be seen as a lack of desire on the part of BSP, SLP, CPGB and so on to form such a party: but the orientation of these parties towards the formation of a political (and in the case of the CPGB an industrial (miners')) vanguard was affected not only by the magnitude of the task, but also by a lack of creativity and invention in practice.

\textsuperscript{15} What is to be Done? sup.cit. p.90.
Lenin's concept of politics, that

"The Social-Democrats' ideal should not be a trade union secretary, but a tribune of the people, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects",\(^\text{16}\)

and that therefore they must "go among all classes of the population" is not by itself a prescription for revolution, or even relative success. But to deny even this prosaic statement, as so many in the labour movement in Britain did, especially during the period of industrial unrest before, during and after the first world war, is itself to mistake the symptoms of social and political change - union growth, social fragmentation and class tensions, crises in the dominant ideology and so forth - as sufficient explanation and prescriptive advice for a programme and a theory. The danger lay in missing the double aspect of working-class activity:

"In a political strike, the working-class comes forward as the advanced class of the whole people. In such cases, the proletariat plays not merely the role of one of the classes of bourgeois society, but the role of vanguard, leader. The political ideas manifested in the movement involve the whole people, i.e., they concern the basic, most profound conditions of the political life of the whole country. This character of the political strike...brought into the movement all the classes, and particularly, of course, the widest, most numerous and most democratic sections of the population, the peasantry, and so forth."\(^\text{17}\)

Failure to realise this double aspect leaders to a state of "permanent transition": Gramsci, who so consistently realised the dangers of sociologism, and at the same time its roots in the dynamics of mass movements, made useful points both on the methodology of research into the relation between movements and theory - and on the phenomenon of transitionism - the failure to convert the working-class to socialism

\(^{16}\) ibid. p.99.

\(^{17}\) Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 18, sup.cit. p.85.
combined with the failure of the dominant class wholly to assimilate,
neutralise, or emasculate it.

"One could study concretely the formation of a collective historical
movement, analysing it in all its molecular phases, which is usually
not done because each treatment would become burdensome: instead,
currents of opinion are assumed already constituted around a group or
a dominating personality. It is the problem which in modern times is
expressed in terms of a party or of a coalition of allied parties: how
the constitution of the party begins, how its organised force and
social influence develop, etc. We are dealing with a very detailed
molecular process, one of extreme analysis, capillary, whose
documentation consists of an overwhelming quantity of books, pamphlets,
articles in reviews and journals, verbal conversations and debates which
are repeated infinitely and which in their gigantic totality represent
this long labour from which is born a collective will with a certain
degree of homogeneity, that certain degree which is necessary and
sufficient to determine an action co-ordinated and simultaneous in the
time and geographical space in which the historical fact occurs.

"The importance of utopias and of confused and rationalistic ideologies
in the initial phase of the historical processes of formation of
collective wills: utopias, abstract rationalism, have the same
importance as the old conceptions of the world elaborated historically
through the accumulation of successive experiences. What is important
is the criticism to which this ideological complex comes to be subjected
by the first representatives of this new historical phase: through this
criticism we have a process of distinction and change in the relative
influence which the elements of the old ideologies used to possess:
what was secondary and subordinate or even incidental comes to be
assumed as foremost, becomes the nucleus of a new ideological and
doctrinal complex. The old collective will breaks up into its
contradictory elements because from these elements the subordinate
ones develop socially, etc."

The problem remains, however, that the British labour movement during the
unrest relied on theories whose justification and assumptions were allied
to "spontaneity" - "bargaining in the free market", or "overthrowing
capitalism by means of the working-class nation already organised in trade
unions". Partly theoritisations of contemporary facts, partly utopian,
it is easy to argue from the experience of the British movement that Gramsci's
new phase was never reached.

18 Gramsci described such a period of transition and resolution as
that of the pre-1914 British unrest, in The Modern Prince and other
writings, (Lawrence and Wishart, 1957 edn.) p.185.
Althusser proposes another remedy:

"il ne suffit pas de rejeter le dogmatisme de l'application des formes de la dialectique et de se fier à la spontanéité des pratiques théoriques existantes, car nous savons qu'il n'existe pas de pratique théorique pure, de science toute nue, qui serait à jamais dans son histoire de science, préservée par je ne sais quelle grace des menaces et atteintes de l'idéalisme, c'est-à-dire des idéologies qui l'assiègent: nous savons qu'il n'existe de science "pure" qu'à la condition de la libérer sans cesse de l'idéologie qui l'occupe, la hante ou la guette. Cette purification, cette libération, ne sont acquises qu'au prix d'une lutte incessante contre l'idéologie même, c'est-à-dire contre l'idéalisme, lutte que la Théorie (le matérialisme dialectique) peut éclairer sur ses raisons et objectifs, et guider comme nulle autre méthode au monde. Que dire alors de la spontanéité de ces disciplines d'avant-garde triomphantes, consacrées à des intérêts pragmatiques précis; qui ne sont pas rigoureusement sciences mais prêtendent l'être parce qu'elles emploient des méthodes "scientifiques" (pourtant définies indépendamment de la spécificité de leur objet prassumé); qui pensent avoir, comme toute vraie science, un objet, quand elles n'ont affaire qu'à une certaine réalité donnée, que d'ailleurs se disputent et s'arrachent plusieurs "sciences" concurrentes: un certain domaine de phénomènes non constitués en faits scientifiques et donc non unifié: disciplines qui ne peuvent, dans leur forme actuelle, constituer de vraies pratiques théoriques, parce qu'elles n'ont le plus souvent que l'unité de pratiques techniques (exemples: la psychosociologie, la sociologie et la psychologie elles-mêmes dans nombre de leurs branches). La seule Théorie capable de soulever, sinon de poser la question préalable des titres de ces disciplines, de critiquer l'idéologie dans tous ses déguisements des pratiques techniques en sciences, c'est la Théorie de la pratique théorique (en sa distinction de la pratique idéologique): la dialectique matérialiste, ou matérialisme dialectique, la conception de la dialectique marxiste dans sa spécificité."

This "Théorie" would seem to some extent to avoid the problem raised by Gramsci, that of writing the history and analysing the ideology of a movement which itself, and with its historian, are still in a transitional phase. It is useful to continue the quotation from Althusser, noting after all, the use of the word "spontanéité" here applied to methodology is analogous to ideologies derived from spontaneity in mass movements:

(And previously I have used "theories" interchangeably with "ideologies",

in distinction to "Theory")

"Une 'théorie' qui ne met pas en question la fin dont elle est le sous-produit, reste prisonnière de cette fin, et des "réalités" qui l'ont imposée comme fin. Telles de nombreuses branches de la psychologie et de la sociologie, voire de l'Economie, de la Politique, de l'Art, etc. Ce point est capital si l'on veut identifier le danger idéologique le plus menaçant: la création et le règne de prétendues theories qui n'ont rien à voir avec la vraie théorie, mais ne sont que des sous-produits de l'activité technique. La croyance en la vertu théorique 'spontanée' de la technique est à l'origine de cette idéologie, qui constitue l'essence de la Pensée Technocratique."  

In fact, it will become obvious that many of the terms of political science which one may use to describe "spontaneous social movements" and the social system from which these emerge are specially apt in that they themselves emerge from just such technical, practical spontaneity as Althusser describes. The methodology and the subject for analysis thus share the same characteristics — sociologism speaks to sociologism. And yet, while indicating the tendencies — sociologism, economism, and the process of radicalisation of those strata oriented towards governmental action and integration into administrative equality rather than class emancipation — in the labour movement during the unrest of 1910-14, one may at least try to fulfil Gramsci's first suggestion, the process of describing the formation of a collective will, its conversion into higher organisational and ideological forms and so forth. 

Spontaneity itself has many different forms and functions. For Sorel, spontaneity was to be preferred above revolution, certainly above

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20 Strictly, "ideology" should include both "theory" and "belief system", but the distinction between these is so blurred, and so often refers only to differences in individual plausibility, that the vital distinction is between the Theory (metatheory) and the theories, ideologies, it embraces and analyses.

21 Althusser, op.cit. note to p.172. Althusser's distinction between "Pratique théorique" and "pratique idéologique" appears a valid one in the context of his analysis, but he himself considers the correspondence between them considerable, and their relationship so complex that the difficulties of maintaining the distinction become too great.
political success. To Bukharin, it was something to be cultivated, preserved as a kind of raw material for socialism - a source of energy - "Comradely discipline must be accompanied by the complete spontaneity of the working class. The workers must not wait for orders from above, must not lack initiative." To Lenin, spontaneity too was a raw material - the "pure consciousness" of Marx, latent energy, an inchoate and incoherent revolt - "pure reaction" to domination.

In Britain the term "spontaneous" was usually applied to a populist outburst - potentially violent, and apparently dissociated from existing political culture. In fact, the category has included not merely this type of behaviour, but also what one might call "historians' spontaneity" - movements led, organised, publicised, but by people and organisations not conventionally regarded as having an influence - the work, in fact, of a grass-roots political underground. Some groups, like the SLP, even coupled dogmatism with spontaneity in that curious derivative the "unofficial proletariat" - the purely-conscious militant workers who, by this "theory" can only flourish in adversity, since any intra-union success, as that of 1910-14, can only lead to accelerated promotion, and their rapid ejection from the rank and file into the leadership - and out of the militant movement.

And yet, this spontaneity does produce forms which bypass and transcend liberal parliamentary democracy, and demonstrate the effects of direct democratic participation in local and national politics. These forms

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22 Reference to Sorel is not to suggest a working relationship between him and the British or French labour movements. This refers only to his role as ideologist of what he observed as the prevailing trends in the French movement. Likewise, quotation from French Cégétistes implies a correspondence of approach, not a closer connection, with the British movement.

however, may only be transitional. When a spontaneous movement withers away, leaving only a "shell" of a party, as Gramsci called some of the European communist parties, the excitement of spontaneity may be lost, but it is arguable that the nostalgia for spontaneity is a misplaced desire for a more effective party and organisation, or indeed a different form of ideology or programme.  

Again, there are features of spontaneous movements, by definition not contained within existing political structures, which serve to demonstrate the untapped political resources of masses of the population. This is as it were a pool of unclaimed and undirected political enthusiasm, attractive to "bidders" for political participants, alarming to the monopolists of political power. Some parties remain "movement-centred" - like the CPGB - where others accept that organisation and routinised control, with a leaven of activists, can dispense with tidal surges of direct participation in political life - like the Labour Party. Above all, such movements are able to discern dichotomy in society as they press for hegemony - they have the features of "counter-societies". Like Hervé's "Leur Patrie", they rationalise and attempt to institutionalise their alienation from established political culture. Indeed, this alienation is perhaps the greatest source of "ideologism". Insofar as it is based on false consciousness, there remain an infinite number of methods of disalienation - including the fading of the original "élan", the redress of immediate grievances, or the reassertion of those forces which previously prevailed, the relentless pressure of specificity.

However, just as Marx moved away from "spontaneity" as a basis for immediate revolution, so too he moved from those voluntarists who hoped

24 A "spontaneous" desire for different objectives hampered by the institutional rigidity of organisations.
through spontaneity to materialise their idealism: it seemed to as Bakunin,

"He (Marx) called me a sentimental idealist, and he was right; I called him a vain man, perfidious and artful, and I was right also..."25

But this was deeper than a difference of personality: the belief in immanent revolution, permanent crisis or permanent revolution, the abolition of politics and so forth were historically a continuously seductive and delusive ideologism, from which the labour and socialist movements drew strength and legitimacy - a source of enthusiasm and loyalty, attractiveness to the "wretched of the earth" - a cause of, and solace in, defeated idealism, and a concomitant, real or confected, of revolution.

This form of ideologism, specifically sociologism, spontanism, is peculiarly active in liberal democracy. In Britain, from 1910-14, for instance, it was hard to shoot down strikers who could, conceivably influence the legislature to enact their demands. In this sense, liberal parliamentary modes were the dominant ones. Likewise, to the syndicalists, the confrontation between federated or amalgamated unions and federated or amalgamated employers had dichotomous and direct features which confrontations in the House of Commons lacked. If the political modes of liberal democracy prevented the illiberal use of "Sir Hiram Maxim's rock salt"26 the "free market" permitted a sharp contest between

25 Quoted in Robert Hunter, Violence and the Labour Movement (1916), (Oeuvres, pp.438-9)
unions and employers, a simulacrum, or a model, of class war.
Contradiction thus contains elements of paradox, devices for its own
modification, as well as an historically, causally determined code of rules
and conventions. The modes of liberal democracy could, by this
ideologism, be ignored or avoided as a quirk of the superstructure for
so long as employers could be found unconvinced that the best interests
of monopoly capitalism lay in a contented and organised proletariat.
Liberal democracy contained both the ideology of abstracts to permit the
political emancipation of the workers, the techniques required to pacify
and neutralise the proletariat under capitalism, and also the production-
relations producing class war and the rejection by the proletariat of
bourgeois liberal democracy.

However, although the labour movement was the more open to subservience
to spontaneity because of the development of liberal democracy, the unrest
had as a consequence the more impact. Here, after all, the defects of
parliamentary democracy were obvious – with an extended suffrage,
disputes between thousands of workers and their employers for a living
wage could still be regarded as a threat to civilisation itself. Strikes
demystified the public as to the nature of class and industrial relations
even at a time when organised collective bargaining was becoming general.
To the labour movement, the unrest might be thought to operate as a stimulus
to return parliamentary candidates in sufficient numbers and with a
programme devoted at least to the payment of a living wage.

If the unrest were not a stage on the road to revolution, then surely
it must be a profound stimulus to popular parliamentary democracy and
labour reformism. And yet in the failure to enact such measures,
apparently simple but in fact acts of profound structural reform, as a
living wage, the inadequacy of right and left ideologism is brutally
exposed — and the limitations of spontaneity likewise demonstrated.

The paradox which Halevy noted thus becomes no paradox — but two sides of the same coin:

"We are driven to the paradoxical conclusion that during the very years in which revolutionary syndicalism was so vocal, co-operation between the trade unions and the Government became closer than before."27

At the same time, it is pointless simply to decry, in the name of "Théorie", or Gramscian historical method, the sociologism of Mann and the others. As Cobb said of the PCF,

"The warmth of personal feeling that so often resides in the key word: les copains..also designates a reality: that of common experience, often of common provincial origin."28

Thus, if Mann's anti-intellectualism be characterised as "sociologism", belief in the efficacy and self-sufficiency of autonomous social forces without the "importation" of socialism by intellectuals, there is a two-way process at work.

The British intellectuals had never flocked to the labour movement — Mann after all had to make a virtue of what seemed necessity when he opposed intellectuals and theorists in the socialist movement. As Neal Wood said of the CPGB, intellectuals played "a very much smaller role in its governance than...in any other section of international communism".29

Again, it was a consequence not only of deficiencies in theory, but of that agonising stage of transitionism which left the labour movement stuck, like Pooh in Rabbit's doorway, with the choice between losing its position in the political and economic system — as was the choice in 1926 — and

29 Neal Wood, Communism and British Intellectuals (1959) p.22.
sacrificing the solidarity which had gained the power position now at hazard.

If "Syndicalism" was simply the latest version of a long tradition of Marxist heresy, reactive militancy feeding on Marxist programmes without the application of Marxist method, held together by populism, then at least the labour movement found the division of function and aim between organising the working-class and achieving material security through collective bargaining was a division built in at all levels – in the officials, policies, groups organised, and so on. Again, in even as simple a gaming situation as that suggested by Hight and Hancox, –

"In the end the point at issue was the definition and assertion of the authority of the two organisations" – employers and workers – the union or group of unions represents more than organisations.30

Heberle talks of social movements, "social collectives", having comprehensive programmes, a direct orientation to changes in the social order and a comprehensive "we" feeling.31 But the specific question which arises concerns the fate of a group which has acted as the vehicle for historical change. If a proletariat, or an organised union movement, has become, or has been, a nation within the nation, there is a sense in which an agent of revolutionary change is present in society, determining explicitly or implicitly the context of all social policy and pronouncements. Yet at the same time this proletariat, this labour movement, may appear aborted – or unrealised potential. When Simmel remarked that

30 Prof. J.Hight and G.G.Hancox, The Strike of 1913 in New Zealand (Economic Journal, June 1914, p.205.)
"conflict can exclude all subjective or personal factors, thus quantitively reducing hostility, engendering mutual respect, and producing understanding on all personal matters, as well as the recognition of the fact that both parties are driven on by historical necessities"

he in fact left open this question of the real weight of "historical factors" in determining the conduct of a conflict situation.  

For there are two lines of analysis - what happens to the spontaneous element, and second what to the conscious when a revolutionary situation has been resolved without revolution? The first question is customarily answered in terms of "closures" of gaps in the political culture - a mixture of concession, coercion, and adaptation of existing structures. The "consciousness" residuum again is customarily seen in terms of party, literature, Geistesgeschichte. But this supposes the complete disintegration of movement despite its fusion in action: again, the model of the intellectual continuum is more complex than the above would imply. Murphy put it that

"The struggle lies between the 'extremists' with a revolutionary objective, and the more conservative elements, who stand midway between the extremists and the Trade Unionists of the middle period who sought to make the best of the existing order by saving the members of their organisation from the workhouse."  

At its simplest, this becomes a problem of historical and national scale. The strike movement of which the pre- and post-war unrest in Britain was a part affected Europe, Asia, America, and Australasia, and parts of Africa.

33 e.g. G. Wootton, The Politics of Influence. British ex-servicemen, cabinet decisions and cultural change, 1917-57 (1963)
34 For a discussion of the historiography of this approach, and a plea for Sozialgeschichte, see G. Haupt, La Deuxième Internationale 1889-1914. Essai critique des sources. (Paris 1964)
By the time of the British General Strike, workers' governments had been set up in several countries, the German, Austrian, Turkish and Russian empires had been destroyed, Lenin had had a profound influence on the CPGB, the legitimate successor to the pre- and post-war industrial movement of unrest.

At a further degree of complexity, the problem of the construction of socialist consciousness could not be reduced to programme and "we" feeling. T.L. Smith maintained

"all the time and energy spent in the building up of intermediary forms of organisation is useless because it contributes nothing towards the creating of that mental revolution..." needed to achieve a revolutionary consciousness. Here indeed is a basic problem of specificity - the scale of the unrest, and its object, even its location. Men like Tillett were aware at the time that they were dealing with "spontaneity" - "leaders however splendid, the organisation, however conscientious, did not and could not account for the great upheaval." They saw in addition that in the interstices of organisational rivalry -

"Sur le terrain politique, la classe ouvrière était alors la proie des partis ou des sectes qui se disputaient à l'envi l'honneur de la conduire à l'émancipation finale. Elle participait à leurs querelles mesquines..."

36 T.L. Smith, Industrial Unionism (IWGB, n.d., p. 9). As to whether the industrial union or the syndicate could perform the role of the party as proposed by Lenin, or complement the work of parallel parties, in the case of the former the question was complicated by the fact that there appeared no intermediate stage of organisation between the loose, propagandist shop group, and the completed industrial union, while in the case of the latter, the "syndicat" was more or less a mood pushing militants gradually into commanding positions within existing unions as the rank and file urged more militant policies on the old leaders. Thus it might be said that for all the debate on organisational forms, the main differences between the groups lay in their diverging objectives, not on rigorous analysis of organisation.

37 Tillett, op. cit. pp. 22-3.
— there could be seen what one can call the agent of transition to socialism. However, the attempt to apply from this premise the call to action of 1847-8, simplified as it often was by men like Hervé into "All countries have a common character, all...are composed of two classes....that's what a country is - a monstrous social inequality, the shameful exploitation of a nation by a privileged class" could be disastrous if it were not immediately successful. The successful exploitation of the periphery - in Sweezy's model - by the advanced industrial capital-exporting nations helped to freeze these dichotomous archetypes of the metropolitan proletariat into stiff, if alienated institutions. Dichotomy, which is but one feature of capitalist society, encourages a theorising in which it becomes the most important and static feature - as if, having failed to carry out a classical insurrection, the socialist movement could survive on mental interconnections instead of facts.

Here indeed there is a sense in which dichotomy, Marxist "ideologism", is simply mental, a matter of political archetypes, ways of looking at things, as Ossowski also proposed. But this "way of looking at things" does not only correspond to an extent with objective reality - the formation of a counter to the dominant class ideology, a defensive ideology, and a response to polarisation in social relations, whether through increasing immiseration in terms of wages or the effective exercise of political and social influence - it is a result of, and transmitting

39 G. Hervé, My Country Right or Wrong (Guy Bowman's trans.) 1910.
40 Paul Sweezy has suggested a revision of the Leninist proposition that Imperialism is not "exported" to the exploited colonies but achieves its typical and developed form in the imperialist society, by remarking
that the exploitation of the underdevelopment of peripheral countries produces contradictions in an acute form in the periphery rather than the nucleus.

The use of dichotomy in this sense is found in S. Ossowski, Class Structure in the Social Consciousness (1963 English edn.), where it is argued that "Different conceptual categories correspond to different problems" (p.176) - that is, Marxism becomes a descriptive rather than an analytical method, a theory which itself becomes a social fact in its aspect of "ideology". Although it is true that Marxism cannot exist outside history, this was Marx's starting point - to distinguish philosophies by a meta-theory. The "fact" - or category - of social dichotomy is thus seen as effectively neutralising the value of dialectical method - the prime Marxist howler. Note too R. Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society (1959).
medium for, "transitionism". This "dichotomous" theory of class war, basic, for instance, to the syndicalists' division of society into producers and parasites does show both objective awareness, and a crude perception of dialectical forms. Such "ideologism" may or may not be Marxist: it may be pre-, post- or neo-Marxist in apparent derivation - but it must be non-Leninist, and can never be a Marxist political analysis - if only because, in Althusser's sense, it places itself beyond criticism, beyond history.

In the case of the labour unrest, Syndicalism with spontaneity, natural, organic forms, as base, clearly helped to prevent the evolution in Britain of those Leninist forms which appeared, however briefly and superficially, in Germany, Italy, France and so forth. Indeed, this "Syndicalism" owed more to spontaneity than to "ideologism": outside the groups advocating industrial unionism, union amalgamation or guild socialism labour militancy probably came closer to the fantasy of Pataud and Pouget than to those socialists and syndicalists in Europe trying to settle their differences by discussions of tactics.

"The State abolished, no obstacle could any longer oppose the expansion of popular instincts: the spirit of agreement and fellowship was going to thrive, as well as the Communist tendencies, so long kept down by authority."41

There is much of an evolutionary faith in the "naturalness" of communist forms - a belief in the release of spontaneity which can be linked to the ideas of Syndicalists, Industrial Unionists, in America working merely to shatter social norms. Syndicalism "has undoubtedly enabled desperate workmen in America to fly to dynamite with a lighter heart" said Harley.42

41 Emile Pataud and Emile Pouget, Syndicalism and the Co-operative Commonwealth (Oxford, 1913) (Comment nous ferons la Révolution) pp.96-7.
Syndicalism, rendered legitimate by its connection with spontaneous outbreaks, seemed to give sense and purpose to the strikes and the insurrections of the streets which orthodox Marxists — if this term, like "the British labour movement" does not imply a spurious homogeneity — denied as having relevance to the socialist revolution, or at best, as in Lenin's case, as having only tactical significance. The Marxists thus appeared to have abandoned the working-class at the crucial time of expansion and organisation whenever it became militant. Syndicalists understandably saw this as betrayal and demonstration of what the workers could expect under a socialist State. Indeed, the Syndicalists' general strike would end not only politics, but also economics. In Roller's suggested scheme, the general strike would end money, allowing the workers to help themselves from the accumulated wealth, after which "work will become an art, because it will be executed free from compulsion and restraint." There is here an almost wilful and perverse inversion of those forces making for militancy. For there was, after all, no reason to suppose that workers' spontaneity came out of a pre-historical phase — a kind of natural atavism. Even in those peasant or recently proletarianised communities where the overthrow of capitalism and government might lead to a reassertion of communalist forms, these would be organised social and political forms. Nostalgia for the peasant commune was tinged with a wholly visionary conception of such self-regulating communities as in a sense beyond organisation and beyond coercion. In those industrial


44 Hyndman and his friends — this would not apply to the SLP, or the BSP rank and file.

45 Arnold Roller, The social general strike (1912) p.18.
countries in which the workers were deeply conditioned by capitalism and bourgeois modes, to rely on spontaneity not only to destroy the existing social, political and economic system but also spontaneously, to produce harmonious and harmonizing forms of social organisation without the state - the workshop group, the trades council with administrative and executive responsibility - had enough contact with possibility to make the idea attractive, but it lacked an overall awareness of the dynamics of a socialism and liberal democracy.

If it is possible to find a Marxist pedigree for this militancy in the Marx of the Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto, this Marxism and Lenin's were in profound conflict. To Syndicalists, "pure consciousness" on the part of the workers dispensed with the need for the intelligentsia to carry socialism to the workers. Since the state was a mere superstructural excrescence, there was no need for party organisation - indeed, pure consciousness made organisation unnecessary. In the organic model of the social revolution by general strike, the syndicalists' vanguard, the militant minority, was quite different from the higher "Party" aspect of the proletariat suggested by Lenin - it was simply the arm of the proletarian body.

Unfortunately, the syndicalist "analysis" and programme applied equally to a revolutionary and to a quiescent working class. Workers without a revolutionary potential also would not require socialism to be imported by the intelligentsia, would have no Marxist organisation and no vanguard. Reliance on the class-drama played out by an independent proletariat was justifiably to emphasise the need for class-identification, class pride - but it ignored the complexity and effectiveness of the subordinating and integrating forces in capitalist society. Hence

46 Though in practise few adhered to this.
traditionally the success of Syndicalism is seen in terms of the "frontier areas" of capitalism, on the industrial periphery - though in fact at all times Syndicalism was either a precisely literal and ex post facto translation of the potential of the moment, or a wholly theoretical exegesis of the potential of social forces, without concern for their cultural, political, intellectual integument.

Thus, although Tom Mann stayed close to the militant workers, he appears eclectic - convinced that to be working-class was itself a sufficient preparation to turn to socialism. And of course, in terms of intellectual and political tendencies, and in terms of basic experience of subordination, this was fair enough: but this trade union, or by-itself class consciousness, lacked a focus. As Labriola said "Le parti, machine essentiellement politique et démocratique, est autre chose que la classe." 47 This concept of the sharpening of socialist consciousness through a party was explicitly denied by Sorel: "passionate individualism is entirely wanting in the working classes who have been educated by politicians". 48 Thus class-consciousness and individual consciousness ally against the prosaic - or effective - "party-consciousness". Sorel's is the heroism of defeat where the syndicalist activists' was the heroism of automatism, its programme arguable only at the tactical level.

Even so, the Syndicalist case rested on emotional attitudes and aspirations which no socialist could ignore, and which had always been a motor-force of socialist movements. It is a mood expressed by

48 G. Sorel, Reflections on Violence (Eng. edn. 1916) p.287. Thus the general strike "is a most striking manifestation of individualistic force in the revolted masses." p.285.
Macpherson as the

"move from a society that has necessarily diminished our humanity by defining it as possession, to a society which will reinstate humanity as creative activity."\textsuperscript{49}

It may bear a false emphasis to propose as did Pelloutier that "the promise of the new order would depend upon the quality of the men who constructed it", but this emphasis was integral to European socialism. When

"Pelloutier hoped that the answer lay in a gradual voluntary assimilation of the cultural and educational possibilities of the Bourses du Travail, yet the affirmation of these possibilities had somehow to precede the workers' recognition of them",\textsuperscript{50} he stood at the point of conflating "sociologism" and a utopian voluntarism. Such an "error" was dictated both by the growth of the labour movement and its potential, and by the defensive action of the political system, the desertions by socialist politicians, and the integrative power of the very political system which sought to destroy workers' organisations. The paradox of Western European liberal democracy which sought to emasculate the working-class politically while summoning the workers individually to have faith in the organic unity of society was reflected in the equally paradoxical sight of a spontaneous movement incapable of transforming a chiliastic discontent into more than modest demands - a pre-political and at times tory movement, encouraging in trade unions and party cults of tradition and reflexiveness.\textsuperscript{51}


\textsuperscript{50} A.B. Spitzer, Anarchy and culture: Fernand Pelloutier and the dilemma of revolutionary syndicalism (Int. Rev. of Social History, 1963) p.388.

\textsuperscript{51} Note in this connection E.J. Hobsbawm's remarks on the role of party as "some built-in guarantee against the drift into reformism, for class consciousness and unity (solidarity, loyalty) are two of the most elementary lessons of spontaneous proletarian experience." In Labouring Men (1964) p.335.
In Britain, the unrest of 1910-14 produced just such attitudes, and in the strikes without end, just such popular attitudes as described above. The South London factory workers striking for "they knew not what", the Ruskin College students refusing "to attend lectures, and (who) actually appointed lecturers from their own ranks in place of those to whom they took objection" were united by this reliance on spontaneity and class independence - breaking the links which bound organised workers to the political and administrative system, but incapable of transcending, or structuring, the mood which Vernon Lee described as

"something amounting to a new religion and a new kind of altruistic ethics, whose watchword is 'solidarity' and whose first, and occasionally sole, commandment is 'Thou shalt not be a blackleg'".\(^53\)

This "embryonic consciousness" involves a rejection of the existing political culture, which is perceived as gravely dysfunctional. But the model is rather that of the crew of the sinking ship taking to the rafts than to warriors of emancipation. The hope is for some outside solution, or permanent crisis preventing "closure" and compromise. Sorel called it the influence of the "spontaneous myth" in the General Strike,\(^54\) where

"tous les événements apparaîtront sous une forme amplifiée, et, les notions catastrophiques se maintenant, la scission sera parfaite."

In Sorel, what to Pelloutier was, surely, a mental "scission", becomes a physical "scission" which, immediately recognised as fantastic, makes the


\(^{54}\) ibid. p.671.
programme itself of psychological ("mythical") value only.\(^{55}\)

The Second International debates on the role of the masses in direct action bore obliquely on the British Syndicalist position. When Bebel said "a correct tactic is more important than a correct programme" he was effectively close to the British militants' position.\(^{56}\) Rosa Luxemburg provided the fullest theoretical justification for the tactical programme of the militants, but Lenin rejected Syndicalism on just the grounds that it was simply tactical, economist and opportunist dignified by ideologism. The theoretical weakness was admitted and customarily glorified by Syndicalists themselves. Though Mann never severed all the links with "orthodox" Marxism,\(^{57}\) there was a truth in MacGibbon's remark that Syndicalism "out-Marxes Marx, for while Marx said that the workers must unite and win as political units, Syndicalists say they must unite and win as economic units."\(^{58}\) Even the position of 1848 was rejected as too potentially integrative in a system of exploitation - whilst the basis of theory remained at the stage of finding an immediate programme.

"Anarcho-Syndicalism has produced no outstanding theoretician of its own, and its principles are sometimes accepted by anarcho-communists in their approach to the economic problems of society."\(^{59}\)

The reliance upon spontaneity and its home-grown radicalism helps to

\(^{55}\) ibid. p.675. It is important to bear in mind that the more "finished" ideology, the bourgeois, had a great advantage over the developing socialist ideology, both in surviving the decline in spontaneity and influencing and permeating the spontaneous movement itself. It operated also as yet another factor confusing the spontaneity-consciousness distinction, and the party-movement difference.


\(^{57}\) Especially because the heightening of his militancy was not simply due to his perception of growing militancy, but to the greater extent and intensity of exploitation - raising hopes of imminent revolution.


account for the superficial impact of the Russian revolution on English-based labour movements. "By 1921, the Russian revolution as a vital force in the Australian labour movement had worked itself out, and the Communist Party itself was testimony to that exhaustion." For if militants have to await the regeneration of revolutionary spontaneity from an increasingly unpromising situation, it must follow that dialogue between pre- and post-revolutionary socialists must become increasingly strained, irrespective of the Stalinist perversions of theory and practice.

In addition, the influence of policies devoted not to the socialisation of the working class, but to its radicalisation and orientation towards state reformism was considerable. It was a policy, as stated above, explicitly of the Webbs, (and clearly misunderstood by Wells, as the New Machiavelli demonstrated) but adopted by politicians of all major parties. It was powerful, and even arguably more effective than a labour reformism based on trade unions as pressure groups. However much could be claimed for militancy and strike action as raising the status of manual workers, it could not be claimed with any confidence that strike action could be more than an occasional, ambiguous and potentially disastrous alternative to gradualism and reformism either through the liberal democratic or the administrative systems.

In all this, anarcho-syndicalism, anarchist-communism, labour militancy, was a resurgence of ideas and tactics which had sprung up whenever the political movement received setbacks. Even a strike against an individual employer might easily, naturally, "spontaneously" lead to the involvement of the government, and an insurrectionary situation, where the political socialists were faced with the seemingly intractable problem of storming political monism. Between these two methods, there was a constant

interchange. Just as men like Brousse, Plekhanov, and Guesde rejected
their early populist enthusiasm for a system of analytical and critical
continuity, so too the desire to share the struggles of the workers, to
give on-the-spot leadership attracted men like Mann.

This thesis, then, is concerned with the history of left "sociologism"
in the British labour movement as demonstrated in 1910-14, and its sliding
towards economism to which it was a reply and a reaction. To economism
its own logic constantly attracted it back under the pressure of economic
necessity. In particular, Mann's career is examined in terms both of its
undoubted constancy, loyalty, nearness to the workers - but also its
dependence upon the spontaneity of masses of the working population in
which his programme could appear only as tactical suggestion. In the case
of the NAUL one can see how a labourers' general union in fact emerged
from the union "explosion" with the possibilities of renewed spontaneity
circumscribed, and an original conservatism institutionalised and
strengthened.

In the Labour Party and TUC one can discern the processes whereby rank
and file pressure and government and employers' aggression could provide
a wide, if tactical, support for militancy. However, these organisations
came to exhibit the belief that spontaneity must not be permitted to
jeopardise established bargaining and contractual procedures and
obligations. In the socialist parties, one finds a mixed record even
in the determination or reluctance to make use of industrial unrest to
hasten the evolutionary process. Finally, the criticism of Syndicalism
by the Webbs is contrasted with the methods whereby they proposed the
eventual "socialisation" of the workers by the rest of society - the false
61 cf. note 55 above.
dichotomy presented between producers and consumers as a mystification of class war - compared in turn with the consequential but travestied version of militancy by the economic federalists and administrative syndicalists.

"Spontaneity" produces, and a political culture in which spontaneous movements occur generates, typical descriptive terms and typical phenomena of behaviour and ideology. "Dichotomy" is the most characteristic ideological "sous-produit" of such a movement as the unrest. The class war was seen as producing sharpened and apparently irresoluble conflicts - producers confronting exploiters, "young men in a hurry" confronting an older generation of union leaders, an independent working-class physically separated from the patriciate, and so forth. The solvents to dichotomy were often seen as "action", a programme of continual resolution of conflict and generation of new conflicts. The system produces concepts, ideologised false consciousness, rather than analysis of dynamic forces. This led to a pseudo-dialectical confrontation between a society and an anti-society, with a resolution containing reconstituted elements of both. Thus the first world war could be described in terms of licensed sabotage, legal disorder, a conflation of law-and-order and its converse. It ceases to be "the war" and becomes "war". Here is disillusion, idealism - and a static view of the level of working-class consciousness marking a rejection of commitment and a vulgar materialism.

"Discontinuity" again appeared both as explanation of the unrest and a method of analysing it. The concept of "discontinuity" is used not only in terms of description, but of functional analysis. The "political culture", which thus has density but no mass, is presumed to have "gaps" requiring "closure" - a term which may also be used to describe the process of restriction of political choice by institutional growth and organisational development. In fact, these terms are useful only as
descriptions of perceptions of social crisis. Severe social dislocation will, for instance, tend to lead to the breaking of those institutional, functional, and conventional links between conflicting groups. Such a situation will naturally produce that "inversion" which is implicit in the dichotomy class-class society, in which class "independence" appears to reconstitute and embody the "real" values of society which class dominance has subverted.

These terms, are in the nature of self-fulfilling explanations, essentially descriptive. Thus "discontinuity" describes the alienation of sections of a presumed homogeneous political culture, "inversion" a political mode of the alienated. They are also terms which apply to all "ideologism". They are a theorisation of conflict and the emotions which this produces. Thus Guy-Grand described Syndicalism as a movement "to maintain or to arouse in the proletariat the feeling of right, of dignity, of the respect due to labour, to love, to the family", to which "To act freely is to resume possession of oneself, to put oneself back into pure duration."62 This emphasis on the non-specific can certainly be reconciled with contemporary evidence. That is, there are degrees of falsity and utility in every ideology, every false consciousness. Murphy's remarks that

"We challenge them, we repudiate them, and by means of independent working-class organisation we mould our forces to challenge the rulers of the earth. We measure our progress towards our goal by the progress we make towards the independent mastery of the factories, workshops and farms, upon which the people's bread and liberties depend"63


63 J.T.Murphy, Compromise or Independence? (Sheffield Workers' Committee) (1918) p.12.
is a classic statement of movements of "scission", in which alienation replaces "Théorie". The use of "working-class" to replace "socialist" is likewise both a repudiation of the orthodox Marxist position, and an expression of thorough social alienation.

Industrial Unionism was

"dependent upon education - working-class education - that will free the minds of the working-class from the thraldom of capitalist-class influence and thereby create that particular unity in regard to structural formation and object that can only be acquired through a complete understanding of the workers' position in present-day society." 64

This is the expression of a popular movement using the terms of Marxist socialism, but not its analyses. This is Marxism itself dominated by economism and tailism.

"There has been exhibited the same spontaneity, the same unexpectedness, the same extraordinary loyalty to each other of the different sections as was shown in 1889, and the rapidity with which the strike feeling seized hold of one body of workers after another has been even greater. Those who see in what has been going on a deep-laid plot on the part of certain agitators to hold up the country's food, and put a pistol at the head of the general public, are utterly mistaken. The strikes have been entered upon by the rank and file of trade unions that have little funds to maintain a long and bitter struggle, and they have also been supported in a good many instances by non-unionists who have no funds at their back. The success that has been achieved is due to the suddenness and completeness with which the refusals to work have been decided upon and carried out, and to the unanimity with which certain sections of the transport trades have been supported by other sections." 65

There is in this, as in what we are terming Syndicalism, a conflation of populism, working-class solidarity, and old schools of socialism. In one sense, these are all aspects - economist and opportunist - of analogous social phenomena. But they are not the same thing as social analysis, and exaggeration, by sentiment or as a legitimating device or

64 T.L. Smith, op. cit. p.l.
whatever, produces distortion.

"Pelloutier a parfaitement représenté l'homme nouveau que
doit être le militant ouvrier, dévoué jusqu'à la mort à la
cause des déshérités, travailleur modèle, moralement
irréprochable, tendu sans cesse dans un tenace effort pour
sans cesse se dépasser"

- but this may come to exalt individual militancy for its own sake. 66

Certainly the Comintern's criticisms of the CPGB were aware of the
need for British Communists to forswear this mixed heritage imported
by shop-stewards, ex-syndicalists, shop-floor militants: the typical
lament was that "the 'aversion to theory' revealed itself everywhere in
the columns of the 'Communist Review'." 67 In part these problems derive
from the difficulties of converting sections of the working-class to
socialism, representing simplifications which come themselves to dominate
the socialist teachers. Syndicalism, however, gloried in this tendency -
"they (the leaders of the CGT) have complete confidence in the
supreme wisdom of the working-man. One of them has said that
on the day of the revolution all will come right." 68

The difficulty of avoiding a theory which consisted merely of mental
interrelations, and a praxis which was not simply a surrender to faits
accomplis was one which men like Tom Mann, like his opponents among the
conservative trade unionists, seldom perceived. 69 Syndicalism was an
attempt to bypass the arguments and consistency of Socialism by basing itself
firmly on working-class practice - however disparate these sources might
be. Thus one finds elements in anarcho-syndicalism echoed in the active

66 Jean Maitron, op.cit. p.28.

67 1926, xxiii. Cmd 2682, p.627. Documents selected from those obtained
on the arrest of the Communist leaders on the 14th and 21st October,
1925. Agitprop criticism, 23.6.25.

68 Professor G. Blondel, quoted in A. Christensen, Politics and Crowd-Morality
(1915) p.222.

69 This recalls Engels's exhortation that "In all fields the task is no longer
to invent inter-relations in our heads, but to detect them in facts."
(in L. Feuerbach).
revolutionary and "sociologistic" movements of the century. Roller's remark that it was impossible to

"centralise the soldiers of the whole country, and send 100,000 well-armed men against a few thousand rebels, because the soldiers would have to maintain order all over the whole country - in the most remote villages as well as in the centres of industry and along all the railway lines"

is not only close to the Régis Debray-Guevara thesis but belongs to a category of revolutionary tactics which gains little definition by the label syndicalist. 70

For, after all, theory itself did not move smoothly on at the same pace as the frustration, discontent and influence of the proletariat. Plekhanov put it in 1898,

"I almost took sick from these articles; what is most vexing of all is that Bernstein is partly right; for instance, it is impossible to count upon the realisation of the socialist ideal in the near future." 71

If, by definition, Theory can never be superseded by events, events do not wait upon their correct theoretical appraisal. When workshop organisation was "always the organisation of a militant minority", 72"theoretisation must borrow from the image of workers acting as "leaven in the lump", and rely on the convertibility of the lump. In France, this was expressed, if only by intellectuals, by borrowings from Bergson - "Consciousness is not so much a fact of mind as it is a moral virtue" 73 -

70 A. Roller, op. cit. p.9. Note too Debray's argument in "Révolution dans la Révolution?" (Paris, 1967) in favour of "un maximum d'efficacité révolutionnaire" (p.8.), involving an attack on the Leninist organisational prerequisites for Marxist activity - party, intelligentsia, vanguard drawn from the proletariat, army subordinate to civilian political control and so forth.


translated into terms of political consciousness.

The thinness of theory led frequently to exasperation: syndicalist organisation covered divergent attitudes as different as those in the socialist movement, and only in so far as the organisation was looser did it appear "freer". Yvetot exclaimed at the Toulouse congress in 1910 "It is not my fault if anarchism and syndicalism have the same ends in view."\(^74\) For in this sense, syndicalism marked a gloomy belief that the workers would not freely adopt socialism. They might be forced to do so by a state socialism which would circumscribe the area of free bargaining and organisation won by the workers' organisations within capitalism. But this choice between socialist coercion and defeat or integration (by the right and left of the bourgeoisie respectively) was one apparently extinguishing the proletarian struggle of the moment. From this arose the significance of the strike,

"manifestation spontanée ou réfléchie, mais sans intervention d'agent extérieur, de la conscience et de la volonté ouvrière, - et ce indépendamment de son intensité",\(^75\)

a self-explaining and self-justifying example of pure consciousness, "idée spontanée issue dans la conscience prolétarienne."\(^76\) Syndicalism, then appears as a rationalisation of an insurrection under way - and of the development of a group consciousness:

"The union's fight is half won and the manufacturers' half lost when workers accept union teachings as truthful and reject the claims of manufacturers."\(^77\)


75 E.Pouget, La Confédération Générale du Travail. (Paris, 1908) p.36.


Despite this, however, the phenomenon of international labour unrest gave a significance to and focussed attention on the work of British union militants, and magnified the political importance of such strikes in the context of an international revolutionary wave which men openly or implicitly linked with the 1905 Russian revolution, the Chinese revolution of 1911, and the revolutionary and insurrectionary movements in Spain and Italy. The place of ideologisms on the revolutionary continuum was determined by their emphasis on spontaneity as opposed to organisation (sometimes education as against pure consciousness), and on central as opposed to local, or centralised as opposed to industrial, planning. Consequently, if one may place industrial unionism, amalgamationism, syndicalism, anarchist-communism on such continua, it would seem to be true to say that during the labour unrest those ideologisms exalting the strike, spontaneity, and national union organisation, with a loose federal co-ordination, would seem the most typical and consequential ideologism to account for, and to influence, actual trends. This is the low-level theory of the unrest.

Again, there is a prima facie case for maintaining that this was a surrender to the current of events. Spontaneity leads to the growth of bourgeois ideology because

"bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than Social-Democratic ideology; because it is more fully developed and because it possesses immeasurably more opportunities for being distributed." 78

78 What is to be done? sup.cit., p.64. There seem in fact to be two processes at work here. First, there is a tendency of "spontaneity" itself to bring to light levels of bourgeois ideology operating within the proletariat - to make these forces active where previously they have either been latent or restricted in scope. For instance, a labour aristocracy's concern with craftsmanship and job integrity may become institutionalised in a union catering mainly for the semi-skilled and unskilled for whom such emphasis serves only to confer a doubtful and unsatisfying pseudo-skilled status or to maintain differentials and
hierarchies which maintain an inferior status. This would seem to apply especially to those groups within the proletariat which had developed or adopted some aspect of "bourgeois ideology" - even though in political matters they might be well-established radical or labour voters. Perhaps, indeed, a connection could be established between such groups which saw in the Labour Party a pressure group to mark and further their status. Then again, the attitudes to authority, religion, established institutional norms and deference could often enough survive, or even be sharpened, by politicisation even during a process of economic and political crisis. An example of this is the syndicalists' distrust of votes cast to legitimate political authority, and as a sole and psychologically sufficient demonstration of political involvement, and political acquiescence - a "recognition" of the limits of political action.

Secondly, apart from these "impurities" in pure consciousness, there is an importation of bourgeois ideology in periods of crisis, especially by those labour leaders without the desire, courage or ability to "take orders from the revolted mass", by the press with its desire to channel spontaneity into the bourgeois mode, by politicians and publicists attempting to neutralise or harness spontaneity, or to provide explanations or condemnations of spontaneous action and suggest alternative action - typically, work through the existing parties, and acceptance of gradual reform. One expects, then, that at the very time that an embryonic socialist consciousness is produced in the working-class, the counter-forces in capitalism producing it will develop a strategy of integration and conciliation rapidly and convincingly. Only complete collapse of the socio-economic system, or factors leading to some measure of physical "scission" - by insurrection, emigration, defection of a section of the bourgeoisie and so on - (more likely to be found where a movement has already taken a political form, as in a colonial or nationalist crisis) can prevent this. This strategy will be convincing because although such an attempt by the bourgeoisie to get in touch with the spontaneous unrest must be an importation it can appeal to elements of bourgeois ideology within the proletariat. In this case there were appeals to bourgeois patriotism, to pacifism, and the like, - which are "churned up to the surface" by the unrest itself.

It was possibly this phenomenon which led to the apparently paradoxical situation that bourgeois ideology in its aggressively anti-international and anti-proletarian aspects might be strengthened - even among the working-class - after such a crisis. The clear case here is in the first world war. One should not exaggerate the crushing of spontaneity in 1914, but it is certainly true that bourgeois patriotism emerged in 1914 as strong as, indeed far stronger than, before, and that the appeal of radical liberalism, even pacifism, was also stronger in some sections of the labour movement (especially in the ILP). This is not to suggest that "bourgeois ideology" is an independent or increasing quantity - but that this tendency for bourgeois ideology to penetrate the working
class movement at periods of crisis is to be expected, and is typically decisive – the "final crisis" in this sense representing the point at which militarily or ideologically a sufficient section of the proletariat can expose the structural weakness of its opposition.
Militants relied on "pure consciousness" to produce specific and effective political forms for the immediate destruction of capitalism. Such a belief depended on the maintenance of social dichotomy, on capitalism being in such an advanced stage of crisis and universal suffrage and the centripetal forces of national defence being such weak bonds, that the workers could, by strikes, neutralise the forces and modes of liberal democratic capitalism. Above all, they could do this in the Syndicat, "the group for resistance of the producers of all producers and of nothing but producers." It seems hardly necessary to point to the exclusion of any further theory, or meta-theory, which this involves, and the simple historical linear determinism of the hopes of such militants. After the war, William Paul was still writing that

"the constructive element in the social revolution will be the action of the Industrial Union seizing the means of production in order to administer the wants of the community" - as if the process of seizure and administration were simple acts of will.

Syndicalism was indeed an unfinished system, intended to provide a programme for action, and wholeheartedly to support proletarian activity. It covered a range of such activity, from the search for a "modulor" in industrial relations to a call to imminent revolution. The theory, like the industrial unrest which it ante-dated but which loaned it significance, "took the restless, the discontented and the extremist for the moment by storm." As will be shown, it was the magnitude of the first two

79 of A.D.Lewis, Syndicalism and the General Strike (1912)

80 William Paul. The State: its origin and function (Glasgow SLP, n.d.) p.192. Note, though, the advance in Paul's thinking in his Communism and Society (1922, CPGB) - in the contrast between these two books can be seen a fine example of the qualitative change in political awareness between the late SLP and early CPGB.

categories which made what Cole tendentiously and mystifyingly called
"extremism" a commonplace. The response to the coercion inseparable from
capitalist control and its labour market was pointed by the operation of
non-legitimated state action: "the men greatly resent the coercion
involved thereby" said Carter of the Munitions Act. Moreover, the union
"explosion" in numbers, in geographical and industrial extent, and the
frequent failure of trade union officials to structure and orientate their
organisations or their rank and file's pressure groups along conventional
- or even revolutionary - lines of industrial action, created a
prolonged ferment within the unions. This made the imminence of
revolution appear a matter of socialist prophecy vindicated. The
revolution seemed for ever at hand, for ever a model of disunity, confusion
and disorganisation - and by the very form of its imminence,
unattainable. The Leeds Free Commune group had urged for twenty years,
"Let us organise, extend and expand our Trade Unions, federate with others,
upon a basis of brotherhood" - and indeed the unrest seemed to spread
as prescribed among the unions of immigrant workers from Eastern Europe to
and from their English counterparts. The upheaval in the union movement
was such that for years problems of organisation and of anticipating another
such upsurge dominated both the constitution-makers like Bevin, and the
political fantasists like the Guild Socialists, who called for "a strong
and vigilant organisation in the shops, and...the highest degree of workshop

p.454. For those who do not rely on government for the protection
of existing property relations, the balance between government welfare
and coercion is proportionately easier to estimate.

83 The Free Commune (Leeds, 1899, no.2.) pp.5-6. This journal advocated
the General Strike.
decentralisation that can be secured"\(^{84}\) - "fantastic", since this was the vision either of millennarian success, or the point of contradiction between "guild" and "socialism".

The international phenomenon of industrial unrest encouraged a search for the appropriate ideologism which would stress neither the multi-causal nature of the unrest, nor its reactive relation to international capitalism. This was why Valdès could state that

"D'une manière générale, le syndicalisme reprend dans sa critique les mêmes arguments que le socialisme, mais il se sépare des partis socialistes au point de vue de la tactique."\(^{85}\)

In the eyes of national bourgeoisies, the socialist parties possessed an idea of Internationalism, they did not share an Internationality. The organisational and behavioural similarities between industrial organisation under capitalism, however, seemed to possess a threat and a unity, a real and effective solidarity which even Marxist socialist parties lacked:

"The Industrial Union is in existence in France, Italy, Spain, Austria, Japan, and America, whilst the propaganda for it is going on in Australia and New Zealand, Sweden, Germany, in fact every country which owns the sway of the Capitalist system."\(^{86}\)

Moreover, if socialist parties talked revolution but stood for parliament, the syndicalists talked strikes - and there were strikes. They advocated trade union fusions - and there they were. If socialists were misguided agitators, greedy, confused and vicious, then Syndicalists might well be depicted in like terms - but none would deny the intolerable industrial conditions which led to spontaneous strikes,

\(^{84}\) The Policy of Guild Socialism (1921) p.14.

\(^{85}\) Jeannine Valdès, *Le syndicalisme révolutionnaire et le mouvement ouvrier français avant 1914.* (Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie 1965) p.127

often against the advice of socialists and union leaders themselves. Again, Syndicalism seemed the more terrible to the dominant class, because the workers seemed to want not dominance in their turn, but emancipation. Unlike the "revolutionary minister", who "n'est pas un ministre révolutionnaire: il utilise tous les anciens mécanismes d'oppression, la justice, la police, l'armée", the Syndicalists relied on the unmediatised will of the worker. Not merely advocates of social disruption, the Syndicalists seemed to have found the ultimate political weapon - the unchained wills of self-conscious producers. However, if a political system weathered this storm, it became clear that however alarming the threat of spontaneity the least effective it seemed. Employers might have to break the spirit of strikers - but they had the material resources to do this, and an ideology which, in the free market, institutionalised and justified such action.

In the short term, such attitudes were close enough to

"those of Philosophic Anarchism - Freedom from Dogma, Free Thought and Free Love... a feeling of conscious humanity and the critical spirit..." 88

But the organisation and co-ordination of a movement to include newly organised building workers and philosophical anarchists could not rely on mere conjuncture to provide common programmes and objectives. Men might grasp intuitively the connections between various struggles for emancipation, but provide only conceptual connections between them. It was left too simple to regard Watson's proposals for union amalgamation, that

"the worker must belong to the Union catering for the industry in which he is working retaining his identity with his particular craft by and through the National Craft Group. Transferring from


88 Watney and Little, op.cit. - a description of the ideas of the "Conscious Minority" p.311."
one industry to another can easily be arranged by a system of "transfer tickets";
as purely manual workers' concerns, instead of much broader approaches
to general problems of social identification and disalienation.89

In Britain, it was essential to see that within the working-class
movement, problems of democracy were being discussed in concrete terms:

"We suggest that to avoid bureaucracy we must allow district and
craft autonomy. Each craft shall have its autonomous group because,
be it remembered, although the different Unions may be amalgamated
into one Union, the members will continue to work in their
respective crafts."90

Discussion of these points, however, was only meaningful in the context
of a broader movement based too on concrete, fundamental terms, deriving
from objective reality and not idealism, to socialise the means of
production. The alternative was something akin the bourgeois idealism
of guildry. The proletariat, prior to its emancipation, must be the
class most concerned with the classical questions, the basic questions, of
politics:

"The spirit that led the South Wales miners, the workers on the
Clyde, and later on the engineers, to challenge capitalist law
and order in the shape of the Munitions and defence of the Realm
Acts, is the spirit that will carry the workers through to their
final goal. This spirit should not, however, be wasted in struggles
for trifling gains"91

It is suggested that the unrest threw into relief the work of
proletarian political theorists in the light of attacks on the growing
labour movement from employers and government, and of multiform attempts

89 W.F. Watson, Trade Union Amalgamation. (The Metal, Engineering, and
Shipbuilding Amalgamation Committee, n.d.) p.4.

90 W.F. Watson, One Union for Metal, Engineering, and Shipbuilding Workers
(n.d.) p.12.

91 W. McLaine, Trade Unionism at the Crossroads (BSP, Oct. 1917) p.15.
to channel working-class spontaneity into channels acceptable to them. The working-class basis of this politics transcended national liberal democracy by relating the idealism of this democracy to the material conditions of working-class experience. It should not be forgotten that this popular participation in the development of a subordinate-class theory coincided with the last displayed conjuncture of British working-class practice with an international movement. Centers has shown that such an undertow of international class identification may still operate "spontaneously". But from 1910 to 1914 there was official recognition of the attractiveness of revolutionary ideas: "The Union ascribes the very large addition in 1913 to its activity during general industrial unrest" said the Chief Registrar's report, of the Workers' Union - and this accretion was widely seen as a paradigm of the British movement and the world unrest.

92 i.e. Richard Centers in The Psychology of Social Classes (Princeton, 1949) found (Table 53, p.159) a relationship between American class-identification and the announcement of the British Labour Victory in 1945 - though the sample on the day of announcement was small. Before July 26th, 51% on the 26th, 67% and after the 26th, 54%, placed themselves in the working or lower class. Thus, said Centers, Classes are "psycho-social groupings that extend across national lines" (p.139 ital.) It is not, however, made clear how psycho-social communication took place.

93 Chief Registrar's report on Friendly Societies and Trade Unions, 1914, vol. lxxvi (on 1913) - the percentage increase was of 301.9% to over 90,000 (from 5000 in 1911). In 1913 (1913 Chief Registrar's report vol. lvii) the increase in union membership for 1912 was attributed to the effect of the Insurance Act. However, as various commentators have noted, and as is borne out by the NAUL's figures quoted in a later chapter, union "explosions" have a mechanism and a dynamic which denies such mono-causal explanations, significant in quantitative terms though they may be. (of E.J. Hobsbawm, in Labouring Men (1964) Economic Fluctuations and some social movements since 1800, p.126 et seqq.)
This national and international movement to organise, and the
incentive to organise and to strike which successful organisation and
strikes gave elsewhere, the wildfire effect of organisation (caused by
the extension of ownership horizontally and vertically and the pressure
towards national industrial wage rates) — all gave a foretaste of
emancipation. "So when you join the Industrial Workers you feel the
thrill of a new aspiration; you are no longer a blind, dumb wage-slave"
said Debs: 94 nor is this talk of emancipation an idealisation of the
workers' struggle though it may idealise the advances made. To join a
union, to engage in a strike was to declare an interest in a changed
objective. To win a strike was to make the first step towards securing
a measure of freedom from insecurity — to start a strike was a recognition
of a coercion implicit in the employer-employee relationship and to hope
for success was to hope for that understanding and control of environment
which Marx considered emancipation. 95 If it was "sociologism" to base a
policy on the evolution of vast but uncontrolled social forces, these
forces did exist. Pataud and Pouget described it,

"The crowd became irritated in the way in which it was pent up.
Like an element under too great a pressure, it expanded suddenly,
and, with a fierce rush, broke up the police barrier." 96

Despite the shortcomings of the International, Internationalism, as mentioned
above, though not Internationality, became susceptible to the exhilarating
action of contagious social movements — not contagion in the sense that
Hardie proposed, 97 but functionally and structurally interrelated through

94 E.V. Debs, Industrial Unionism (delivered 10.12.05) (Glasgow, SLP n.d.) p.11
95 As in the MSS of 1844, and The Poverty of Philosophy.
97 "Beginning with the seamen the strike spread like an epidemic in the
Middle Ages" p.3. of J.Keir Hardie, Killing no Murder. The government
and the railway strike. (n.d.)
world movements of profits, prices, organisations and labour, a world undergrowth of the effects of national militancies and international co-ordination and their interaction.

Although Hyndman remained unimpressed by this change in aspiration and objective on the part of hundreds of thousands of workers, he produced a theory of the causes of the unrest, although these contrasted strangely with his complaint that no longer would thousands march to Hyde Park to demonstrate,

"pressure of life and anxiety for the future, due to the rapid introduction of wages-saving machinery, with its tendency to level skilled and unskilled labour. This and the simultaneous combinations of employers, which render partial strikes helpless, have had a great effect on the men."98

Thus, for many "Marxists" like Hyndman, the problem was not whether Marxists or Syndicalists should make most use of the unrest, but whether the Socialists would manage to persuade the workers not to strike, on the grounds that Marx had no said this was the way to conduct a revolution. Hyndman's forsaking the strike weapon as of scarcely tactical significance showed the clear tendency of some of the orthodox to see the world of factories, fields and workshops, as mere reflections of the real world of the State and the Countess of Warwick, and a revolution became ideal.

In fact, the traditional claim to labour's three rights - to the whole produce of labour, to work, and to subsistence - had strong roots in the immediate demands of workers at various phases of industrialisation.99

98 What the Worker Wants, The Daily Mail Enquiry (1912) p.34.
99 Discussed in A. Menger, The right to the whole produce of labour (1899 Eng edn.) p.1 et seqq. Though Dr Menger concentrated on the framing of these demands by socialist and other theorists, it could be claimed not only that this theory of labouring rights dates at least from the seventeenth century, but that these are fundamental "spontaneous" demands arising from the consciousness of the class created by the capitalist mode of production.
Such demands were inherent in working-class revolutionism. Insofar as these were spontaneous and organic, they were structured in socialist programmes. This original spontaneity differed in quality and objective both from the purely reactive and alienated discontent of proletarians and the populist demand for popular participation in government. When Bukharin called for the complete spontaneity of the proletariat under socialism, he was probably demanding a non-structured form of political behaviour, a combination of the populist ideal of direct participation and of the proto-socialism of the first workers' movements contemporary with pioneer socialists.

Such spontaneity, however, did not begin to solve problems of balance between, say, a policy of democratising central government and administration, and one of decentralising government. For until a socialist government was achieved, spontaneity had but one major function – to hasten the supersession of capitalism, and to speculate on the forms of spontaneity in a socialist society must be a work of the imagination. Alternatively, since a "socialist society" must to some extent be self-defining, the workers would find that the "spontaneity" which had been a necessary part of their struggle against capitalism became an ideological nonsense under socialism – depending not on material conditions, but a philosophical view of the intrinsic value of individual wills. This difficulty was not intractable under the eye of "Theory", the critique of ideologies. But in view of the practical use made by socialists and syndicalists of "spontaneous anti-capitalism", many workers naturally felt that spontaneity was to be restricted under socialism – not just by "Theory" but in practice. This would involve a diminution of the freedom of economic and political action men had had under capitalism. To argue that for workers to strike in a "workers' state" was irrational and self-wounding
could not conceal the fact that as a means of pressure such strikes might be effective, that "spontaneity", the grievances of the periphery against the centre, for instance, did not evaporate after the revolution. Thus if "spontaneity" be the raw material of socialist politics, it is easy to see that, retained simply in its reactive aspect under socialism, it becomes "non-politics". That is, in terms of Theory, it sets out to change environment by a refusal to take steps to change the environment.

Clearly, here was a major concern of Lenin's after 1918 - to "rationalise" spontaneity -

"On a hundred different occasions Lenin paid democracy high praise, and insisted that the dictatorship of the proletariat is both 'a dictatorship against the expropriated expropriators' and 'the broadest workers' democracy'. He believed it, wanted it to be true. He went into the factories to give an account of stewardship. He wanted to face all-out criticism from the workers.

But he wrote in 1918 that the dictatorship of the proletariat was by no means incompatible with personal power, and by doing so justified in advance some kind of Bonapartism. When his old-friend and co-worker Bogdanov came forward with embarrassing objections, Lenin had him locked up."

In fact it is hard to see how the use of spontaneity by a workers' opposition can be avoided except by a process of indoctrination which changes the character and legitimating force of that spontaneity bred under capitalism from the "class situation" of the proletariat. 100

In the British "unrest", then, this double aspect of spontaneity, at once reactive and tending to class consciousness, naturally produced both a "right" and a "left" ideologism. The second conceived in terms of a movement sweeping on to mass rejection of bourgeois modes and social organisation, the former of association, integration within the political and social system, the gaps in whose culture would be repaired by the

100 Victor Serge, Kronstadt 1921 (Solidarity vol.1, no.7.) p.10. That is "spontaneity" remains again a "raw material" of legitimization, criticism, and action, but of course its specific role in the labour movement changes.
inclusion of workers' representatives, and by the control of excess and inequity. Organisation was the key for both "right" and "left" to control and direct a spontaneity which was mistakenly conceived of as increasing in effect. In fact, the opposite was the case.\textsuperscript{101} This process for the left - described by Pelloutier as "de discipliner les forces naturelles et de les faire servir au bien-être humain" - came to involve some self-deception.\textsuperscript{102} Just as the anarchisation of the CGT might be claimed as an act of self-destructive and self-indulgent fantasy, so one might make the same claim for the Guild-Socialists, misled by the success of the building guild into believing that such structures could succeed within capitalism, but without capital.

In the exponents of industrial unrest, the attractiveness of the directness contrasts with the sterility of its explanation:

"Par l'action directe, l'ouvrier crée lui-même sa lutte", "Le but du travailleur est son émancipation, l'outil est le groupement, le moyen est la lutte."\textsuperscript{103} This is indeed a "class liberalism" - based on a concept of political free-will simultaneously denied by a quasi-Marxist theory of the pursuit of class interest. As Geoffrey Marshall has pointed out, indirectly, the desire for pluralism and federalism to outflank sovereign authority constantly found itself in conflict with the inherent monism of class

\textsuperscript{101} That is, its drive towards the left rapidly lost its force.

\textsuperscript{102} P. Pelloutier, Histoire des Bourses du Travail (Paris, 1921) Pelloutier noted the claim by many in the CGT that to "anarchise" the movement before it had accomplished its tasks was to disarm and to declare the unattainability of its objectives. In Britain the question of types and structure of organisation was overlaid by a debate as to the efficacy of various forms of decentralised democracy - by geographical or occupational decentralisation - and the possibility of a democratisation of central decision-making (cf Cole, Self-government in Industry (1920)) and LT. Hobhouse's idea of consumer democracy, in The Labour Movement (1893) p.80.

\textsuperscript{103} V. Grifflues, L'Action Syndicaliste (Paris, 1908) pp.23 and 35.
This was to be seen in Industrial Unionism, in which the economic federalism of social organisation according to industry was in tension with the monism of a movement with a single objective. Allen said the "union (was) to become the central spring of a new social system of a Workers' Commonwealth" - in fact a pluralistic form without a conflict of appetites. More likely, as Neumann said of Blanqui, "politics appears to be squeezed into very short periods of time in which the spontaneity of the oppressed makes possible the activity of such small groups of conspirators." For during the unrest, although militants might claim they were "non-political" their language was exclusively that of organisation, of participation in the re-casting of social and political systems and so forth. If this be "non-politics" it remains closer to politics than to any other study.

It was, then, no proof of international conspiracy when, faced with the international growth of large scale industry and trade unionism, world economic fluctuations and so on, "ideologists" should construct a homogeneity from a common wave of resistance to capitalist industrial relations, and social and political discrimination, and that such ideologism acted as the agent of self-fulfilling prophecy. Where workers had no vote, where the electoral system, or the consciousness of the unorganised or rural workers


106 F. Neumann, The democratic and the authoritarian state (Illinois, 1957) p.262. That is, the problem of combining the aims of trade unions in furthering the interests of their members with the presumably overriding interests of the worker-citizens is avoided (especially in a propagandist work of this nature), by assuming a uni-directional spontaneity, leading to harmony or quiescence within the new government and union structures which seem to have no objectives apart from steady-state administration.
were such as to exclude labour politicians from parliament, the pursuit of political power by constitutional means was partially self-defeating. Just as "collective bargaining by riot was at least as effective as any other means of bringing trade union pressure, and probably more effective than any other means available before the era of national trade unions to such groups as weavers, seamen and coal-miners" as it may be argued that the strike had just such a function as instrument of persuasion — over and above constitutionalism.

The emotional and practical lateral effects of strikes — "they owed their success very largely to the solidarity of distinct but allied branches of labour, and it is this same solidarity which is at work in the renewed outbreaks of the present months" — was aided in England by the institutional offshoots of unionisation.

Kenney made the point that "During the railway strike last year the chief agitators in the most militant districts were ex-Ruskin students, who are now CLC propagandists. One of them was an organiser in Liverpool. The principal strike advocate in the Chesterfield District, on the Midland, was a college man who, long before the strike occurred, had criticised the 1907 Conciliation Scheme, strongly denouncing the whole policy of conciliation as being a handicap to the workers...The present lecturer on Industrial History and Economics at the Labour College was a brakesman on the Barry Railway Company five years ago, and resigned his post in order to avail himself of a two years' course at Ruskin." Thus the old debate on the influence of French syndicalism on the British unrest is probably best expressed in terms of interpenetrating ideologism from situations with extensive — and in terms of liberal-democratic

107 In that "constitutional means" in a class society implied either acceptance of a dominant class rule, or a process of compromise and collaboration with such a system.

108 E.J.Hobsbawm, op.cit. p.16.

109 The Nation, The claims of labour. p.698 August 1911

110 Kenney, op.cit. p.692.
imperialism intensive - similarities. There is an element of rediscovery, of the spread of ideas, and of their simultaneous invention, in the international unrest which cannot be untangled, just as one must remember that in Britain the ideas of the Grand National Holiday or General Strike had had great currency in the 1830s and 40s. Even among the propagandists of the GNCTU, Owen's own idealism may be found in many forms earlier and later than his own statements. As Cole put it, Owen "was not, let it be clear, appealing only to the Trade Unions, or merely for the formation of new Trade Union branches. He envisaged an organisation wide enough to include all the Co-operative Societies and all persons of every class who were prepared to join with him in the attempt to establish suddenly and at a blow the 'New Moral World' of which he had been dreaming so long."


Cole, Attempts at General Union, sup. cit. p.409.
The unrest after 1910 had something of the inchoate and incoherent protest of the start of the GNCTU, something of the enthusiasm and particularism of Chartist: "I don't know what has come over the country. Everyone seems to have lost their heads" Askwith was told.  

He himself pointed to the most significant source of syndicalist theories:

"In fact, it proved difficult in some cases to find out exactly what their claims were, though at the base of all was the economic demand, more money in view of increased cost of living and rising profits."114

Here are the spontaneous and the vulgar Marxist strands: the strike without an end — indeed, without an aim, unless it be a final and transforming apocalypse — was the ultimate in spontaneous protest, and in militancy, just as all strikes seemed, wrongly, movements towards expropriation.

Perhaps, had there been a European wave of revolution immediately before 1914, the élan of the moment might have carried the movement on to open insurrection and away from idealism. As Crook pointed out, "The general strike has a character of infinity, because it puts on one side all discussions of definite reforms and confronts men with a catastrophe."115 But the world war allowed the strike movement to run its course in isolation, and in a situation where the freedom to strike was strictly curtailed and the former measure of tolerance of strikes withdrawn. This did not kill the strike movement, though, as Pribičević noted, it hastened the dissolution of its disparate theorisations, put severe pressure on its organisational dispositions, and left the policy

113 Askwith, op.cit. p.149.
114 ibid. p.148.
of securing workers' control distinguished both from a policy of strikes and militancy, and from one of seizing political power, both integral to the pre-1914 militants. The pre-war appeal of a man like Clay to develop a counter-ideologism of middle-class pride, class organisation to defend property was rendered unnecessary (though none the less attractive to counter-revolutionaries) by the fact that in and since the war, the maintenance of the existing system of property relations was not a matter of internal politics, but of national defence. Hence the old problem of using troops against strikers was fortuitously solved by Bolshevik revolution. What Gramsci noted as the subordination of civilian politicians to the military became institutionalised into a state of preparation against international communism, in which internal militancy became a simple appendage of the armed and alien threat to the nation and the state. This had been foreshadowed before the war by statements like Briand's, that the French Railway strike "is not a strike it is a political insurrection". However, in the strikes during and after the war it had become clear that the separation of capitalism and government, government and military could not longer be counted upon. This belief in a separation had always been tenable only at the tactical level - but syndicalists were always ready to deny past experience so long as new sections of the proletariat could be found ready to strike and take their

116 Pribićević, op.cit. p.17 et seqq. This excellent account of organisations and distinctions between the ideas of Industrial Unionists and Amalgamationists and Syndicalists makes it unnecessary to repeat his findings. However, the organisations and the ideas were so shifting, so often the creatures of a mass movement, and so sectarian that the novelty and significance of the broad-based movement may be diminished by such an approach.

117 To make the merely historical and contingent point that the policy of the use of troops ante-dated the unrest, and that troops were used to supplement police in a generally restrained and cautious
manner cannot diminish from the impact of displays of force showing conservative union leaders both that normal trade disputes might lead to forcible suppression, even massacres, by the government, and also that this danger was likely to be increased unless political objectives and political militancy were disavowed and anathematised. Gramsci's argument (in The Modern Prince) refers to the acceptance as a matter of policy and conviction by the dominant class, that a military solution to the militancy of the workers is to be prepared - which means that troops are not to be used to preserve order, but explicitly as a counter-revolutionary force not only against socialist revolutionaries, but the occupational and class objectives of organised workers. The fact that Churchill did not give orders to the troops in Wales to shoot strikers on sight - but rather to act with moderation and caution - gives him credit for elementary common sense, but does not conceal the fact, quite explicitly made throughout Sir Henry Wilson's biography by Callwell (vol. ii) (Sir E. Callwell, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson. His Life and Diaries (1927)) that the cabinet had come to depend on the military to defeat the working-class - and in that sense, their social policy was "militarised." The quotation from Briand is in Fabian Ware, The worker and his country (1912) p.198.
chance at the hands of employers, government, or troops.

The strike as a simple form of behaviour is one of the oldest and most basic forms of protest or non-co-operation. Gubbels, for instance, describes the strike as "Phénomène de civilisation". But while it is conceivable that an industrial proletariat could so disrupt a society that its political system could no longer function, it seems false to deduce that strikes under capitalism are both anti-capitalist and devoted to the achievement of a socialism reached by specific means but with an unspecific programme. Thus Lenin's remarks on the strike movement stressed the difference of the impact on the peasants of Russian strikes as compared with similar movements in the West - and indeed made the point that "the strike movement in Russia kept at a height unprecedented in the world."\(^{118}\) Where the mass strike had for Lenin a tactical significance, and even for Rosa Luxemburg was to be complementary to other lessons of action, the machinery of co-ordination and the means of control by political analysis were to have a crucial role.

Even if Rosa Luxemburg thought that once a revolutionary situation existed, formal socialist education was unnecessary, she still accepted the need for"(concentrating) all the forces of the proletariat for an attack upon the very foundations of capitalist society" - even if these foundations were individual employers.\(^{119}\) The industrial unrest in Britain

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118 Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 18, Economic and Political Strikes, op.cit. p.83. The remarks on the difference in impact are in A Word about Strikes, Pravda, no.27, 2.2.13 (ibid. p.541).

119 Rosa Luxemburg, op.cit. p.22. Indeed, it is arguable that despite her differences with Lenin, and despite her retention of the concepts of revolution from below, mass action and so on, they were never closer than at the moment of Spartacist action.
admitted of no such single objective or focus. Syndicalism relied on the spontaneity of the moment - the short term activity of the mass of workers - and it was in the short term that immediate objectives must most concern the syndicalist, and over these he had least control.

"The British trade unionists have never seriously considered the French Syndicalist idea of accomplishing a social revolution - acquiring the industries of the country and running them in their own interest - by the coup of a general strike."\textsuperscript{120}

If indeed it seems as if syndicalists - and throughout this term is used widely, to include those militants, whether connected with Mann, with industrial unionists, guild socialists, or the parties, who saw in the strike and the trade union an acceleration chamber for the revolution and a model for the enthusiasm and organisation of socialist society\textsuperscript{121} - mistook the preconditions for a socialist movement for the revolution itself, the strike figures were sufficiently remarkable to recall the mass demonstrations of the nineteenth century. Significantly, there was an irreversible trend towards unionisation not present in socialist political participation. But growth rates of union membership, the overall tendency of strike frequency and intensity to rise after 1910, the strikes over principle - nearly a third of a million workers went on strike in 1911 over questions of trade unionism - masked the significance of short term movements in the strike figures, like the slackening in 1913, and the question of overall strategy and significance of the strikes. For the employers, after all, there was widespread success in resisting strike action: in the bad year of 1911, local authorities, 120 Kenney, op.cit. p.696. 121 Making a distinction, that is, between movement and organisation.
coal and other mining employers won strikes more frequently than those in building, transport and textiles. In any case, over 84% of strikes ended in compromise, and only 6.6% in defeat for the employers. If the percentage of the industrial population involved in strikes had trebled in 1912 (13.4%) over the average from 1903 (3.9%), a more ominous figure was the large number of strikes won outright by workers in 1912 (74.5%).

This implied danger from the previously "safe" proportion of workers who never went on strike, or were on strike only occasionally. But 1913 saw only 5.6% of the industrial population on strike: true, that still meant that every year substantially more might strike than voted for the Labour Party at a general election. But even so, 1913 was closer to 1910 in terms of the numbers involved than to 1911 or 1912. Even within the strike wave, then, there were signs that unless a strategy be worked out for the new industrial unions of confederations of unions, spontaneity alone would not guarantee victory and a cumulative strike movement. Indeed, it was clear that "spontaneity" could be taken both as the driving force behind volunteers for the first world war, and for traditional trade union policies afterwards. Some union leaders relied on an implicit view of the workers as embourgeoisés to account for and to enforce policies of conciliation, or regarded acquiescence as a demonstration of consent, or even participation in union affairs. However, it was the more politically oriented, those more interested in intra-union democracy, who referred to the need to keep policy and leadership in phase with the "spontaneity" of the rank and file.122

Even this continuation of dichotomy cannot be seen simply as a sign

122 Figures from Strikes and Lockouts, 1910-14. Especially Cd 6472 (for 1911) Cd 7089 (for 1912) and Cd 7658 (for 1913). See too the tables Appendix I.
of increasing, or persisting, contradiction in society. "Transitionism" described the relation between two morphic parts, and continued precisely because the significance of the contradiction was not put to a decisive political test. Instead, the area of contradiction most conclusively tested by political movements was that between the industrialised and capitalised core, and the periphery. Thus, for instance, Morris’s model of "Syndicalism in one country" to follow the machine-gunning of crowds in Trafalgar Square in 1952, postulated a proletarian relationship only with its own ruling class, in which the Government remained neutral. Again, spontaneity ("the mass was fermenting indeed") played the decisive role.  

A strike is certainly a dichotomous situation - though not all links between the conflicting groups are severed. It derives to some extent from contradictions in the relations of production, and as Tridon pointed out, each strike has a strategic significance as well as one purely tactical. "In many cases a strike from which the workers derive no concrete advantage may constitute a decisive victory from the point of view of future struggles." But Garmy pointed to the difficulties of basing a revolutionary movement on the strike. The idea of the general strike itself was utopian, and discouraging, strikes called by minorities tended to end in disaster, the CGT militants were independent in a Proudhonian sense - that is, they pretended to a neutrality which in practice the political concerns of the leaders denied.  

Syndicalism, then, was most inventive at the tactical level - as in Pouget's suggestions for a "grève des machines" - but at the level of

123 News from Nowhere (1907 edn.) p.139.
theoretisation its suggestions seem little more than descriptions of purely verbal victories. Thus Pouget claimed the strike was

"L'heureux symptôme d'un accroissement de l'esprit de révolte et elle se manifeste comme un phénomène d'expropriation partielle du capital." 127

This partial expropriation of capital in practice must be a temporary suspension of the process of capitalist production — but it is hard to see how the capitalist loses his capital or indeed how capital loses its overall significance. In fact the drawback of a policy of strikes over a long period is not that it is incapable of altering the conditions under which production is carried on, but that initiative is left with the possessing class. The difficulties of possessing capitalist means of production may increase — but then, dominant classes remain dominant by their resilience in crises. The tolerance of capitalist production to strikes was, in any case, demonstrated long before 1914 — as was the possibility of the development away from comprehensiveness of the unions.

"The business-union strike is cleansed of vague revolutionary aspirations; underneath its showy emotional facade it is a hardboiled bargaining maneuver" was how Ross described the process. 128 In fact, even in this situation a "we feeling" will probably always have some elements of class identification — the point is, however, that frequency of strikes alone is no guarantee of the increase of such identification.

In Britain, there were two sources of discontent with the growing power of trade unions — from industrialists with the economic organisation


and demands of the workers, and from the government with its determination
that the bases of political power should not be challenged by class
institutions not orientated towards and under the control of state
bureaucracy. But these two attitudes interpenetrated, and the ultimate test
was the second attitude, the monist and political one. As Macpherson says,
in the Osborne judgment, the judges
"sought to prevent the trade unions exercising political power
because they believed that the continuing exercise of that power
would work against the interest of the State and of the system
of property ownership on which the State was based."

What the Syndicalists discovered, and what they relied on, was that
strikes did not depend solely on wage and cyclical fluctuations - that
a strike movement could be maintained without complete dependence on economic
forces beyond their control. But although neither the correlation between
strikes and prosperity, or between strikes and rising prices can be definitely
established, the Syndicalists were wrong in assuming that industrial unionism,
or union amalgamation, would progressively increase strike frequency and
success. They were wrong also in assuming that the tolerance of capitalism
to strikes would decrease. Again, Syndicalists who opposed political
action by unions excepted from this political strikes. It was precisely
in this area that British unions were most reluctant, and in which para-
party political organisation would seem essential. If trade unions were
to repeat the experiment of the 1920 Jolly George strike, and develop
Councils of Action as latent soviets, transitional forms of states, then
to all intents and purposes they would have developed a new party
inevitably reliant upon an increasingly structured rank and file spontaneity.

129 C.B. Macpherson, Voluntary Associations within the State 1900-1934. With
special reference to the place of Trade Unions in relation to the State

130 See e.g., J.I. Griffin, Strikes. A study in quantitative economics (NY.
1939). Cf. too for a criticism of Hansen's strike-prosperity
correlation (Cycles of Strikes, Am.Ec.Rev. 1921) Horace B. Davis, The
Theory of Union Growth (Quarterly Journal of Economics, 1940-1)
Between 1963, when Professor Turner made the point that it was surprising, in view of conditions, how few strikes occurred, and Money's remark in 1911, that "What is to be wondered at is not that strikes are now occurring, but that the British workman has humbly consented to the falling remuneration which is depicted" (in the indices for wages and cost of living), there lay fifty years' experience of the normality of strikes, in which strikes could be interpreted as common-sense reaction to the infringement of social norms by employers.

One could even argue that a strike derives from frustrated expectation which may or may not have a class content, or rather, may have a greater or smaller class content. Prezzolini put it that "once the working classes are able to carry through their General Strike they will no longer require to have it; but they must go on attempting their General Strike...well, so long as a General Strike is impossible to carry through."

To twist this argument somewhat, the force of the notion of a General Strike can be held to correlate directly with the frustration of expectation - and expectation is directly allied to levels of social and political aspiration and reference. The tactical argument for General Strike always ran parallel to the revolutionary automatism of a complete stoppage.

Before the first world war it was clear that "The possibility of importation made the miners' general strike of 1912 less rapidly paralysing than had been expected. Railway facilities were used as a set-off against the dock strikes in London and Liverpool and the seamen's strikes preventing the traffic of coal coastwise."

Although it was conceivable that a sympathetic general strike would

133 Quoted in Vernon Lee, op.cit. p.669.
accidentally turn into the General Strike, only government neutrality, as Morris argued, could allow such a contingent revolution. The evolution of the strike seems in fact closer to Gubbels's extensive typology. Certainly the strike appears as "une forme momentanée de la lutte permanente entre le capital et le travail", and not only "un moyen de pression destiné à faire rentrer l'un des partenaires dans la 'zone de contrat' de l'autre, mais une action tendant à modifier la relation sociale entre deux groupes en affectant l'ensemble du réseau où ces forces s'insèrent." But it remains halfway between an insurrection and a brake upon production. The strike seems to encapsulate and sharpen the attitudes and frustrations of the moment, to act as an acceleration chamber for social grievances and social interconnections.

Thus although Quelch employed a stereotype of the strike which ignored its specific and unique importances, there was an element of correct observation in his remark on the 1912 coal strike, that

"This great struggle has shown once more the futility of strikes as a general rule, and the supreme folly of giving the other side months and months of notice in which to prepare, while making no adequate preparations ourselves for a protracted struggle."156

Partly this attitude rested on rationalisations of the value of spontaneity - possibly themselves depending ultimately on a belief in the validity of the contractual relationship between employer and employee, and union and employer - partly on the lack of definition of the status of the manual worker in industry. Gouldner indeed sees strikes mainly in terms of the last aspect. Thus a wage demand becomes "a convenient way of expressing aggression derived from changes made in the plant's internal


156 In the British Socialist, 15.4.12. p.171.
social organisation, and especially from the attack on the indulgency pattern. This seems to make the worker a creation not simply of capitalist production, with no existence separate from this, but a creature of the individual plant. But while this seems to claim far too little for strike movements, Hiller seemed to claim too much of individual strikes:

"every strike is a single episode in a series of events that have already profoundly altered the traditional conceptions of property rights and employees' positions within the industry. In the last analysis, the strike is a political instrument which progressively effects fundamental constitutional changes."

For the problem does indeed lie in estimating the "progressive" changes supposedly made by or attributable to, strikes. Warner and Low, while accepting the dichotomy between systems of business logic and operatives' logic, conceived of their strike as an attempt to halt the erosion of traditional privilege and status. The strike here became the expression of "long pent-up feeling of frustration and loss of self-respect." This lack of a defined expectation and a mutually acceptable status for manual workers, the "concealed protests against the character of industrial work" may cause strikes. But they say little about the previous social

137 Alvin W. Gouldner, Wildcat Strike (1955) p.32. This brief and incomplete review of interpretations of strikes is intended to serve as illustration not only of how strikes can appear to different observers to bring pressure on employers in wholly different ways, but how they do also reflect differing degrees of class-consciousness and job-consciousness among the workers involved. Here indeed is demonstrated the weakness of relying on strikes by themselves to raise consciousness to a uniform level (though clearly in an insurrectionary situation, or over a short run, a large number of interconnected and interrelated strikes will tend towards this homogeneity as scattered strikes over a longer period will not).


139 Warner and Low, op.cit. p.172.

dispositions of the parties in conflict, or the political results of such situations. In terms of political education, it could be argued that to run a socialist candidate for a local election would give deeper insights into social attitudes and political forces than were given by the lessons in potential, in the strength of solidarity and powers of resistance demonstrated in a strike.

If, then, "spontaneity" is no guide, and was no guide in 1910-14, to the specific political effectiveness and orientation of the strike movement, the attack on their leaders and the parliamentary tactics of the Labour Party by rank and file opinion leaders assumes an additional point. For as Lenin said of the relation between spontaneity and leadership,

"The consciousness of the leaders yielded to the breadth and power of the spontaneous rising"..."The more the spontaneity of the masses called for consciousness, the more the inadequacy of this (legal Marxist) literature was felt. The leaders not only lagged behind in regard to theory ("freedom of criticism") and practice ("primitiveness"), but even tried to justify their backwardness by all sorts of high-flown arguments."141

It becomes arguable, then, that the attack on conservative trade union leaders by spokesmen from the rank and file, which often involved a repudiation of leadership - a self-denying gesture, as well as a reliance on the self-sufficiency of the mass - was a replacement of the task of raising consciousness by faith in spontaneity. Paradoxically, these rank and file spokesmen often achieved union office. But they did this in unions where their repudiation of mediatised policy had not as they hoped reduced the policy-makers to the status of servants of the mass, but instead simply avoided the attempt to raise into consciousness the spontaneity of the rank and file members. The rejection of leadership as an agent of mediatising the "real" demands of the workers, a diminution

141 What is to be done? sup.cit. p.190.
of "pure consciousness", was closely allied to a parallelism between ownership and administration.

Where Engels (in Anti-Dühring) distinguished between coercion and administration in the state, and Marx always left open the question of the degree of coercion necessary to maintain levels of production after socialist revolution, the Marxist postulate of "pure consciousness", the ambiguity of a dictatorship of the proletariat in which the emancipation of the proletariat and all other classes coexisted with the use of coercion - these conflicted with a Leninist position.

The Polish Opposition for instance, maintains that

"In reality, exploitation does not consist in the fact that workers' wages represent only a part of the value produced, but in the fact that surplus product is taken away from them and used for ends which are foreign and antagonistic to them; the nonproductive sectors serve to maintain and reinforce the domination of the bureaucracy (or the bourgeoisie as well), over production, over society and the life of the working-class. The end of exploitation means the creation of a system where the organised working-class will be the master of its labour and its labour product; where it will determine the goal of social production; where it will determine the division of the national product."142

Although this starts from Marxism, the idea of a relationship between bureaucracy and proletariat synonymous with that between exploiting class and proletariat is not Marxist - no more than the idea of an independent and permanent working-class (ouvrierist) society can be derived from Marx's classless society. But this may be no consolation to aggrieved workers in nationalised industries under capitalism or socialism.143


143 In the sense that there is no class role for the proletariat under socialism outside the framework of the socialist state, a similar sense of historical disconnection may be experienced. Likewise by a process of mystification, the worker in a state-owned enterprise under capitalism, seems, by a long operation, to employ, control and exploit himself in his capacity as a member of the public, his interests as a citizen notionally having first call over his interests as employee.
In terms of "Theory" the problem is resolved by reference to immediate objectives and effective action. "Pure consciousness" is not necessarily effective consciousness or organisation. The proletariat may be the agent of socialism, but it is also the special creation and dependent of capitalism, and thus most subject to the "ideologies" of its parent. The accelerating effect of Leninism naturally and significantly relied less on spontaneity and universal legitimation by the proletariat of its Armageddon than on those traits which Bakunin called "perfidious and artful" in Marx. Since Marx himself was attracted at various times to both extremes of these positions, it is possible for professed Marxists to make practical efforts to combine elements of these positions while not abandoning a Marxist methodology. Indeed, as Kolaja found in both Poland and Yugoslavia, such considerations may be made and structured empirically. He remarked of the FMJR that here was "a continuing search" for the development of a system of checks and balances.\textsuperscript{144} In Poland too, the form of the revolution cannot be seen as determining the praxis of functional relationships: "Along with their outspoken bitterness, there was an obvious lack of fear, a sort of cheerful sneering at management."

This may be the remnant of "spontaneity"\textsuperscript{145} - but as an indication of administrative malfunction, and as an incentive, such spontaneity may be a vital source of political stimulation. It does, however, fail the simple test of whether or not it is an effective attempt to change the environment. Like the unrest in Britain before 1914, it is an appeal for the environment to be changed. It does not mark emancipation, so much as a realisation that complete emancipation has not been achieved, and that men

\textsuperscript{144} Jiri Kolaja, Workers' Councils, The Yugoslav Experience (1965) p.11.

\textsuperscript{145} ibid. A Polish Factory, A case study of workers' participation in decision making (Kentucky, 1960) p.18.
cannot comprehend a way of achieving it. The syndicalist militants were in the position of saying to the workers that their emancipation lay at hand, through their own efforts and organisation. At the same time that they pointed out that organisation and leadership diminished freedom, that after all freedom was a concept. When all men believed in the concept they would have the leadership and the organisation to free themselves: indeed, they would already be free. The spirit of this was admirable - the practice mystifying. The intention was clear: "Les militants eux-mêmes voudront n'être pas pris pour des bergers, ce qui laisserait à penser que les autres sont des moutons". To build up the necessary class pride, to encourage men to perceive coercive and exploitative relationships, it was essential that a movement be not itself coercive, exploitative, and prescriptive. But this could not in all honesty be presented as the whole movement unless the organisers, propagandists, and theorists made a show that emancipation was immediately possible by themselves refusing to organise, propagandise and theorise. This is an extreme statement of reliance on spontaneity: but in Tom Mann, in The Miners' Next Step, in the statements of men like Tillett's "Damn the Capitalists! We will kill them as they kill us," there was a passionate idealism intermingled with abdication of responsibility for the actions of the men they hoped to convince to take action.

If militants call men to revolt for emancipation, their responsibility must involve consideration of the most effective and economical ways of achieving revolution, and often enough tactical considerations were allowed

146 Georges Yvetot, ABC Syndicaliste (Paris, 1908) p.25.
to become theories for all time. Understandable opposition to
conservative officials in unions as policy-makers became institutionalised:
"no permanent official should be allowed to sit or vote upon any Committee,
Council, or Conference of the Union" said Jack Wills's Case for
Amalgamation. But this implied not only that the workers would be
masters of their own future - but also that workers' direction involved
no policy, no collaboration with those of different functions. While
a militant movement existed, pursuing ends more or less in harmony with
socialism, such statements were justified by the dynamics of the movement:
"The need of the hour is a drastic revision of the constitutional
procedure which demands that the function of the rank and file
shall be simply that of obedience."149

But when the "spontaneity" diminished, or took other directions, the
paucity of theoretical equipment, the low level of political consciousness
became clear - and it is reasonable to suggest that this reliance upon
spontaneity was replaced among militants, after the waning of the
"spontaneous" unrest, by a reliance upon party or Soviet Union which
equally ignored the imperatives of Theory, and specific analyses.

By 1910, the growth of managerial strata enforcing the prerogatives
of ownership as well as setting the conditions for industrial production
had rendered the relationship between worker and employer apparently more
complex. As the size of industrial units increased, so the white-collar
workers and professional men in industry seemed to challenge ideas of
working-class separatism by appearing as a bureaucratic, indeed a "neutral"

148 Jack Wills, The Case for Amalgamation (Amalgamation Cttees' Federation)p.9
149 J.T. Murphy, The Workers' Committee (Sheffield Workers' Committee, 1918)
p.4. It is interesting that the international workers' committee, council
and soviet movement received nothing like the same close examination in
Britain that the Syndicalist movement had done.
administrative layer. The relative downward displacement of the craftsman and the mediatising of personal ownership by this group, however, exerted two pressures.

In the first place, the persistence of traditional economic pressures on manual workers probably increased after 1900 while the industrial bureaucracy remained faithful to the modes of autarchic ownership. Secondly, the social barriers to upward social mobility into the white-collar group were not noticeably relaxed, and in any case the office staff seems to have lived in a social limbo — stripped of the protection of manual workers' organisations, their position on the staff closely linked to the adoption of deferential and subordinate attitudes. The effect, therefore, of this interposed group was not to protect the workers from the dynamic of individual acquisitiveness, but to further emphasise the powerlessness and subordinate position of the manual workers, and the apparent end of the evolution of a labour aristocracy. Hence came the hope expressed that "Under our plan the official becomes a fellow-workman in every way." Understandably this industrial experience, or, more accurately, this appraisal of the direction of industrial change, dominated the form of the political movement, the militant movement, which was its by-product. Estey corroborated this when he said the young generation took a Syndicalist line, not because they wished to see a syndicalist state, but because "they see in such methods the sole prospects of improving the present condition of the labouring class." In a class in which it was a commonplace that the strongest would be taken as "bell-wethers", the most ambitious as foreman, the most intelligent de-proletarianised, it might

150 A Plan for the democratic control of the mining industry (Industrial Cttee. of the South Wales Socialist Society, 1919) p.11.
151 J.A.Estey, Revolutionary Syndicalism (1913) p.134.
well seem as if all plans for amelioration, organisation, and increased administration robbed the workers of their leaders, and provided a carapace of bureaucratic controls which still transmitted the modes of dominance. For this reason, many took the advice of Sorel, to shun all organisation, that "il leur faut vivre à l'écart des organisations officielles."  

In tension with this was always a realisation that "scission" was a measure of idealism, or desperation but that even "scission" must be organised. Griffuelhes advised that

"L'action révolutionnaire du prolétariat exige pour sa croissance et pour son extension un vaste réseau formé de groupements disséminés, rattachés par des liens naturels à des centres mieux placés pour leur situation géographique et dont l'influence s'exerce et se répand loin autour d'eux."  

In fact, the "inserted stratum" had many aspects, some ameliorative, some alienating. The dilemma of rank and file and union officials was indeed well put by Robertson, speaking of Guild Socialism,

"will the most complete control of workshop conditions fit the Trade Union for control of the broader issues of business policy unless it sits at the feet of those who know their job, profit-mongers though they be?"

For ultimately, the militants sought to make the working-class conscious within the limits of its class functions. Thus the general strike, with all its logistic and political problems, became the supreme gesture of solidarity and social isolation and frustration - a demonstration of an immiseration in terms of influence, opportunity, and social security. Much as it showed the malfunction of the dominant ideology, it could not by itself produce a counter-ideology which was not either hopeless, idealist, submissive, or infinitely patient.

152 Pelloutier, op.cit.
Thus appeared the phenomenon of one generation of union leaders -

"The trade union leader of the old type is a man with plenty of
native shrewdness, but he is illiterate; or reads little except
his daily papers; knows nothing of economics; is bumptious in
his dealings with the workmen; has no ideals and is rapidly
becoming discredited. Among the younger workmen he is a spent
force..."^{155}

- being replaced by a stereotype of new leaders relying on the obedience
and solidarity of the workers to react along certain predictable lines.
The structure within industry and the improvement or deterioration of
industrial conditions to an extent determined the openness of union
officials to the spontaneity of the rank and file. This union viewpoint
was necessarily limited.

"By itself, nationalisation, therefore, has failed to make
a substantial contribution to the socialist objective of
achieving a more equalitarian distribution of income"
Sturmthai remarked.^{156} While it is not suggested that a study of theory
would necessarily have transformed the labour movement, these "situations
of opposition between 'represented and representatives'"^{157} in periods
of organic crisis are not necessarily resolved by replacing officials by
others with different objectives - any more than by abolishing officials
altogether. "Unrest" and "conversion to socialism" were not synonymous,
any more than socialism here meant Marxism-Leninism or Kautskyism. However,
in rejecting liberalism the working-class necessarily rejected the
objectives of those labour leaders who had compromised with it.

Bodies like the SWM Reform Committee clearly hoped that a union
strategy would be evolved not simply tied to the economic fortunes of

155 Kenney, op.cit. p.694.
156 A.Sturmthal, Nationalization and Workers' Control in Britain and France.
industrial workers within capitalism, but to a more flexible, and more radical, programme. "We must learn to conserve our strength and conduct our fights on principles, not arithmetic."158 For a time, it seemed that, willy-nilly, the industrial unrest must assume a political form, when "the State has become the Grand-employer, and the employees do not like it in that capacity."159 But one result of the liquidation of war-time agencies and controls was to return industrial action to the sphere of private employment. It also made the conversion of manual workers to white-collar tactics of permeation of the bureaucracy - as Beatrice Webb had proposed - less feasible. But just as the creation of a class-by-itself was no closer to making a critical political contribution than the meticulous distillation of a "spirit of revolt", so too the "battle of the classes, brutal and confessed" appeared as a necessary but not sufficient condition of a vigorous socialist movement.160

The evidence of immiseration, and the attempts to answer this by ingenious relativism, the growth of trusts with quasi-governmental powers and international status, combined with specific causes of discontent to produce a feeling that manual workers were both beleaguered and undermined. Mogridge, for instance, notes an accumulation of grievances for waterfront workers tending to increase solidarity - the weakness of union organisation and the strength of the Shipping Federation being perhaps the dominant features.161

In coal-mining, Robertson made the point that conditions of indeterminancy

160 Christensen, op. cit. p.223.
were also manipulable:

"in a sense a minimum wage already existed; but in some cases it might be a shadowy figure, bearing no precise relation to piece-wages actually earned, and there was no certainty that every man would receive it."\(^{162}\)

Among the eight causes of the unrest suggested by Sires, the particular roots of discontent on the railways were seen to be the fact that they were "semimonopolistic in nature, and there existed among executives a determined opposition to any form of collective bargaining."\(^{163}\) These factors pointed to a situation where not only traditional labour policies, but traditional Liberal and Conservative policies, were discredited. A situation existed in which the need for a re-casting of political orientation and organisation was self-evident. "Class after class of workmen is invaded, often quite suddenly, by the conviction that it will pay them to "down tools" commented The Nation.\(^{164}\) Ensor demonstrated the inequity of wage rates, concluding "Comment is superfluous."\(^{165}\) The precautions taken by the government were recognised as marking a new willingness, however careful, to associate military and police work in peacetime:

"Through the dispute troops were used on police work in quite a new way...The soldiers were there, or should have been there, like the special constables, simply as extra policemen; and it is worth considering whether they, too, would not have been better armed as such."\(^{166}\)

Thus the centripetal forces urging manual workers to unite in face of common

163 Sires, op.cit. p.254.
164 The Nation, Unrest and its cause, August 1911, p.729.
165 ibid. p.744.
dangers, and nation-... and industry-wide forces was plain, and the response correspondingly widespread. The laments and rejoicings that strikes had killed Free Trade seem more heartfelt than the attempt to comprehend the impact of industry-wide strikes within the bankrupt liberal framework, that "Our workers must be taught that they have the right to strike, but not the right to terrorise, assault, loot and burn." 167

All the preconditions not only for new organisations, but for new forms of struggle and raising of consciousness seemed to exist. Militant feeling was turned not only against government and employers but against traditional labour policies. Hardie had said the Labour Party's "professed independence has become an object for the sneers and contempt of all parties in the House of Commons." 168 There was general agreement with Kenney's statement about the workers that

"Wages showed no tendency to rise and living became dearer. They were surfeited with politics, utterly distrustful of politicians and all agog for any methods of attack on the employers." 169

In addition, local "communes", material gains from strikes, and the emotional and functional benefits of solidarity were clear:

"Mr Tom Mann, who was at the head of the transport workers' struggle in Liverpool, claims that in Liverpool alone thirty thousand dock workers won an increase of wages averaging eight shillings per week each, in addition to numerous concessions referring to the conditions under which the men would work in future. No other town in England could be used to such good advantage as Liverpool to indicate the growing consciousness of unity among workmen. The dockers are almost entirely Roman Catholic; ninety per cent of the carters, numbering seven thousand five hundred, are Orangemen; but throughout the seventy-two days that the strike lasted not one discordant note was sounded." 170

168 Quoted in Kenney, op.cit. reported by Snowden, p.687.
169 ibid. p.688.
170 ibid. p.695.
It is possible to suggest a large number of reasons why this unrest failed to produce revolution, and even the "normal" configuration of Western European socialist groupings. In Britain, the dominant class, its possessions, its media, its ideology, were diffuse, its political self-justifications pluralist. The labour movement valued its right to strike and organise, and to develop its own political cadre in parliament and in government agencies. Thus, when talking of the resistance of government to spontaneous unrest, one is also concerned with the degree of resilience shown by this cadre of labour leaders to the modifications urged by rank and file.

In this sense, the rank and file "handed up" its grievances for solution and resolution to the established political system, and to its own special representatives within that system. As Carter pointed out in 1915, a strike which was caused by bad conditions and bad or non-existent formal industrial relations, raised questions which were not in the power of the rank and file, or indeed of employers or labour leaders, to solve:

"the nationalisation of coal supplies...the control of the distribution and prices of coal, the taxation of war profits, the adjustment of earnings to the costs of living."

Leaving aside the practical difficulties of developing rank and file parties and organisations opposed to the "official" - and after all, this was attempted by the BSP and SLP, by the shop committees, amalgamation

171 Note 78 is relevant here. The "handing up", in addition to the phenomena described previously, can be said to develop from the incoherence of spontaneous protest - in conventional terms, its "political illiteracy". The fact that grievances were not followed up in the form in which they arose might be due to greater political skill - or a difference in objective, a lack of interest or conviction in the justice of spontaneous proletarian claims.

172 G.R.Carter, The coal strike in South Wales, Economic Journal, 1915, p.464. This did not, of course, affect the problem of whether the rank and file were to be able to pursue these questions through their organisation, nor the reasons why established leaders were reluctant to do so.
committees, unofficial reform committees and so forth — the reliance on the spontaneity of the mass showed at once its powerlessness. Even in their own eyes the militants acknowledged their lack of legitimacy as leaders, and their movement's lack of firm objective. Not to socialist, but to political consciousness, were the first steps being taken by manual workers before 1910. As Carter said of the 1915 coal strike,

"Neither was the strike entirely the result of Syndicalist efforts to realise their policy of 'the Mines for the Miners'; nor was it the outcome of Socialists' efforts to force the Government to nationalise the steam coal collieries as the first step towards nationalisation of the coal industry as a whole." 173

Rather, this was discontent laced with populism. Here was a striving for disalienation closer to Syndicalism than "orthodox Marxism" — but even so a tentative, transitional phenomenon. If the Social-Imperialists aimed at undermining the argument of the socialists and demonstrating that, contrary to the Marxist allegation, the workers had more to lose than their chains," 174 the unrest found the workers discovering what precisely this "something more" might be. In this process, the explanations of the unrest by liberal commentators were of significance, both in providing arguments to the die-hards that the unrest would pass and that reforms could be passed by the government and not enforced by the unions themselves, and also in providing a bridge between haute bourgeoisie and labour elites, giving an exposition of the unrest to the latter which made the phenomenon seem comprehensible.

We shall now examine the role of the British intelligentsia vis-à-vis the unrest. There seems to have been little suggestion that the liberal intelligentsia in Britain should see in the labour movement an alternative to the plural modes of the dominant political system, no suggestion that

173 ibid. p.454.
"the very beginning of the spontaneous labour movement on the one hand, and the change of progressive public opinion towards Marxism on the other, was marked by the combination of obviously heterogeneous elements under a common flag for the purpose of fighting the common enemy (absolute social and political views)."

Though some of the heterogeneous elements conceived of a wider political participation (as, for instance, did Hobhouse) and others accepted the legitimacy of union claims and hoped for a greater integration of unions and workers into social and political decision-making (as did Cadbury and Rowntree), there was very little movement towards the acceptance of the basic militant position that the working class must be liberated not only from the limitations of bourgeois parliamentarism (limitations which were admitted by Milner and Belloc, as well as Hardie and Snowden), but from the political methods of bourgeois liberalism.

This latter proposal, by drawing attention to the acceptance of illegal methods, kept many would-be sympathisers away from the movement, and, in the nature of self-fulfilling prophecy demonstrated that the workers could not expect co-operation from the "political class." From the start, workers' politics seemed both non- and anti-politics.

Thus Hobson wrote that "the object and working power of Syndicalism consisted in organised violence," and, basing his argument on a reading of Sorel insisted that

"the working people in this country will not go very far in the process of Syndicalism, and will refuse to cut themselves off from the use of the political machine, which they must do if they are to have a clear and powerful Syndicalism."  

The implicit plea for moderation in dealing with industrial unrest made by Hobson ignored the fact that it was the isolation of the working-class and

175 What is to be done? sup.cit. p.38.
177 ibid.
the disruption of its traditional structure which were causing the unrest, and that neither the suggestion that workers should seek salvation from a skilful reformist campaign, or that they should be kept in isolation until the spontaneous movement had died away, began to alleviate the causes of unrest, or meet the programme of the militants. Thus Balfour dismissed Syndicalism on the grounds that producers' control was not practical. This was a tougher and more humane reaction indeed than that of the more volatile right, men like Ware, who urged the need for a dictator "far above the turbulence of party politics." This was the logical position to adopt had there been serious dissension between the parties as to the need to preserve order and maintain union legality, and had the unrest been founded on a consciousness more solid than one of spontaneity.

At the level of day-to-day policy, panic and rapid militarisation were most likely to divide the dominant class. In quantitative terms, the workers had a case which no government hoping to win the votes of the working-class could ignore: "comment is superfluous" as Ensor said of contemporary figures for wages and prices. The problem for the government was not so much whether wages should rise, as how the workers could be allowed to win (or, if necessary) to lose without disrupting society, without permitting quasi-legislative powers to the trade unions or, in the case of their defeat, encouraging a more resilient and organised movement of protest. There was truth in The Communist's statement in 1921, that

"One thing only capital hopes, and that is that this suspiciously facile series of 'Labour victories' will turn the workers' interest towards Parliamentarism again, and kill all his hasty talk about direct action."180

178 ibid.

179 Ware, op.cit. p.275.

180 The Communist, 12.3.21.
Before 1914, neither the preparations against civil war, nor dissillusion with reform as a solvent of unrest - which developed after the war - achieved prominence. But discussion of these issues appeared with an almost universal liberal condemnation of the legitimacy of illegal resistance. Colby's remark was typical, that the weakness of Syndicalism 'lies in the advocacy of violence, which once established as a principle renders industrial security insecure.'\textsuperscript{181} The proposal that men "do not know the moral basis nor the practical necessity of a standard rate of wages" was consequently often made the basis for a formal political programme. This ignored the fact that what had been in question was the total transformation of working-class conditions and environment - an aim always crippled and partially self-defeated by the impossibility, legally, of making the first steps (or indeed of conceiving the first steps) necessary to such a total transformation.\textsuperscript{182} It might be that liberal sympathisers would urge the workers to look towards the Liberal government to accept a policy of progressive legislation, eroding the privilege of the possessing class - as the Liberals themselves seemed to have decided vis-à-vis landlordism. But the spontaneous unrest demonstrated that the workers suspected the good faith of liberalism, and the timetable of the reformers.

The unrest, after all, was making interconnections which middle-class students of the labour movement considered nearly miraculous - and which liberals themselves feared as a threat to their own position of intellectual neutrality - Harris in 1913 said that the socialist "has but


\textsuperscript{182} Edith Hunter, Order and unrest. The Hibbert Journal, April 1914, p. 652.
to adduce the confusion and wretchedness of our present condition; the individualist need only mention the danger to personal liberty involved in the opposite system.\textsuperscript{183} For all the supposed "alienation" of intellectuals in late Victorian society, their defence of a progressive liberalism was reconcilable with the maintenance of their position within the dominant class. It was easy enough to praise Ruskin and Morris for their emphasis on the desirability of job-satisfaction, the attraction of Tolstoyan harmony, and to advocate benefit, bonus, share or pure co-partnership systems in industry.\textsuperscript{184} But it was seldom that these sympathisers accepted the spontaneity of the discontented as the statement of popular democracy, or the expression of objectives as the will of the majority.

Unrest might be understandable, or justified. It might indeed point to the deficiencies of a high political culture. But there was little attempt by intellectuals to associate with the movement and work for it - save by those romantics who saw the working-class as a figment of their own class discontents. While still stressing the importance of the intellectuals' contribution to the understanding of the movement by politicians and labour leaders, the group position recalls Tillett's evocation of Burns during the Dock Strike of 1911, "fussing like an old hen as he hovered between us; he ran like a being possessed from room to room, a sort of interrogation mark linking both sides."\textsuperscript{185} For if during

\textsuperscript{183} Prof. D.F.Harris, Are 'the brains behind the labour revolt' all wrong? Hibbert's Journal, Jan. 1913, p.355.

\textsuperscript{184} Watney and Little, op.cit. p.256, eq seqq.

\textsuperscript{185} Tillett, op.cit. p.36.
the unrest academics, politicians, journalists made their most serious attempt of the generation to come to some definition of their class attitudes, to the problem of the position and interest of the working-class, it was also the occasion on which a majority accepted the moral victory of the unions and their members' grievances over that of the employers - but equally acknowledged that the role of intellectuals was peripheral to the workers' movement. They welcomed the struggle for what the market would bear, but rejected the task of building a socialist consciousness.

They might urge the radicalisation of the proletariat, encourage its employment by the state, and its copying of the petite bourgeoisie's mildly radical inclination towards welfarism - but when it came to the point, few seemed to dissent from Christensen's opinion, that

"the great collision between capitalism and syndicalism is preparing, and the broad intermediate stratum, which produces intellectual values and therewith the possibilities of progress, stands to pay the reckoning."186

This obscure self-dramatisation may indeed cover the fact that intellectuals (unlike the broader stratum of Russian "intelligentsia") felt their interests fully protected by liberal democracy, indeed threatened by a sudden disruption of the distribution of political power among classes and institutions.

It is from such interested statements that men like William Paul derived a brutal demystification of academic argument, quoting the Glasgow Evening Times's statement of the "irresistible logic inherent in the bayonet and the bullet", the "futility of arguing with a machine-gun."187 In a society dominated by Humpty-Dumpty definitions, the use of logic and argument to justify the threat of military power as the domestic reflection of imperialism

186 Christensen, op.cit. p.224.
187 William Paul, Communism and Society, sup.cit. p.36.
was a poor reward for the plea for conciliation and reason before 1914. The self-imposed dilemma of intellectuals is well demonstrated in Wells, falling in the New Machiavelli into his own first category, remarking that "just as at present, while a number of excellent people of the middle class think that only a 'man' is wanted and all will be well with us, there is a considerable wave of hopefulness among the working class in favour of a weak solution of nothing, which is offered under the attractive label of Syndicalism." 188

Indeed, this indeterminacy, in which Angell pointed out that the "drift of real legislation - creating power from the incompetent to the competent body", 189 which might lead to collective bargaining, technocracy, or workshop control, encouraged a diffuse and tentative response from intellectuals.

Cunningham, for instance, noted a two-way process: of providing social welfare through trade unions, and at the same time encouraging respect for central authority by a mixture of coercion and legislation.

"The Insurance Act, by causing a discrimination between the benefit side and the trade side of trade union funds, has done away with a part of the difficulty in this matter. (i.e., the difficulty of the state providing 'responsibilities' for workers' and unions - that is, integrating them within the central administration). The possibility of legal proceedings for damage inflicted through breaches of contract would have a sobering effect..." 190

Although some intellectuals followed the chimera of economic federalism, the direction of Syndicalism, and unrest in general, was seen as an irrelevant and impossibilist movement away from the inevitable and desirable subordination of private to public interests. 191 Pouget condemned this tendency roundly: instead, "Ainsi, le Syndicat - le

188 What the worker wants, sup. cit. p.108.
189 ibid. p.82.
190 W.Cunningham. The causes of labour unrest, and the remedies for it. (1912) p.25.
191 And it was on this ground that many liberal-radical intellectuals took their stand - permitting in the name of logic and argument, the
preparation of the means to suppress the spontaneous working-class movement. High as were the motives in desiring to give responsibilities to the trade unions, integrating them into the administrative system, there is here a penetrating overtone of "trahison des clercs." Having suggested the employment of punitive legal proceedings for breach of contract, Cunningham proposed to salve his social conscience - already reassured by the sight of the "certainly 'well-to-do'" rural labourer on 15/- a week, enjoying low rents, allotments, and harvest rates - with the reflection that despite increasing immiseration of the "very poor", "To arouse kindly pity for the poor and the desire to relieve their privations is only a first step in cultivating the virtue of charity, and the Church is neglecting a social service..." (p.29).
groupement corporatif, - apparaît comme la cellule organique de toute société"...

The critics of unrest were

"La Bourgeoisie, par le canal de l'État, dont la fonction (indépendante de la forme) consiste à veiller sur les privilèges capitalistes, s'est employée à cette besogne d'étouffement et de déviation des aspirations de la classe ouvrière."

Thus, whilst this "ouvrierism" may have made an idealistic virtue of necessity, the alternative (typically Fabian) of ignoring the political force latent in the working-class movement at the level of the rank and file member was wasteful of a thick and uncultivated political undergrowth. Sorel put it that

"the moderns also did not think that there was anything more to be said about workers than Aristotle had said; they must be given orders, corrected with gentleness, like children, and treated as passive instruments who do not need to think. Revolutionary Syndicalism would be impossible if the world of the workers were under the influence of such a morality of the weak."192

The question of the belief in a certain inevitable rate of technical and political change, in accordance with a traditional style, is one involving a complex of institutional and historical factors. In Britain, the emphasis on British political stability, evolutionism and peaceful change was one of the strongest and most pervasive myths of a dominant class - relating not only to the unquestionable material and psychological barriers to cataclysmic change, but also to what one might call "dialectical transformations", specifically the change involved in the assumption of power by a previously subordinate class. In this sense, social perception of the British proletariat seems to accord with a realisation before 1914 that it was not merely proletarian in terms of income, but was proletarianised in terms of position in the labour market.

relation to employers, social mobility, and political power. Industry-wide strikes, mechanisation, national unions ranged against employers' federations, machine-guns and artillery at the main-line termini - this "class-drama" seemed to act on the consciousness of the workers periodically, but in increasing extent. But to look only at the "extent" of this unrest is to take Sorel's position - a recognition only of the historical necessity of class conflict, rather than comprehension of, for example, what Macpherson called the "vanguard State". Such discussion not only permits evolution of dialectical materialism, but of what according to precedent would be fantastic alliances and vanguards.

Hence arises the toryism of Sorel's remark that "Man has only 'genius' ...in the measure that he does not reflect." This is a perverse derivation from "pure consciousness", and is enthroned in left "sociologism". It can only lead to Maeterlinck's proposal that, all in all, men must "side a priori systematically with those who are disorganising (society)". It is not far from this, and indeed follows directly from such a statement, to Camus's discussion of suicide. It is hard to see how on such a basis there could be co-operation between intellectuals and labour movement - and this left apocalypse is only a perverse version of its right edition - "We have been given a foretaste of the first consequence of the disastrous defeat of our fleet, in the shape of dearth, famine, riot, and civil war." To welcome such apocalyptic horsemen is either to have overriding faith in one's personal virtue - like the Indian who claimed

195 ibid. p.348.
196 J. Ellis Barker, op.cit. p.441.
that his transcendental kindness to mosquitoes ensured that they infested only the houses of his neighbours - or a personal recklessness so great that it must be a political liability. In this, Syndicalism tried to combine an acceptance of violent struggle without calling for it, or suggesting how it could most effectively and economically be used. While calls to armed resistance might be emotionally and politically significant, the actual employment of armed struggle could neither morally nor politically be justified by its advocates unless they would take an active part in its efficient prosecution. At the level archly hinted at in The Syndicalist, involving assassination of policemen and so on, such violence would not only be suicidal but bereft of the slightest political or social analysis. Indeed, one of the problems of left "sociologism" was that it provided few intermediate forms between the sect and the mass confrontation.

Despite this, however, it is fair to say that liberal commentators emphasised as the alternative to working-class political organisation and eventual dominance, the need for an immediate programme of reforms from above, which, it was held, would destroy the class orientation of militants, and deprive them of their spontaneous following - the sort of process described by Knowles:

"...the provision of unemployment insurance as well as of other social services in which Trade Unions had previously been interested, has contributed to the workers' psychological dependence on the State rather than on his Union. This in turn has probably affected his attitude to strikes."197

Even this tentative remark can be qualified. The "dependence on the State" (liberal democracy) is of necessity rather than psychology. One might also argue that, significant though the gradual dropping of insurance business by unions in the early twenties was, dependence on the Union was always of 197 Knowles, op.cit. p.91.
a different order from dependence on the State. Before 1914 attachment to the Union was seen as a necessary alternative to a state action unpredictable and suspect.

The "spontaneous movement" appears and is discussed only when it has "surfaced" from its own turbulence, and is taking shape within a political framework. The need to watch for the artefacts of such "spontaneity" necessarily discounts the existence of a cadmean critique of these same artefacts, one of which there can be no record. Before 1914 in Britain it might be thought that parliamentary democracy and a widespread unionisation of manual workers meant that already "practical Bernsteinism" would replace spontaneity, that political culture was too dense to allow of a mass movement in its interstices. The destruction of such a belief in Britain, however, involved not only the development of new organisation — industrial and amalgamated unions, rapidly expanded parties and so forth — but the attachment of new members to well-established unions and parties, in both cases making necessary both an interpretation of "spontaneity", and an absorption and re-orientation of its force.

For some labour leaders, the growth of numbers and the responsibility of increased influence made it essential to incorporate the labour movement into a public interest which frowned on militancy. "Class war was a luxury the public could not afford" said Clynes.198 Others who had doubted the capacity of the proletariat to make an insurrectionary protest, were already devoted to gradualist modes, however rigidly justified by reference to Marx or to the professions of Radical politicians. Hyndman was more openly delighted in capturing the Countess of Warwick ("beautiful, accomplished, charming, splendidly dressed, up-to-date and influential with the King")199

199 Hyndman to Tom Mann, 25,2.05 (Tom Mann papers).
than with the strike movement. In the House of Commons of January 1910, only 8 MPs could be classified as working men outside the Labour Party, and Eton had supplied the education of more members than twice the total number of Labour MPs. Yet labour leaders and socialist politicians were taken aback by the wave of indifference to indecisive working-class political action in parliament.\textsuperscript{200} However, it is not sufficient to maintain that in the unions "The process of the conversion to socialism was largely completed in the years 1910-14"\textsuperscript{201} - though such a statement is in itself the more interesting since the "process" of socialising the working-class is here held to coincide with vigorous attacks on state socialism and state collectivism, "socialism" in this sense being used - and encouraged in this by Lloyd George - as a defence against rank and file militancy.\textsuperscript{202} The ambiguity of "socialism" in this context is paralleled by the supposed conversion to workers' control of many union leaders and rank and file by the middle twenties.\textsuperscript{203}

For such "control" ranged from an emotional gesture - a directional gesture at best - to imply that union policy was "rank and file-directed","n
\textsuperscript{200} Figures in J.A.Thomas, The House of Commons 1906-1911. An analysis of its economic and social character. (U of Wales, 1958)

\textsuperscript{201} Pribičević op. cit. p.162.

\textsuperscript{202} This bore fruit at the time in the vigorous counter-revolutionary propaganda of such socialists as Macdonald and Snowden, by the acceptance of wartime office by labour leaders, and the denunciations of Bolshevism, revolution, militancy and strikes by labour and socialist leaders after 1917.

\textsuperscript{203} At this time "workers' control" had clearly yielded much of its revolutionary potential. This is not to deny the possibility of developing socialist consciousness through emphasis on workers' control as a total programme. But by the time of the collapse of the building guild, it must have been clear that if workers' control had a significance to socialists - rather than in the technical systems of industrial relations - it was as an intermediate stage, or growth point, in the transition of the socialisation of industry and politics.
to terrorist anarchist communism. Simply to say that the "spontaneous" unrest made it clear that a socialist state could not rely on "reforms from above" to satisfy the rank and file, says little about the nature and practicability of such control.

Spontaneous unrest for example would curtail or override what Epstein noted in 1962 as the two functions of the Labour Party - the provision of remedial legislation and meeting the desires of Labour leaders for public (and middle-class) careers. On the industrial frontier there were chances to break down modes and create structures beyond the reach of political parties at parliamentary level:

"Immediately the unions in an industry weld themselves together they must forthwith proceed to organise all grades of worker in that industry. The handyman and labourer must be treated as of equal importance to the highly skilled, seeing that he too is a factor in production. The exclusiveness of some of the existing unions must be got rid of. Henceforth we must proceed to organise on class lines, not by trade or craft...There must be no lowering of the standard of the skilled, but there must be a raising of the standard of the lower-paid man, the latter's position being made worthy of a man, while he must in future be counted as a man and a brother"..."The skilled men must throw off that silly notion of superiority which still characterises a number of them. All necessary classification by occupation will be attended to, but that unionism whose object is to maintain a special preserve for the privileged few must disappear, for it is incompatible with the rights of workmen generally, and is a menace to industrial solidarity, without which there can be no advance."205

These programmes at the level of the infrastructure of union and party organisation, in turn reflecting infrastructural change in the composition and social relations of the proletariat were indeed as Clay said doctrines "subversive of the fundamental principles of civilised life" as be conceived of it.206 There is too an element of the self-fulfilling

205 Mann quoted in Watney and Little, op.cit. pp.30-1.
206 Clay in McCartney, op.cit. p.3.
prophecy in the warning that Syndicalism

"promises bloodshed and death to those who would resist its violence: it will let us off with mere starvation if we stand idly by and allow it to seize, without check, all that it decides to lay its hands upon."  

For to those workers whose protest against conditions was greeted as Syndicalism, Syndicalism might indeed seem worth fighting for if, as Clay and his like claimed, it was revolutionary to demand a living wage, political participation, the right to strike, the right to the full produce of labour, and the right to work.

If indeed such demands involved the destruction of the state and the disruption of society, than a state and society which fought to prevent their destruction were openly declaring their interest in the subordination of the working masses. If

"invasion would become a reality if our people allowed Syndicalism, the most cruel, ignorant and disastrous plot the world would ever have known, to grow to such strength that it could match itself with the State",  

then to the worker there seemed no alternative between revolution and a continuing acceptance of economic insecurity and erosion. As Watson said during the war, "I want to cause disaffection against the exploiters of the food of the civil population."  

This concern for the conditions of the working-class was one which proved to involve the questions of emancipating a class within the framework of bourgeois democracy in the process of itself subduing politically and economically its colonial periphery — and enlisting the support of its domestic proletariat in the process. The militants' forces seemed absurdly inadequate.

207 McCartney, op. cit. p.17.

208 ibid. p.18.

It was all very well to say "instead of leaders and officials being in the forefront of our thoughts the questions of the day which have to be answered should occupy that position", but so often the complaint returned, "we are driven back to the workshops." Trade Unions, after absorbing and subverting spontaneity became laagers for the workers - neither for nor against capitalism, making truces and forays with the disapproval of a section of their members, but never wholly committed either to hostilities or a change of sides.

In the transmission of relations of production prevailing in the imperialist nucleus, the British proletariat remained in a specious neutrality - a subservience to the tug of the economic tide. This in turn was justified by a false analogy with the rank and file's spontaneous protest against exploitation. Just as Lenin said there was "spontaneity and spontaneity", so spontaneity does not arise from "natural men". By organising those applying for membership of unions, the organisers orientated that spontaneity, they did not enshrine and defer to it. Indeed, if spontaneity permitted both strikes of solidarity with the exploited, and exploitation, then this was an excellent reason for moving beyond spontaneous protest as a determinant of policy. Cook put this simply as the statement that

"Mondism means that the British worker is called upon to enter upon an international starvation and slave competition with the workers in other countries, leading to the degradation of the working-class throughout the world."213

Such a position arose not only through Mondism but formed part of a

210 J.T. Murphy, The Workers' Committee, sup.cit. p.4.
211 ibid. p.8.
212 Nor from "natural Marxist-Leninists."
readiness to accept, for a multitude of reasons, or rationalisations, a role in society rejecting the autonomy of class solidarity. It developed also through those political philosophies, philosophically based on individual will and self-control, but materially on spontaneity and reactivity.

"L'Internationale révolutionnaire fédéraliste et libertaire rêvée par les syndicats français ne se réalisera point et cela pesera d'un certain poids sur leur état d'esprit quand ils étudieront les possibiltés de résistance à un conflit franco-allemand par une action conjuguée des prolétaires des deux pays." 214

"Spontaneity" does not, through some kind of voluntarist magic, always tend towards proletarian revolution, or to the growth of effective means for its realisation, whatever the long-term prospects. Thus the tragedy of the Pauls's observation, that "Before the war it was difficult to get an average British proletarian audience to listen to talk of the class struggle" - but after four years of war,

"even the British worker is beginning to realise his proletarian status. British tanks in George Square to terrorise the Clyde workers, British troops to break the power of a Belfast soviet - these were portents which it needed no Joseph to interpret." 215

Indeed no: so long as tanks and troops could not be dematerialised the workers might maintain short-term protest, but unless they were equipped to fight, or to maintain permanent revolutionary spontaneity, they could not perform the necessary political insurrectionary tasks.

The hope that political action would come through the unions was even in 1913 in need of qualification, in view of the minorities voting against the setting up of political funds under the 1913 act. 216

In 1917,

214 Jean Maitron, op. cit., p.110.


216 For example (in the Chief Registrar's report on friendly societies and trade unions for 1914 (1914-16, 139, vol. lix) voting on the setting up of funds for political objects included:
ASE 20586 for, 12740 against.
United Pattern Makers 1045 for, 1686 against.
Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union,
9279 for, 1350 against.
Workers Union 12115 for, 1010 against.
MFGB 261643 for, 194800 against.
NAUL 18214 for, 7470 against.
NALU 1485 for, 318 against.
Cole noted that despite the richness of rank and file and shopfloor committees, there was delay in discussion of relations with official trade unionism, and of the political base of the movement. Brailsford, indeed, pointed to the futility of discussing the role to be played by spontaneity in revolution, and the need to organise on the basis of existing resources, whilst during the pre-war unrest itself there was no shortage of commentators stressing both the reformism (or the low level of aspiration) of the workers, and of the reformist tendencies within the most revolutionary mass movements.

Connolly's acceptance of the thesis of the "premature" insurrection might not lead to success, but it would test the quality of spontaneous protest and indicate further tasks as no obedience to the pressure of the masses would. On the other side, it can be argued that, if talk of revolution or insurrection be dismissed as ridiculous, there are degrees of reformism of which spontaneity alone - or apathy, equally spontaneous - likewise is no adequate determinant. Scanlon put forward the suggestion that "From 1922 onwards there were two schools of thought in the Labour Party. One, led by Maxton and Wheatley, which believed that the Party must remain true to the spirit of Hardie and refuse to accept any of the political or social compromises which would inevitably divert it from its path. The second school believed that if Labour was ever to attain to power it could only do so by becoming as like the other two Parties as possible, and so miners and dockers were deliberately trained to behave as though they were stockbrokers or landed gentry."  


218 In The Russian Workers' Republic (1921) ("The agitator who desires revolution will be a passive thing borne along by the flood, and the philosopher who would withstand it, a bubble on its froth." p.181) Thus as the spontaneous movement shrank, it remained the ultimate threat of dislocation - the ultimate political mystery weapon.

Clearly, these are not simply "schools of thought", but reflections of "spontaneous development" in the proletariat and its environment. Equally, they reflected an awareness of the physical problems of storming heaven—or Westminster. In 1926 there were half a million OMS volunteers, nearly a quarter of a million specials.

Only Theory, it seemed, or the Communists then in process of expulsion from the labour movement, could justify a confrontation with middle-class "spontaneity". For although in Carr's sense the unrest did have a continuing impact on attitudes towards nationalisation, welfarism, parliamentary and revolutionary socialism, unionisation, strikes and so forth, there was also tacit acceptance that the volatility of the mass had diminished. The months when

"Anarchists, Socialists of all denominations, and Syndicalists, vie with each other in their eagerness to seize the occasion for exploiting the physical forces of labour to further their own ends" were not repeated, although the improvisation and militancy of the rank and file over short periods was demonstrated again during the war, in 1920 and 1926. Clay said he had

"attempted to show that the present industrial unrest is due to a sinister change in the mental idea of the wage earner, and that for the existence and continued operation of this change public opinion (in the shape of public education and legislation) is responsible."—but the pressure was complex.

Insofar as the quantity of unrest assumed qualitative proportions,


221 i.e., the "impact" E.H. Carr demonstrates in The Soviet Impact on the Western World (1946) – where "impact" and "similarity" or "parallel development" or "imitation" or "challenge" are by design conflated.


223 ibid. p. 1017.
one might claim that the unrest was unable to penetrate the throng of
existing organisations, and lacked a homogeneity and consciousness
sufficient to impress its specific objectives in a persistent and
unmediatised form on these pre-existing and developing organisations.
"Syndicalists" who had argued in the 1850s that

"Universal participation in government, through a hierarchy of
union lodges, would...be a safe and meaningful application of
the principle of universal suffrage"224

had almost exact counterparts eighty years later, who continued to believe
that it only required sufficient numbers to join a mass movement, for
there to be complete transmission of rank and file aims on to labour
organisation, through these organisations on to the social system, and
for these aims to be pursued and eventually achieved by means of the
initial élan.

Placing faith in cataclysm, in practise such men assumed the total
transformation of workers' life within a capitalist society in a
socialist direction - (notwithstanding Marx's warning, or encouragement,
that immiseration would be a more likely prelude to revolution) -

"En reclamant la diminution du nombre d'heures de présence à
l'usine, au chantier ou au bureau, ils visent également à donner
des loisirs au travailleur pour cultiver en lui l'homme total
et préparer le citoyen de la libre République de l'avenir."225

Although the BSP attitude to the strikes was officially one of
disillusioned sympathy, there was perhaps a useful corrective to the cult
of spontaneity in Quelch's remark that direct action "can never be really
aggressive. It can only be defensive or passive",226 and that "when the

224 Oliver, op. cit. p.95 (referring to Morrison of the Pioneer).
226 The Social Democrat, 15.10.09. p.437.
British working class are really revolutionary they will show equal voting strength, equal discipline, equal sturdy determination, with their German comrades."^227 However, if correctives were needed,^228 it is hard to see how condemnation of the unrest and the methods it had necessarily to employ could help to advance the fortunes of a British Marxist party.

The demand for workers' control, then, had three main uses: it approximated to the lowest and most emotional level of spontaneous protest - and, incidentally, to a pure proletarian consciousness. It allowed of a common platform for rank and file militants who differed as to their explicit proposals and definitions, but agreed at least on this verbal objective. And it admitted not only this acceptance of unrest, but allowed the organisation of militants within and without the preserves of existing workers' organisations. Like "spontaneity" itself, however, the slogan of "workers' control" and its subsequent deployment was reactive and inexplicit. There is ample evidence, however, that militants themselves were aware of the thinness of their programme, and its failure to assume among the rank and file a comprehensive political policy. Mann, for instance, was aware that the unrest suffered from its very inexplicitness - though he himself conceived of the British unrest as part of a dynamic and progressive international movement.

"While the army is a caste apart from the rest of the nation, while it is nominally voluntary, we must carry on our 'Don't

227 The British Socialist. p.132 (15.4.12).

228 And Paul Thompson (Past and Present no.27, April 1964) in his article on Liberals, Radicals and Labour in London 1880-1900, argues that in London at least there was in 1900 little room for an independent non-socialist labour party - implying that spontaneous activity can be viewed in terms of rapid changes of objective, rather than politicisation at high speed of the non-political (p.95).
shoot' propaganda. But when conscription comes, as it is doing fast, when men will be liable as reservists to be mobilised in order to break their own strikes, like the railwaymen in France were, we will have to change our attitude from a negative one to a positive one, and call for Sabotage and Insurrection."229

The problem seemed always to be that the role of the militants was to organise and propagandise, but never to have the initiative. In addition, it was clear, especially in a country with a widely distributed suffrage, that what Bernstein called "The cooperation of related forces"230 gave both aspects of conflict resolution to institutionalised conflicts, like elections, as well as encouraging on practical and ideological grounds, social mobility within the existing system, amelioration and so forth. In the absence of a framework of organisation able to claim these as victories for a cumulative militancy, the British vanguard would seem to have particularly heavy responsibilities and an especially difficult task. The connection between the political modes of the last third of the nineteenth century and the rise in real wages had established a natural, if contingent, connection between relative economic optimism and liberal democracy - checked after 1900, but never completely separated.231

It is also arguable that the effect of strikes - and the excitement and dynamic they produced - was over-emphatic, over-effective, as a reflection of the political aspirations of the mass of the membership, and of the union leaders. A transport strike immediately became a national crisis, and ministers who might be sympathetic to specific wage claims were liable to react sharply to "political pressure", certain of public approval.

231 Thus, although for large sections of the working-class the freedom of the market produced a chronic insecurity and progressive immiseration (either individually or for strata of the working-class), the modes of this type of exchange in the political system were accepted. That is, the vote was taken for the outward sign of political equality - and welfare legislation seen as a straight transfer of privilege.
of such a stand — so long, at least, as it called the bluff of the leadership. This vision of insurrection sustained the militants and alarmed their opponents — but there was always an element of "mere action" to the events of such strikes. Scott nicely pointed to the Syndicalist nurture of conflict in which the class struggle

"strikes up a suspicious and yet an apparently natural and almost necessary connexion with violence; and so becomes a disintegrating force."

"That is the secret of M. Georges Sorel's Reflections on Violence. The writer is obviously stung by the sense that the situation which inspired the revolutionary side of Marx is slipping away. In both the opposing social camps there appears to be growing up a desire for peace. In violence lies the one hope of restoring the state of things out of which alone, if Marx is right, the new social order can come."

In fact, this violence was so much a reflection, a mere by-product of spontaneity that, however loudly militant leaders might talk of the need for armed struggle, in general they deplored the sporadic and unplanned street battles. For this petty violence, indication as it was of a mood of militancy and of a section of the rank and file, was the merest epiphenomenon of the continuation of class struggle. Syndicalists were not faced with the problem of "creating" class struggle, but of developing an effective political vehicle for what already existed and was increasing.

However, it was of course true that liberal democracy and the needs of technical change and industrial expansion could not simply separate the proletariat from the rest of society, to be freely exploited and isolated. There are two movements involved here — firstly the use of the British proletariat as a source of technical and managerial skill involved the provision of routes of upward mobility despite a rearguard action by conservatives. Secondly, there was an attempt to divide the British working-

232 J.W. Scott, Syndicalism and Philosophical Realism (1919) p.33.
class from the international proletarian movement, to make it the "house slave" on the latifundium of the Empire - a "house slave" perhaps manumitted, but still largely living in the old slave quarters. There was too a dramatic sense in which the episodic violence was an act of class-preservation from that Bergsonian freedom which was a "wholly artificial world, projected into the future". Thus the Syndicalists' attempt to "aim at cutting a class clean out from the heart of the nation, and making it an independent entity and unity" seems at once sociologism, and an attempt to realise vulgar Marxism on the spot.

In this context, men like Challaye who proposed that

"il est chimérique d'esperer une société de producteurs libres, travaillant par goût, créant les choses utiles à la façon dont les artistes créent les objets de beauté"

accurately enough pointed to the utopian characteristics of syndicalism. But this also tended to deny the feasibility of a society, not where it would immediately be possible to base individual fulfilment on free and creative work, but where it would be possible to discuss the creation of job satisfaction in terms broader than the maximization of money wages. On the question of whether this discussion would be "spontaneous" and the resulting structures open to "spontaneous" modification is, of course, basic to any discussion of the origins of freedom under a socialist system - customarily seen as deriving historically from the form of the revolution instituting it, the relation between party and mass. Kolaja described in 1956 in a Polish factory the remnant, the much restricted role, and the structuring, of spontaneity -


235 Challaye, op. cit. March 1907, p. 259.
"there was a great upsurge which in a few days disappeared. Furthermore, the party quickly anticipated and channelled popular dissatisfaction into verbal protests at meetings. Note that all meetings were organised by the management and the party. Thus, a somehow paradoxical situation occurs: the group that is the target of criticism and dislike organises the opportunity for its own exposure. Even the protest is organised by the party and within the party. Characteristically, the labor union had nothing to say during the whole dramatic October..."236

Clearly, analysis of this type of spontaneity is impossible without an examination of intra-party participation, and the effect of pressure "from below" on party and management. Before 1914, militants in France and Britain were aware that they were living in a transitional stage - as Niel said "Ou c'est un peu trop efforcé de jouer au petit État, ou c'est un peu trop attardé à singer nos parlementaires."237 In Britain, the question was whether the crisis in the dominant class could be resolved before working-class aspiration and spontaneous protest could reach a sufficient point to deepen the crisis - even if they were held together "only by a common mood", to Simmel the lowest level of solidarity.238 The efforts of men like Jaurès to look beyond the class struggle to the resolution of conflict - he pointed out, for instance that even armies fought on common ground - marked for him a profound belief that the spontaneity of the mass was not socialist, could not lead to socialism, but was a barbaric and disruptive version of the social relations which reached their highest point and harmony in a common culture and tradition.239 The workshop thus was an inferior circle of the real world. The harmony which labour

238 Simmel, op.cit. p.102.
politicians conceived of as implicit in welfarism and universal and comprehensive administration was no less real than, and ideologically wholly different from, the political and cultural world of the workshop, where

"I am convinced we are a damned lot of fools to squabble about who should do the work when we should be concentrating upon securing more leisure for the workers and more work for the bosses." 240

If force majeure compelled organisation through the shop, it expressed a philosophy of the roots and purpose of political action which during the war became a distillation of syndicalist ideas more faithful to the original impulse than the "syndicalism from the leaders" Mann endeavoured to disseminate. The branch, said Murphy,

"Provides opportunities for propaganda amongst the small interested groups who may be persuaded to initiate a movement for shop stewards." 241

If the pre-war movement relied excessively on spontaneity to act as the equivalent of socialist improvisation, Murphy discovered at the grass roots that the basis of this spontaneity was far from a reasoned socialism and disciplined organisation. One could argue that here was yet another stage of the movement to institutionalise socialism with which the parties and unions associated in the Second International had been involved as both cause and effect. 242

After the war, the militant left seems to have had a revulsion against spontaneity which aided and helps to account for Lenin's influence on the early CPGB, but which could never replace the hope of a mass movement by a reliance on party and Comintern. This tension underlay many of


242 cf Haupt, op.cit.
the waves of resignations from the party.\textsuperscript{243} The Pauls, for instance, wrote in 1920,

"By \textit{ochlos}, the mob we denote the unthinking crowd, including the unclass-conscious proletariat. With all the issues of life set awry by the class struggle, the 'people' is not a real entity at all, and 'democracy' is a figment."\textsuperscript{244}

Polarised society was clearly not socialist society, and acceptance of a more or less harsh dictatorship of the proletariat appeared the only Marxist alternative. This had been implicit, for instance, in Plekhanov, who had brought from Narodism a fear that Economism, founded on spontaneity, would lead to bourgeois revolution.\textsuperscript{245} The emphasis shifted so far from spontaneity, in fact, in Western Marxism that "Primitive Rebels" now seems a radical departure in the literature, rather than an attempt to recall and develop on the basis of a large literature before 1920 on movements which, if not strictly "pre-political", relied heavily on the "spontaneity" of their members.\textsuperscript{246}

In practice, Syndicalists, militant Socialists, Industrial Unionists sought the best practical basis for action by imitation or intuition. Pelloutier, for instance, rejected the idea of a dirigiste party, but his agglomeration of individuals in the Syndicat had the moral leadership of a

\textsuperscript{243} The revolt was partly due to the realisation that conversion to a policy of action was not conversion to socialism. The most "spontaneous" groups might well be those least willing to follow a policy proposed by socialist strategists, and spontaneous unrest would not shake the foundations of a militarily-prepared government, but simply operate as a crude expression of sectional opinion. In any case, the spontaneous mass movement had itself been superseded by organisation which in the case of the unions had become indispensable to secure permanent advantages. Indeed, the greater the concentration on theory and effective practice among British socialists, the more non-socialist and unstable did spontaneity appear.

\textsuperscript{244} Eden and Cedar Paul, op.cit. p.39.

\textsuperscript{245} cf Baron, op.cit. p.201 et seqq.

\textsuperscript{246} E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, (Manchester, 1959).
conscious minority." Where a comprehensive political programme was rejected, "The weakness of the syndicats predisposes the French workingmen to more and more generalized forms of struggle." This attitude of practical practise and its theoretical negation can be seen in Jouhaux's remark that "On peut être contre la iiie Internationale et pour la révolution russe." This would seem to come close to the "renegade Kautsky's" sophistry as against the dialectic of proletarian dictatorship, involving the rejection of the "unity in variety" thesis to which Lenin himself subscribed in the early twenties. Again, before a successful Marxist revolution, the utopian origins in European socialism constantly acted as a leaven. However, those who talked of transcendance in quasi-religious terms, instead of analysing the material supercession of social systems, were effectively "de-politicised" by their own fantasy, turned away from what Allen called simply "a struggle for the possession of the land, machinery and materials wherewith the necessaries and luxuries of life are produced."


250 Lenin's attack was published in 1918. Jouhaux's belief in the power of "the nation" as opposed to the State, with the power to simplify all problems, in a society in which the limitations of liberal democracy had been overcome by idealising its values is close to Lenin's criticism of Kautsky for setting in opposition democracy and dictatorship (especially proletarian dictatorship). The real contention may be said to lie over the role of working-class spontaneity (indeed, the spontaneity of all) in the socialist state. There seems little doubt that Marx himself hoped that spontaneity would prove to be compatible with socialism at an early stage - but that he would agree with Lenin that, however they might differ as to the harshness of dictatorship required, it was the analysis of the historical and material tasks of the revolution which must precede any identification of idealism outside history, and outside class society.

Thus the export of capitalist relations of production, the growth of a world system based on its modes - and ownership - was seen as alleviation, and attention concentrated on social and psychological forms of alienation, instead of economic and political. Perhaps it was to stand against these tendencies that British Marxism developed its characteristic intransigence - based on agreement that, for example, Mann "in advocating Industrial Unionism...is simply following the line of least resistance." There were, after all, deep contradictory aspects within Syndicalism, suggested by Vernon Lee:

"Seen from the standpoint of the State or nation, he is an Anarchist (the cosmopolitan Syndicalists of Chicago seem to call themselves by that name); seen from inside his own Syndicate, he is a completely unindividualistic part of a collectivity..."

One might add that it was easy to make exactly the opposite description, and that no labour movement could afford such inconsistency.

And yet the syndicalist demands have proved, even as the militants said, hard to satisfy even partially under capitalism and its modes.

"There is little doubt that so far consultation has, on the whole, failed to give the workers in most nationalized industries that sense of participation in the general affairs of the enterprise which was aimed at."

252 F. Neumann, op.cit. discusses three strata of alienation, political, social, and psychological (e.g. p.273 et seqq.) - but it should be stated that these are manifestations of alienation which have a common source in social relations.

253 E.J. Hobsbawm's description, Labouring Men, sup.cit. p.236.

254 Kenney, op.cit. p.695. It is from such alignments that Kautsky's opposition to proletarian dictatorship arises - democracy as "the sway of the lowest and largest class" (Macpherson, The Real World of Democracy, p.5.) is the passive aspect of a process involving the dispossession of a formerly dominant class - the difference here is between the rule of numbers, and the rule of class.


256 Sturmthal, op.cit. p.71.
The Syndicalists may not have added much of use to socialist analysis or tactics, but the humane and liberal demands they made of any system of centralised control and decision-making, the restraint they demanded of those in office in any social system correctly located a powerful source of mass revolutionary activity. This may now seem peripheral to the

"great Socialist importance of the trade-union struggle (which) consists in socializing the knowledge, the consciousness of the proletariat, in organizing it as a class."257

If the organic resolution did not proceed in a Marxist-Leninist direction, the "desirability of continuous, voluntary action in all spheres of human endeavour" was an aim of emancipation which capitalism in its turn had urged and been unable to supply for the proletarian mass.258 Insofar as no effective alternative could be demonstrated to the proletariat, it was condemned to exist within capitalism as a latent political force, ideologically shielded from the unleashing of creativity in socialist countries. This protective ideology had its source both in labourism and class dominance.

If the popularity of Syndicalism was due to its being "vindicated by experience",259 experience alone was not sufficient to develop the social and political force necessary to crack the shell of the old society. But if the strikes were and

"are still to a large extent the expression of the 'unconscious' of the labour movement, and their causes are not always clear even to the strikers themselves",260

257 J.P. Nettl, op. cit. vol. i. p.225.

258 R.L. Mott, The political theory of Syndicalism. Political Science Quarterly, 1922. p.26. A socialist movement could not be expected to succeed in such a voluntarist framework - save by conjuncture. Again, a potential condition was assumed to be actual.

259 Pribičević, op. cit. p.164.

260 Knowles, op. cit. p.212.
then at least the unrest showed the British proletariat was not a unique creation. Not only did it share the characteristics of the international working-class, but its relation to capitalism was fully "proletarian". As Marx had said nearly two generations earlier -

"It is true that labour produces for the rich wonderful things - but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces - but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty - but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labour by machines, but it throws a section of the workers back to a barbarous type of labour, and it turns the other workers into machines. It produces intelligence - but for the worker stupidity, cretinism."²⁶¹

The labour unrest showed the British working-class endeavouring to discover the way out of its subordination.²⁶²

This has been concerned with the classic questions of the unity of Marxist theory and practice. It is suggested that syndicalism translates the contradictions present in material conditions directly into ideology in such a way that dialectical development becomes impossible. The ideology itself becomes rigid, the dynamics of society become increasingly harder to fit into this petrified shell of doctrine. In libertarian syndicalism itself there were profound inconsistencies. The weakness of strike tactics and the need for political organisation became clear only when the syndicalist leaders themselves began to realise that what they postulated as pure consciousness produced its own forms of false consciousness even under direct capitalist coercion. Capitalist society would not produce spontaneously the ideology and the political weapons

²⁶¹ In the Economic and Philosophical MSS of 1844.

²⁶² In Z.A.Jordan's The Evolution of dialectical materialism (N.Y. 1967) there is a good account of the ways in which these different interpretations of consciousness relate to the differing approaches to, and foundations for, a "Marxist" epistemology by Marx, Engels, and Lenin.
needed to socialise workers and the means of production. Nor would capitalist society rely simply on coercion to subdue its proletariat. When this was realised it was already too late – or at least the task of revolutionary organisation and crystallisation had become much harder. Higher forms of socialist consciousness were required to articulate demands of principle in liberal democracy. Militancy had either to forsake syndicalism, or become an embittered and non-creative kind of left opportunism. And here, essential though this work was if militant action at the grass-roots was to have experience and devoted leadership, the militants seem like the defenders of Verdun, defending to the death, to exhaustion – a soldiers' battle.
Appendix I

There are slight differences between the strike figures given in Knowles, Barou, and the Government Reports. The following tables are taken from N. Barou, App. ix. p. 250. Strikes and Lockouts.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Disputes</th>
<th>No. of Workers 000s</th>
<th>Working days lost 000s</th>
<th>Men per Dispute</th>
<th>Days per Dispute</th>
<th>Working days per dispute per man</th>
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<td>148</td>
<td>2162</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>3600</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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<td>399</td>
<td>296</td>
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<td>743</td>
<td>27190</td>
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Ibid. App. x. p. 252 Causes of strikes (%)

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<th>Hours</th>
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### Disputes by methods of settlement (%)

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<th>Conciliation and arbitration</th>
<th>Return on employers' terms</th>
<th>Otherwise</th>
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Chapter Two.

The Condition of England

This chapter begins with an examination of the problems involved in studying the data concerning material conditions in society before 1914. The assumption is frequently made that material conditions are easily quantifiable in terms of the political effect produced. The very collection and interpretation of data, however, represents and suggests ideological forms. This may be seen, for example, in the simple view that statistics suggested rising prices and stagnating wages, that this caused syndicalism, and that to defeat syndicalism it would merely be necessary to raise wages.

The data themselves seem to show that the struggle for control of the means of production was intensifying. Its scale was more extensive, the structures of capitalism were becoming progressively institutionalised and bureaucratised. The distinctions between industry and state, economic and political imperialism, were clearly and publicly diminishing. As the tasks of working-class organisations seemed to grow more complex, so too there was evidence that in enlarging their global base, British capitalists were also consciously and unconsciously intensifying their exploitation of the domestic proletariat. This exploitation was perceived in terms both of progressive economic immiseration and social and political powerlessness. But the dominant ideology, and no less the ideology of workers and socialists provided more or less disalienating compensations, masking and travestying the real effects of the concentration of capital, monopoly, and the growth of imperialism.
In presenting an economic profile of the British working-class before 1914, there arise three major problems. First, the appearance of phenomena used as the raw material for different theoretical approaches to economic correlates of political action gives rise to historical problems in a different dimension. To maintain that productive forces must reach their highest level of development before the next stage may be achieved is qualified by the 'closure' of certain political routes, circumscription of consciousness, perhaps its permanent limitation, by the development of trusts, and economic-military imperialism. In much the same way, it can be argued that the prerequisites for social emancipation may be supplied without the fatalistic haul through the intermediate stages of amelioration or immiseration — in fact one finds the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy disputing with Leninism in the Soviet Republic of Bokhara.¹

Secondly, as extension of this, there is a sense in which Capital is indeed the last great work of bourgeois economics. In terms of macro-analysis, the assumptions and descriptions of the economic system cannot provide in these terms, a programme, a motive, and a critique of the system which provides the raw material of this 'literature of exposure.'²

Finally, perceptions of contrasts, contradictions, discontinuity between the forces of production, the potential of the economic system, and the dominant ideology raises to conscious levels the powerlessness

1 For example, in Joshua Kunitz, Dawn over Samarkand (1936) p.131 et seq.
2 See V.I. Lenin, What is to be Done? passim.
and deprivation of the working-class. But the discontinuity may be repaired, the false, or useless, consciousness may be replaced by another - and the atomism of life under capitalism appear as a healthy pluralism, an infinite series of rewards and punishments. These three elements are aspects of the same difficulty - one common to John Maclean, Allen Hutt, Edward Cadbury and Sebbohm Rowntree. For the theory of consciousness itself is a recognition of the nexus which must connect, or the lacuna which must exist between, quantifiable productive forces, material conditions of proletarian existence and the resulting forms of political behaviour - but it is a theory faute de mieux, a theory of what can be, not what is.

For instance, it has been argued that before 1914 it was the militancy of the "unofficial proletariat", the less mediated, more spontaneous element of the working-class whose movement for direct action, direct democratic control, worker's institutions transforming or bypassing the official proletarian, legal, and non-dichotomous organisations was loosely known as Syndicalism. As such it threatened labour leaders as it did the dominant class. This "unofficial proletariat", - the grass roots' activists, the pamphleteers like Croweley, the branch secretaries with printing presses, the ad hoc unemployment committees, the trades councils, lecturers and lecture audiences, the lone unionists and socialists, "Societies of One" in provincial cities and so forth, - all these may well have formed the vital link in the "two-step flow" of information to the workers, and the feedback of spontaneity to the workers' political and economic organisation. However accurately one may present

3 Labriola, for instance, mentions the role of "unknown" theorists and propagandists in making the transition from utopian to scientific socialism - by way of men as Bauer, the shoemaker, Lessner and Eccarius the tailor, Pfaender the painter, Moll, the watchmaker, etc. A. Labriola, Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History. (Chicago, 1908) p.69.
a quantified account of pressures bearing upon certain sections of
the proletariat, the material, prosaic conditions are by themselves
non-communicating and non-transmitting. From this may arise an
interpretation like Lukács's, that one needs a

"marxisme qui incorpore la subjectivité à l'histoire sans
en faire un épiphénomène, c'est la moelle philosophique du
marxisme, sa valeur de culture et finalement sa signification
révolutionnaire, qui en est, nous le verrons, solidaire".....
"Le sens profond, philosophique, de la notion de praxis est
de nous installer dans un ordre qui n'est pas celui de la
connaissance, mais celui de la communication, de l'échange,
de la fréquentation".4

This, however, while realising the need to go beyond simple
"connaissance", seems to exclude systematic enquiry. Is there not a
critique of Lukács in the trade unionist's lament that he deplored
"the canker of apathy, indifference, and an inclination to let the
machine hustle us along on its momentum"?5 For this indeed shows
how subservience to the ideological forms of social relations and
dominance goes closely with subservience to the mechanical processes
themselves - and the subjectivity thus produced - in fact just
another aspect of the dominant ideology. Thus the system may become
known by what it does, not what it is. Briefs describes this first
stage of "ouvrierisme" as a desire by the worker to "magnify the work
of his hands."6 From this the progression seems to be, in the terms
of the GNCTU rules, to work for "a different order of things", where
"the really useful and intelligent part of society only shall have the

pp.57 and 70.
5 J.T. Brownlie (ASE), Some dangers that threaten trade unionism.
(n.d) p.15.
the direction of its affairs." Thus one needs a political economics which can separate, were such a thing feasible, data which distinguish between the development and effects of productive forces and that of their formal social derivatives. A useful example of such a process is to be found in Lenin's working over of Russian strike figures, to which he returned throughout 1912. This was analysis of potential, rather than of figures.

Before 1914, there was clearly an attempt to found a new "imperialist" base to capitalist enterprise, which had the effect of increasing perception of the "latent divergence of interests between workers and capitalists .... Though capitalists had not been alone in gaining from the export of capital, the working class participated more by accident than design. It was only by a rare coincidence of interests that the most profitable risks happened to fructify in cheaper and cheaper foodstuffs and raw materials. Capitalists were ready enough, at a price, to finance schemes of less advantage to their countrymen - the building of sultans' palaces, the mining of diamonds, the purchase of warships, the construction of strategic railways. At the same time, a rising standard of living amongst wage-earners was not entirely dependent upon reductions in the cost of imports."

The perception was twofold: first, that the development of new high-risk and national monopoly markets increased rather than diminished the maldistribution of returns. If wages remained stationary and prices and unemployment increased, then the promise of social reform must indeed seem no more than a grudging rescue operation, carried out to supplement

8 V.I.Lenin, Selected Works. vol. 18, (Moscow, 1963) p.85 et seqq.
rather than permanently increase, working-class incomes and security.

Secondly, this stagnation, this relative and absolute deprivation, was exacerbated in those very ways which showed that a growth of productive forces was under way - not that breakdown was imminent. The pre-1914 speed-up, the process of de-skilling, of specialisation - the intensification of labour and the concentration of capital - were signs in the industrial sphere that only when a new and more productive system had been developed under the protection of militant employers' associations, the delaying action of the courts and so on, would working-class organizations be permitted to bargain for a share in the profits. And then permission would be given only since such bargaining could not be avoided.

Not unnaturally, this had repercussions in politics, and led to remarks like Stephen Reynolds's:

"Scepticism as to the party system, as to politics themselves and even the whole theory of democracy, is spreading amazingly ... Theology has fallen to bits; politics will, I think."  

10 Stephen Reynolds, Letter to the New Age's editor, 2.6.10 (in Letters of Stephen Reynolds, 1925) pp.132-3. That is, in so far as the pressures on a class are seen to be common, the view of this class stressing the divergent interests of its "gradations" (cf S.Ossowski, Class Structure in the Social Consciousness for the use of these terms) will be superceded by one stressing the unity of interest of the class, and the disfunction of competing parties supported by workers in a social system which contains the elements of class domination. In such a situation, the work of politicisation, of overcoming particularism and the centrifugal forces may well be carried on by the pamphlets, public meetings, leaflets and discussions of workers themselves, men without contact with, or ambition to be active within, the existing parliamentary system. There is, however, another dimension to such phases. If indeed the economic and ideological changes of the years before 1914 be accepted as the growth of economic imperialism, then working-class activism is not only a symptom of political malfunction, but of the growth of a capitalism more hostile to the proletariat, more able and willing to demand national unity at all costs and to destroy those movements for class independence (and emancipation) within capitalist society seeking to prevent its internal and external wars, and destroy its equilibrium.
For any hypothesis must explain both the submersion in unproductivity of a large proportion of the working population, and the technical development of the economy — only the United States and Canada having drawn ahead of Great Britain in 1909-13 — even if this, in the terms of Kuczynski and Cairncross, was itself a development through prosperous unproductivity. This in fact corresponds to Caudwell's remarks on the two aspects of the bourgeoisie: "The stick is my property; I am equally a stick-owner". This is also reflected in the differentiable relations of the worker to the means of production, "a precarious and coerced relation to the machine due to the capitalist's ownership of it ... and the natural relation to it springing from the nature of machines." This divergence of interest is clearly a source and product of cultural dichotomy. Bourne spoke of his work on the village and its inhabitants as, "It were almost as easy to write of the Chinese." For in making use of the working-class, the bourgeoisie had to remain separate from its aspirations and its potential. Niceforo erected a theory of the atavism of the poor on this ignorance, social distance. He scorned belief that the human machine of the dominated class would one day dominate its master-engineer:

"Le peuple accepte entièrement cet héritage du passé et y prend plaisir — justement parce que sa gymnastique cérébrale est restée encore semblable à celle des peuples

13 George Bourne, Change in the Village (f.p. 1912, 1955 edn.) px (letter to A.Bennett, 1898).
primitifs auxquels il est redevable des ces antiques creations."14

Thus the dominant class itself believes that the productive forces in society depend upon the continuance of its domination and its resistance to atavism.

Although it is possible to apply, say, Ossowski’s "categories" to class society, the element of dichotomy in all systems based on class domination produces that element of class struggle which underlies categorisation by stratification or function. That is, such categorisation is a measure of the intensity of class struggle, not its epitaph. At times, the dichotomy arises directly from economic deprivation – as in Thomas Cooper's reaction to economic distress:

"I told the conference I should vote for the resolution because it meant fighting, and I saw it must come to that. The speed of the strike would and must be followed by a general outbreak. The authorities of the land would try to quell it; but we must resist them. There was nothing now but a physical force struggle to be looked for. We must get the people out to fight; and they must be irresistible, if they were united."15

Equally, the functional categorisation of social relations has itself an aspect of class dominance. As Bukharin said, every bourgeois policy had a functional significance, it "serves to reproduce given relations of production either simply or on an enlarged scale."16

Stark though Labriola's talk of working-class history as being one in

14 Alfredo Niceforo, Les Classes Pauvres (Paris, 1905) p.201. This awareness of the immiseration of sections of the proletariat, and an attempt to link this with biological propensities to criminality or magic seems to recognise the preconditions for class struggle, but to ignore the connections which bind the poor to capitalism, and involve the unrest of the poor workers in the fate of the capitalist system.


16 N.Bukharin, Imperialism and World Economy. n.d. p.112.
which failure becomes experience, or experiment, there is a sense in which this accurately describes the proletarian time-scale, like the Belgian strike, and "Lockout paisible, ensoleillé, joyeux", in which the strike itself is seen as an episode of reintegration with nature (in the sense of the Manuscripts of 1844), "La beauté persistante de l'automne contribua certainement à la résistance des ouvriers", and where groups went about singing "Il faut écraser la bourgeoisie" - on their way to picnic in the woods.\(^{17}\) Compared with this, the false (useless) consciousness of Brown, the small master artisan, who "has resolutely embraced the cause of progress, even though such progress is ruining his calling,"\(^ {18}\) becomes politically an extension of anomie, subordination to irrationality and domination.

Labriola's description of the relation of the Marxist to the proletariat, and of the proletarian to productive forces and relations of production is particularly useful here. Talking of the useless utopianism of socialists demanding the abolition of poverty, middle-men and so forth, he said

"These demands reduce the things, tenacious and resistant, of real life into as many reasonings, and they have for their object to combat the capitalist system as if it were a machine from which one can take away or to which one can add pieces, wheels, and gearings."\(^ {19}\)

Thus, discussion of the condition of the working class in economic terms must proceed from the mechanistic elements of the economy to attempts to separate the determinants of consciousness from the machinery, whose double


\(^{19}\) Labriola, op. cit. p. 82.
aspect is itself ideological as well as mechanical. 20

"How can it be hoped to destroy such a system by an act of logical negation and how eliminate it by reasoning? Eliminate pauperism? But it is a necessary condition of capitalism. Give the worker the entire product of his labor? But what would become of the profit of capital, and where and how could the money expended in the purchase of commodities be increased if among all the commodities which it meets and with which it makes exchanges there were not a particular one which returns to the buyer more than it costs him; and is not this commodity precisely the labor power of the wage worker? The economic system is not a tissue of reasonings but it is a sum and a complexus of facts which engenders a complex tissue of relations. It is a foolish thing to assume that this system of facts which the ruling class has established with great pains through the centuries by violence, by sagacity, by talent and by science will confess itself vanquished, will destroy itself to give way to the demands of the poor and to the reasonings of their

ibid. pp.13-14, makes an important comment on the kinds of literary and political response to the "contrasts" of capitalism: "Critical communism - that is its true name, and there is none more exact for this doctrine - did not take its stand with the feudalists in regretting the old society for the sake of criticising by contrast the contemporary society - it had an eye only to the future. Neither did it associate itself with the petty bourgeois in the desire of saving what cannot be saved: as, for example, small proprietorship, or the tranquil life of the small proprietor whom the bewildering action of the modern state, the necessary and natural organ of modern society, destroys and overturns, because by its constant revolutions it carries in itself the necessity for other revolutions new and more fundamental.

"Neither did it translate into metaphysical whimsicalities, into a sickly sentimentalism, or into a religious contemplation, the real contrasts of the material interests of everyday life: on the contrary, it exposed those contrasts in all their prosaic reality. It did not construct the society of the future upon a plan harmoniously conceived in each of its parts. It has no word of eulogy and exaltation, of invocation and of regret, for the two goddesses of philosophic mythology, justice and equality, those two goddesses who cut so sad a figure in the practical affairs of everyday life, when we observe that the history of so many centuries maliciously amuses itself by nearly always contradicting their infallible suggestions. Once more these communists, while declaring on the strength of facts which carry conviction that the mission of the proletarians is to be the gravediggers of the bourgeoisie, still recognise the latter as the author of a social form which represents extensively and intensively an important stage of progress, and which alone can furnish the field for the new struggles which already give promise of a happy issue for the proletariat. Never was funeral oration so magnificent. There is in these praises addressed to the bourgeoisie a certain tragical humour, - they have been compared to dithyrambs."
advocates. How demand the suppression of property without demanding the overthrow of all the rest? To demand of this society that it shall change its law which constitutes its defence is to demand an absurd thing. To demand of this State that it shall cease to be the buckler and defense of this society and of this law is plunging into absurdities. The one-sided socialism which without being clearly utopian starts from the hypothesis that society admits of certain errata without revolution, that is to say without a fundamental change in the general elementary structure of society itself, is a piece of mere ingenuity."21

From such a position, one is indeed condemned to deal only with "morphological previsions". Fortunately, however, Leninism and Luxemburgism pre-empt much of the need to test hypotheses against bourgeois economics as Capital laid down in its ground plan.22 The politics in this political economy alone validates or invalidates the economics. Economics becomes illustrative only of the proposition that

"The proletarian mode of life is essentially rational because its position in the world compels it to plan revolution on a calculatory basis even more than the bourgeoisie has done..." and it is, presumably, the formidable nature of this task, and the degree of commitment and isolation, not to mention the danger and privation such activity produces, that raises the permanent problem that

"the social position of the proletariat forces it into irrationalism."23

However, if we admit that Syndicalism was not this theory which Labriola calls "critical communism", above the proletariat and its

21 ibid. p.84.
22 For this reading of Capital, see J.Witt-Hansen, Historical Materialism, vol i, Copenhagen, 1960.
vicissitudes, that Syndicalism was in fact a "sous-produit" of infrastructural developments, then one can still argue that such "sous-produits" maintain a latent or residual influence on the consciousness of proletarians. Such "sous-produits" may be an automatic reaction to the disparities and maldistribution of capitalism — but they are also a prerequisite for the development in the proletariat of an awareness of this grand theory.24 Just as, in practice, a successful strike for a wage increase proves to the strikers that such an increase is not the millennium, so too participation in management without control demonstrates that participation is not after all joint control. Equally, this does not lead to a revolutionary consciousness. But this is, after all, the real world and the only world in which such consciousness may develop. Again, if the Syndicalism of the unrest be accounted a "sous-produit" of the growth of imperialism, then the impact of the unrest on the labour movement is itself a reflection of the changing economic base of that movement, something to be known, not just perceived!

A discussion of the changing material conditions now follows. The most obvious long-term economic influence on the working-class between 1900 and 1914 was the stagnation or barely perceptible fluctuation of wages. Even so, there should be no assumption that wage questions "caused" the strike movement. Carpenter for instance described the causes of the Clyde shipping strike:

24 Of L. Althusser, Pour Marx (Paris, 1966) p.165 et seqq. On the discussion of the point at which to seek education in socialism by action, rather than what Rosa Luxemburg called socialistic education, see her speech of 30.12.18, reprinted in 'Spartacus' (Ceylon, 1966). As always, we are concerned to show that such "debates" arise both from the methodology and historiography employed by Marxists, and also from the "real world" to which the methodology was applied.
"The real grievance was a personal one. The men had been affronted by the overbearing conduct of the Chairman of the Employers' Association, the insulting manner in which he had behaved to their representatives and so forth; and they were not going to put up with this without a protest. They wanted to be treated in a gentlemanly way."25

After all, however "irrational" proletarian reaction might be, strikes against productive forces in the abstract were impossible. When Barnes said "It is not only in stoppage that there is loss. There is loss without stoppage. There is tacit slackness" one might imagine that

25 E.Carpenter, Towards Industrial Freedom (1917) quoting p.262 of My Life and Dreams. p.46. On the cause of strikes, see H.A.Turner in The Trend of Strikes (Leeds, 1965), V.L.Allen in Militant Trade Unionism (1966), and both K.G.J.C.Knowles, Strikes, - A study in industrial conflict: with special reference to British experience between 1911 and 1947 (Oxford, 1952) and Robert Gubbels in La Grève: phénomène de civilisation (Brussels, 1962). All see strikes as arising out of a total work and social situation. W.Lloyd Warner and J.O. Low in The social system of the modern factory. The Strike (Yale, 1947) and Alvin W.Gouldner, Wildcat Strike (1955) also stress the multi-causal origin of strikes, and J.I.Griffin's Strikes: a study in quantitative economic (New York, 1959) found no persistent economic correlations in strike proneness. E.C.J.Aitken's Taylorism at Watertown Arsenal. Scientific Management in action (Harvard, 1960) describes the unrest resulting from a crude introduction of Taylorism, while William Gossin, Sur les relations entre le temps de travail et valeur: la valorisation du temps de travail humain par la machine, (Revue d'histoire économique et sociale vol. xlv, no. 2, 1966) has attempted to relate wages with the value of labour power compared with the value of mechanisation. Under nationalisation, improvement in labour relations tends to be studied from an assumption that wage levels should not be the main focus. W.H. Scott, Enid Mumford, I.C.Modgiverin and J.M.Kirkby in Coal and Conflict (Liverpool, 1965) suggest pay as crystallising grievance. F.Zweig in Men in the Pits (1948) concentrated more on the grievance arising from the disappointment of hopes of greater control under nationalisation than, say, Clinton E.Jencks (British coal: labour relations since nationalisation (Industrial Relations, vol. 6, no.1, Oct. 1966) who simply stresses improvements in relations, rather than pay structure, since nationalisation. Thus, to point to deprivation and immiseration, and to suggest that these are immediate causes of unrest, without giving weights to, say, social immobility and stagnating wages, seems not only inevitable, but in view of field work, justifiable in the eyes of the bulk of the above authorities. Even low-level, common-sense theory does not seem convinced it has discovered real causes for strikes, even in explicit statements of grievance.
this slackness was for the worker dysfunctional.\textsuperscript{26} In fact, discounting Ward's Illyrian income-maximising man, this unproductive attitude had a positive and active aspect. Pouget castigated the man who worked up to the pace of the machine and of the productive forces in the service of bourgeois morality,\textsuperscript{27} that morality which favours "ouvriers-caniches qui se sont distingués par la souplesse de leur épine dorsale, leur esprit de résignation, et leur fidélité au maître."\textsuperscript{28} Although Beatrice Webb complained of the demoralising effect of such slacking, the sabotage by "bouche ouverte" required a courage and a consciousness which, through the degrees of inertia, involved always some consciousness, some political content, however much condemned by orthodox Marxists.

The level of consciousness in strikes should not be idealised, nor the attention to increased wages ignored. Clearly in 1911 there was some "slack" in the economy, in that in 1911 only 3\% of workers in disputes were unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{29} But strikes are contested, by two sides at least, and such a figure has more than economic significance. Likewise, although in 1912 8\% struck for wage advances, not all who were relative or absolutely deprived struck, or struck on a wage question. Custom as well as necessity demanded that a refusal to continue work should involve a wage question.\textsuperscript{30} But the percentages

\textsuperscript{26} Rt.Hon. George N. Barnes, Industrial Conflict. The Way Out (1924) p.2.
\textsuperscript{27} B.Ward, The firm in Illyria (American Economic Review, Sept. 1958, vol. xlviii, no.4) Although initially self-interest alone is postulated, it is clear that the social criteria of profitability and individuals' degree of control are the true framework (pp.583-5) for a discussion of wage maximisation.
\textsuperscript{28} E.Pouget, Le Sabotage (Paris, n.d.) p.28.
\textsuperscript{29} Cd 6472 (1912)
\textsuperscript{30} Cd 7089 (1914)
of strikes won shows a continuing momentum, reflected in the growth of union membership: in 1911, 84.1% of strikes were settled by compromise, only 6.6% won outright.\textsuperscript{31} In 1912, 74.5% of disputes were won outright, only 11.1% met with compromise\textsuperscript{32} - while in 1913, 79% of those who went on strike were successful or achieved a compromise settlement.\textsuperscript{33} On the basis of the figures, then, the expectation of victory was considerable in 1912-13. While it would be absurd to talk of the wage gains in strikes as effecting a major re-distribution of wealth, wage questions showed that a direct attack could be made on the existing system of distributing the resources of industry by a method demonstrating the dichotomous social organisation of industry. And in so far as a strike on a wage question was implicitly or explicitly an attack on the distributive system, it became by this a challenge to the priorities and authority which controlled the distribution. In fact, it might be said that the only way of legitimising the authority of managers and the social justice of the distribution of property would be to ensure that all strikes always failed - or at least to ensure that any advance secured from one part of the economic system should immediately be reclaimed by another part, in demonstration of the immutability of economic laws.

In fact, wages questions depended not on whether unions could be partners, or parasites of capitalism within industries, but on a complex of factors in which the absolute level of wages was of less importance than the social and political force of anti-capitalist sentiment. The mastery of the productive forces by the dominant class could never be

\textsuperscript{31} Cd 6472 (1912-13)

\textsuperscript{32} Cd 7089 (1914)

\textsuperscript{33} Cd 7568 (1914-16)
"Wage-earners gained most from the favourable movement in the terms of trade in the seventies and eighties and lost most from the subsequent reversal. On the other hand, capital lost through the damper that falling prices put on development, and gained from the very change in the terms of trade that cut into real wages in Britain, but made the primary producing countries more attractive and profitable outlets for British capital."34

Likewise, the local pattern of wages and poverty demonstrated a varied pattern of resistance and openness to economic pressure.

Every town had its labourers receiving less than a living wage. Warrington had iron labourers on 22/1 a week, and 15% of its working-class population in poverty. Reading's highest wage in the biscuit factories was 23/-, and 25% of its workers lived in primary poverty.35 The contrast between those receiving £5 to £20 a week, and those in the "large class of persons, unskilled labourers, who for a full week of 54 hours receive £1 to 24/-"36 and who made up a half to a third of the cases of primary poverty, underlines the significance of the amalgamationist and industrial unionist idea.

To unite men with such disparate wages, even with the tacit assumption that the differential would be maintained, in a single union, with a common policy, did show at least to some extent, that

34 Caimcross, op. cit. p.8.

35 A.L.Bowley and A.R. Bennett-Hurst, Livelihood and Poverty (1915) passim. (Some notes on the statistical material follow in the appendix at the end of the chapter.)

36 Ibid. p.117. Note too the table for Warrington, where workers' and employers' estimates of wages appear. The workers estimated that 61% received 30/- or less p.w., while the employers saw the distribution as putting 47% below 30/- (p.116). The workers' estimates placed by far the largest group (36%) as earning 20-25/- a week - but the employers' largest group was the 25-30/- men, and this only 24%, making the distribution from 20/- to 40/- and above much smoother and more gently graded. This is a nice exercise in social perception.
industrial-occupational, if not class, solidarity, had force. In these circumstances to make a wage demand necessarily, organisationally, involved the craftsmen in a struggle for the living wage. For although the unskilled labourer was anomalous in terms of technical development, he had a new importance in the new mass consumption industries, the national branded consumer goods industries which were heavily reliant on the unskilled labourers, women, and boys paid from one third to two-thirds of a living wage. If, over the period 1880 to 1913, wages rose by 36%, then the period of stagnation after 1900 was that of the rapid concentration of capital and intensification of processes. This in itself is sufficient to account for suspicion and bitterness, that not only was capital exported without an obvious compensation to the producers, but that the very sectors of growth at home - the tertiary industries, services, especially transport, and consumer goods, should be those which continued to rely on a base of underpaid, insecure, unrecognised, economically dependent and physically vulnerable labourers.

In 1915, the commissioners described such results:

"Whenever friction arises in a particular munitions establishment between an employer and his workmen, even although it seems to have no very tangible foundation and to involve no definite principle, but to be largely the outcome of indiscretion or inconsideration on one side or the other, it leads to a state of irritation among organised workers which quickly spreads beyond the boundaries of the establishment where the trouble first arose to other works, and frequently from adventitious causes wholly unconnected with the origin or merits of the dispute it becomes elevated into a question of principle affecting all employers and munition workers generally throughout the district."

37 A.L. Bowley, Wages and Income in the United Kingdom since 1860 (Cambridge, 1937) put 1900 as the year after which "relative loss" set in. p.93.

38 Report on the Clyde Munitions Workers (Cd 8136, 1915) p.298.
Indeed, so natural would be a union demand for complete control of industry that participation with management seems almost its polar opposite. The pressure of unemployment to steady falling wages, and its existence in times of rising wages might enforce quiescence and modest demands, but it scarcely encouraged workers to think of themselves as glutted with the prosperity of the haute bourgeoisie. The commissioners in 1917-18 in their list of grievances in fact conflated the grievance against "high food prices in relation to wages" with "unequal distribution of food" — just as they did not consider the political questions to be "priced" against notional wage increases. "Restriction of personal freedom, and, in particular, the effects of the Munitions Act" were seen as a reason for disquiet — as too the "Lack of communal sense. — This is noticeable in South Wales where there has been a break-away from faith in Parliamentary representation." Indeed the Syndicalist ideas were brought out by repetition and intensification of pre-war conditions. An attack on union and occupational custom, rising prices, intensified discipline, the introduction of new, group-disrupting processes, led to a militancy "not caused by the war, but...greatly aggravated and

39 In 1912 and 1913, nearly two million people were affected by rising wages, and on the basis of weekly rates, the amounts were over ten times the rise in 1910, and the 1911 rise over four times less than the 1912 figure. At the same time, unemployment in 1912 and 1913 was 2.5 and 2.1% respectively (Trade Union figures), compared with 7.8, 7.7, 4.7 and 3.0% in the four preceding years. Thus despite a conjunctural element in this, it would be hard to convince a would-be striker that his interests would be or had been threatened by a strike in 1912 or 1913.

(Cd 7635) Changes in wage rates and hours of Labour in the United Kingdom in 1913.

40 Summary of the 1917-18 Commission of inquiry into industrial unrest, (pp.153-5).
One may say, then, that the perception of rapid change, especially an increase in prosperity not transmitted, will cause discontent in those in need, with little social mobility, and with a relative worsening of their position in the class, status and power hierarchies. This discontent may not be as articulate or as purposive as that of men whose class status and power are threatened by an economic transformation of their working and social life enforced by men who appear also to be determined to break down customary defences against just such a transformation - but there would appear here to be a strong case for the "abandoned" labourer in a growth industry to make common economic and political cause with the "speeded-up" class. Both groups will be in a position to take note of the disparities between the magnitude of the changes in working life and the compensating degree of consultation and control for any but the most tightly organised craft union. Thus, to say that the check in the rise of real wages by 1900 was due to "a distributive change", that there was "no longer the massive application of new equipment to raise productivity throughout industries that were already large", partly as a result of the working out of the innovation effect of the application of steel and steam, could not fail to arouse men to ask whether this distribution, and the working out

41 Cd 8663, Report for the North West (quoting A.A.Purcell, President of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council) in ibid. p.10.

of innovation effects was a result of the productive or of the distributive system. They might also ask whether the benefits from the earlier period had been acquired in such a way and to such an extent that deterioration after 1900 was a fair, efficient and equitably-distributed sharing of profit and loss, and "working-out" of technical forces.

When Kuznets pointed out that

"higher consumption levels may make for higher productivity of the population, either because of beneficial physical effects or greater training, or because of inducements toward more enthusiastic participation in productive economic activity" it is as well to remember that such a movement may not affect the perceptions of the distribution of power within the productive system, - just as the relation between statistical and experiential signs of amelioration are not immediately linked: "it is doubtful whether the working class felt better off", in the period before 1896.  

This effect of differences in social perception may be explained, after Runciman, in terms of reference groups - or again, by such factors as wage distortion, whereby over half all wage-earning families earned less than the average of 45/- a week for families with two wage earners.  

Again, a working population in which the two depressed

43 S.Kuznets, Share and structure of consumption. Jan. 1962 Economic development and cultural change (p.59)


sectors were the unskilled - nearly 10% of the occupied - and the trade cycle sector (22.4%)-(and presumably agriculture (8.4%))-leaves on this rough count a substantial proportion of the working-class in primary poverty, or in and out of secondary poverty. Thus, though not every strike which criticises distribution by implication is a demand for control of that process of distribution, a system operated by owners and managers which fails to distribute a living wage over such a wide area would seem to be challenged not only by those who held "that the payment of a wage determined not by supply and demand but by human needs and common decency should be a first charge on their industry", but by those who maintained that the coercive aspect of capitalism was becoming clearer in the daily divergence of the level of productive force and the actual market satisfaction of the worker. If industry were indeed based on a relationship "essentially reciprocal, a partnership between two men neither of whom can get on without the other..." an observation "profoundly true", although "the conditions of the wage-earners' working life can easily persuade him of the opposite" - then it would seem that the element of coercion, of authority not legitimatated, in the relationship was becoming clearer before 1914.

In fact, Tougan-Baranowsky claimed before the war that the new base of the British economy would be less open to crisis than before, through "la ruine de la suprématie industrielle anglaise". He presumably claimed

46 ibid., and figures from Routh, op. cit. passim.
47 Phelps Brown, op. cit. p.313.
48 ibid. p.102.
too that the market justification of unemployment and low wages was less viable now that the world had been opened up to commerce, and that industry was open to the "développement du travail sur commande." 49

But in Britain, concentration and amalgamation coexisted with a surviving and more primitive organisation of production, itself running through all conditions of prosperity, and transplanting its sectionalism and modes of organisation into large-scale industry. Alfred Williams said of the Swindon works

"One would think that the various divisions of the works were owned by separate firms, or people of different nationalities, such formidable barriers appear to exist between them." 50 "The bricklayers are a distinct class and do not mingle well with the other men at the works" 51 "The workmen of every shed have their own particular tone and style collectively as well as individually, different trades and atmospheres apparently producing different characteristics and temperaments." 52

Thus political unionism, and industrial unionism, rather than "the unionism of the dispossessed" 53 appears not as an aberration, but, in a country amply stocked with the dispossessed, a form of organisation delayed only by the survival of pockets of aristocrats and the modes of small-scale industry. The question "why did the dispossessed not produce a more militant and lasting politics" seems at least as apposite

50 Alfred Williams, Life in a Railway Factory, (1915) p.43
51 ibid. p.49.
52 ibid. p.56.
53 Phelps Brown op. cit. p.118.
as a concentration on the forces tending to consensus in industrial relations. In some sectors, the foremen might set a level of aspiration - in Swindon they were paid 70/-, over twice the rate for fitters and turners, over three times the labourers' wage - and fight in the front line for the staff. But the monthly staff clerks received only 30/-, plus the security, gentility, and a whiff of upward mobility which isolation from the shop floor conferred.  

The presence within the working-class of large numbers of domestic servants, bell-wether foremen, and staff clerks and shop clerks (unionised though some might be), parallel with the semi-skilled and skilled operatives was a natural defence against vertical, industrial organisation. Likewise, the pluralism of the industrial system, its multiplicity of customs, industrial relations systems, wage and skill structures acted as a retaining wall, or series of walls, to the common pressures, the common conditions of existence pressing towards class unionism. And yet, in most cities there was a large group of the sweated, the unskilled, the underpaid, whose stabilising force was only their toleration of insecurity and powerlessness.

In Norwich, of the 1800 applicants to the Distress Committee in 1908, 800 were general labours, 425 from the building trades. In Liverpool, in a population of \( \frac{3}{4} \) of a million, 125,000 were sailors, and 25,000 casual workers. That the conditions, the expectations, of such

54 Williams, op. cit. p.309.
groups described by Booth, Rowntree and so forth, could permit only of loosely and fleetingly organised unionisation and industrial action would seem to imply that the process of "politicisation", of integration into the existing political system, was of a leap from misery to an abiding faith in the healing powers of the Labour Party. When Arch saw the village labourers coming up for communion after the worthies of the village, sitting in social segregation "as if they were unclean", he could propose that "Oppression, and hunger, and misery, made them desperate, and desperation was the mother of Union."

But Union could build an organisation parallel to the system of exploitation - it could soften but not reverse the process. That Unions could collapse, or be themselves coerced, that economic development should be directed to overseas investment, or to a growth of exports between 1900 and 1913, served to increase the possibility of an exposure of the maldistribution of the returns. To transpose Rowntree's remark on the village labourer, that his budgets described "not a temporary but a permanent state of things" one may add that stagnation in "prosperity" involves relative deprivation: that when prices rise, and profits rise, then there is not only absolute loss, but the effective power of the dominant class increases. It is true that its life may be shorter, but Pollard's figures for Sheffield note "a stagnation, if not decline, in Sheffield real wages in the fifteen years preceding the First World War" - the period during which finance

57 Joseph Arch, The story of his life. Told by himself (1898) pp.20 and 67

58 For contemporary estimates of distribution, see L.G. Chiozza, Money, Riches and Poverty (1910) and W.H. Mallock, The nation as a business firm. An attempt to cut a path through jungle. (1910) pp.140-158. On the increase in foreign trade, note Werner Schlote, British Overseas Trade from 1700 to the 1930s (Oxford 1952) p.42.
and industrial capital had been developing its interests abroad at the expense of industrial capitalism at home. 60 Then

"On the eve of the First World War investment within Great Britain was once again recovering whilst the prospects for investment abroad began to look less attractive: prices had reached a ceiling, the pressure of international competition which had been increasing since the eighteen-nineties could not be entirely alleviated by the stimulating effect of capital export upon world demand, and after years of intensive capital export, industry had become aware of the need for new equipment." 61

If capital export led to the encouragement of class collaboration on a basis of imperialism, then the neglect of home industry represented a fault-line, a contradiction, in the economic system which its pluralism might manage to repair.

Despite this, the labourer could hardly identify his interests with the industrial capitalist. For a start, growing British industries tended to be international and imperial themselves, and both finance and industrial capital rested in the last resort on the inscrutable preferences of investors. Again, the industries praised for their enterprise, the branded consumer goods industries were neither high wage industries, nor did they appear affected by lack of Protection. Stratford saw a rapid growth of chemical and soap works in the early 1880s. At Silvertown there was an oil-mill, Tate's and Lyle's sugar refineries, Keiller's confectionery, the Brunner Mond alkali works, the Schmidt japan and varnish factory and the Vinolia soap and candle works. 62


Again, in 1880 the Albert Dock had been opened - and yet the average labourer's wage was 24/-.

In confectionery "A man used to be paid 35s a week where a youth is now paid 16s, and the output is doubled..." Certainly there was a wide range of wages - labourers in import and export got 30/- a week, but still there were casual dock labourers on 7/- to 17/6, and domestic sweated trades, like umbrella tassel making (average 5/3 a week) and matchbox making (8/3). Though expanding capitalism might represent the hope of improved wages and conditions - but on little evidence - the possibility of state intervention could encourage only the most desperate. To the PLA "B" man whose vegetables consisted of 14 lbs of potatoes for the week, as to the railway clerk whose ideal budget was 55/- and pay 35/-, the fact that legislation affected his occupation may not have given him comfort.

If it was in the ports, and Watney and Little make the point that Hull, Manchester and Liverpool were among the most disaffected centres "of the railway world", that casual and dock labour, and sailors, had the effect of depressing wages, forming the nucleus of a distressed and boisterous crowd, and being particularly sensitive to fluctuations in trade, they only served as a trigger for the distress normal throughout industry. In South Wales, where the 1912 act to set minimum wages in the coalfield did have effect, there had been much scope for improvement.

63 ibid. p.18.
64 ibid. pp.199 and 297.
65 Watney and Little, Industrial Warfare (1912) p.280 et. seqq.
66 ibid. p.62.
Just as Ben Turner said it would take nationalisation, free education and a 30/- a week minimum to outbid Syndicalism, so Hartshorn might say the price of Syndicalism in South Wales was the raising of the wages of the third of the getters below the average, the nine-tenths of the labourers and the two-thirds of the hauliers below the minimum.

However, it must be stressed that a low level of aspiration and expectation and a high level of aspiration and expectation frustrated will unite and become volatile when wages are reduced.

"The individual wage-earner appreciates the difficulty of recovering a reduction in wages, and his opposition has been consolidated by trade unionism into a definite policy. The rates of wages will not normally be affected before earnings have fallen appreciably. Similarly, if there is an improvement in trade, the first result is full-time working and the absorption of the unemployed, until the whole labour force is earning the full weekly rate of wages, and even more if recourse is had to overtime. Then, and not until then, will the actual rates be raised."

These calculations encouraged a gradualism additionally conditioned by the knowledge that no trade and no skill was proof against unemployment and technical transformation. Gradualism in these circumstances, profound scepticism as to the usefulness of state action in affecting the infrastructure, these were attitudes based on experience, a fatalistic but not unreasonable structuring of aspiration - and a defence against the claims of the dominant ideology, however Spencerian.

A family in "mere physical efficiency" was, in Taine's image, like a man walking upon the bottom of a lake up to his mouth in water - but

67 ibid. p.248.
69 J.W.F. Rowe, Wages in practice and theory (1928) p.10.
in the more danger of drowning the more movement he made.

"A family living upon the scale allowed for in this estimate must never spend a penny on railway fare or omnibus. They must never go into the country unless they walk. They must never purchase a halfpenny newspaper or spend a penny to buy a ticket for a popular concert. They must write no letters to absent children, for they cannot afford to pay the postage. They must never contribute anything to their church or chapel, or give any help to a neighbour which costs them money. They cannot save, nor can they join sick club or Trade Union, because they cannot pay the necessary subscriptions. The children must have no pocket money for dolls, marbles, or sweets. The father must smoke no tobacco, and must drink no beer. The mother must never buy pretty clothes for herself or for her children, the character of the family wardrobe as for the family diet being governed by the regulation, "Nothing must be bought but that which is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of physical health, and what is bought must be of the plainest and most economic description."

Should a child fall ill, it must be attended by the parish doctor; should it die, it must be buried by the parish. Finally, the wage earner must never be absent from his work for a single day."70

To the Bedfordshire lime kiln worker, with a 42% energy and 49% protein deficiency, to the North Riding labourer, feeding six on 17/10 a week, it might indeed be true that "Nothing can ever be done unless they combine. And it's for the North country to set the example."71 But perception of the purposes of the union might concentrate on the achievement of the simple minimum — the union might simply become a means of bringing men within the scope of revised economic laws. As Tawney pointed out, for the domestic and workshop chainmaker, there was "no bottom to the trade", wages were "indefinitely compressible". To restore the working of those economic laws which operated within the factory did not call into question which of these "laws" were made and imposed in the interests of a class, and which inherent in the productive capacity of industry.72

70 E. Seehom Rowntree, Poverty. A study of town life (1901) p.154
71 How the labourer lives, sup. cit. pp.81 and 165.
In fact, workers were in contact with the first kind of "law" - the machinery of ideology in class domination - often enough to have some idea of the difference between a social relation and productive capacity. For instance, one may cite the man who earned 9/5 in a fortnight in January, and then was given twopence for opening a cab door for a lady - and imprisoned for three days for begging. Again,

"The apathy of the big employers who regard labour as a 'bagatelle' is a serious obstacle to any scheme of reform. Where there is not apathy there is too often hostility. The employers are very much afraid of possible shortages of labour which would mean expensive delays, and they are afraid, too, of increasing the power of unions."74

The preconditions for union membership, even militancy, are thus present before 1914. But then one might claim that employers had been overcompensating and overcompensated, in this period. The strengthening of the basis of capitalism had been accompanied by the strengthening of labour organisations - but not of a socialist consciousness.

The literature of exposure proposed a more productive use of labour, and a partnership for labour in the exploitation of Britain's colonial and international position - but not a partnership in domestic control nor in progressive expropriation. The pace of the labour movement, even after the unrest, was geared to the aspirations and consciousness of the weakest. If the movement's unity was based on awareness of common interest, it might be claimed that that sous-produit of immiseration and imperialism, "Syndicalism", could be represented both as a disruptive and revolutionary doctrine - and as a "change of persons not of things", the continuation of capitalism under workers' control. A political

73 Mrs Pember Reeves, Round about a pound a week (1913) pp.199-200.
remedy, however for the servant, -

"The chill of the cavern in which her evenings were spent, the long solitudes only interrupted by what Charles Lamb calls the "customary chiding" of a mistress who looked upon a servant as the regular dérivatif of her ill-temper, the cold scraps that passed as food, the systematic begrudging of all that Nature commands Youth to seek"

- was still apparently out of reach, and yet here the exploitation and indoctrination was at its highest.75

The warning by Booth that the unrest was in part due to the failure of trade unionism to redistribute wealth, reduce hours and improve conditions could yet convince the author that the antithesis Capital-Labour was "more or less obsolete, but still dogs and confusing."76 And indeed, with some truth by this analysis the unrest could be termed the demand of the sweated for a living wage, based on the common interest of workers. Outside the general unions,

"Successful combination depends on possession by the men of some special qualification for the work they undertake, serving to protect them, at any rate for a time, from the competition of outside labour...the helplessness of the worker, whether unionist or non-unionist, shows itself not so much in rates of wages as in irregularity, or actual lack, of employment."77

This economic, or "pure" consciousness does indeed appear to precede and differ from

"the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophical, in short, ideological, forms wherein men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out."78


76 Charles Booth, Industrial Unrest and Trade Union Policy (1915) p.8.


78 Labriola, op. cit. p.49.
The period before 1914 was a crucial one:

"The union does not distinguish between good and bad employers; one cast-iron policy is meted out to all, and the result must be to harden the hearts of the more sympathetic employers against the men. In the struggle for existence it is the enterprising master of small capital that goes to the wall."79

That is, the union, by the application of the common rule not only makes possible but encourages an awareness of class interests and class struggle. But the broad line of inter- and intra-class interests even within an industrial union is not necessarily distinguishable, when the future of the industry is international and imperial. World trade and capital export were bridges involving the home proletariat in the international supremacy of the capitalist economic system as a whole. Nationalisation of domestic industry — the railways, agriculture, the Post Office — these became feasible, while nationalisation of export industries was not.

This represented a series of "closures" for an independent proletariat. The range of permitted economic manipulation was restricted. Mark Abrams, for instance, maintained that the increase in living standards between 1914 and 1924 was made possible by a reduction in personal savings, leading "if only in the short run, an increase of at least 6 per cent on the average "consumed" income per head."80 Nor did the probability that

"Thousands of men feel that they have no prospect of being anything but wage earners all their lives, and they have in consequence lost the stimulus of wholesome ambition"

mean that, in a movement to assume control of their industries, they would

80 Mark Abrams, The condition of the British People (1945) p.75.
recover their ambition and transcend their apathy. More common was Sexton's appraisal that,

"Thanks mainly to a new type of employer, personified by such men as Sir Alfred Booth and Lawrence Holt, the fight, though sharp, was short and conclusive. It resulted in the welding together of a vast number of men who had previously held aloof from all trade union organization."

It was the knowledge that, when the pressure became intolerable, the workers would throw their weight behind the labour movement, which the leaders drew from the unrest, rather than a belief that only control would give the workers that security, status, incentive, power, necessary to carry on production with full social justice and reward for their labour. Still less did it convince labour leaders that their rank and file could become a dominant class as the "new type of employer" appeared.

"Rather, the wage-earners were in those years subject to growing pressure by employers' associations in their early period of power and militancy; by the long-term tendency of competitive capitalism to keep down wages; and by the fluctuating influences of raw material prices, terms of trade, and degrees of monopoly. The unions, as a "counter-vailing power", did well to maintain the share of labour, while raising the absolute level of real wages." (between 1870 and 1914).

And yet, if the labour movement had no place for spontaneity and "forest fires", not only did the strikes "beat the market" thus encouraging a degree of militancy as sound "business policy", but the hostility of employers in some industries - notably coal-mining and the railways,

81 W. Cunningham, Causes of Labour Unrest. 1912.
84 Pollard suggests that certainly in 1911-12 the "market" was beaten - but in fact any strike which is not a defeat modifies, or defines the market. (cf. ibid. pp.105-8).
encouraged demands for nationalisation, and even called into question economic as well as the social efficiency of capitalist control.

Caimes's question is significant:

"What we want to know is, not whether an increase of supply and demand will cheapen a commodity or will cheapen labour, and an increase of demand raise the price of each - every costermonger will tell you this much - but what it is which governs supply and demand in each case."\(^5\)

If Syndicalism did not attempt to answer this question, then the vulgar Marxism of many trade union leaders did - and yet unions might well continue to act in a context where their motives "only of a quasi-economic kind" might be dominated by "supply and demand" considerations.\(^6\)

Thus the narrowing of differentials has been described, not as a solidarist policy helped by union growth - but "absence of mind."\(^7\)

The achievement of the market rate for wages by 1914 referred to by Pollard seems to have coincided with the continuation of the tendency for wages to take a decreasing share of national income.\(^8\)

Again, the conflation of earned and unearned income paralleled the broad spread of intra-class incomes. Some manual workers received wages of the equivalent of the middle class - a proportion of whom were

85 Routh, op. cit. p.135.

86 H.A. Turner, Trade Unions, Differentials, and the Levelling of Wages. Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies Sept. 1952.

87 K.G.J.C. Knowles and D.J. Robertson, Differences between the wages of skilled and unskilled workers 1800-1950 (Bull. of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics, April 1951) p.121.

88 L.H. Phelps Brown and P.E. Hart, in The Share of wages in national income calculated the percentage of wages to national income at 40.7% in 1900, 38.3 in 1905, 37.8 in 1910, and in 1911, 37.0% in 1912 and 36.6% in 1913 - a slightly higher rate of decrease than the decrease in the number of wage earners - from 1900-1913, a decrease from 78.0% to 74.1% of the occupied population. pp.276-7 (Economic Journal, 1952).
employers and a proportion shareholders. Thus did the presentation and availability of statistics confuse the nature of the inequality — as Dobb said

"Such concealment, by emphasis on social unity, is a principal function of a dominant ideology." 89

The great success, however, of Chiozza Money's book was a sign that the contrasts under imperialism would be made plain. Money estimated that the national income was divided between 5½ million who took £909 million — those with incomes over £160 a year — and 39 million with incomes below this. "Riches" were enjoyed by 1.4 million, whose income exceeded £700 p.a., "comfort" by 4.1 million, between £700 and £160 (275 million) — and "poverty" by 39.1 million, so that

"more than one third of the entire income of the United Kingdom is enjoyed by less than one thirtieth of its population." 90

Indeed, it seemed probable that about 120,000 owned two thirds of the wealth of Britain — £5928 million — compared with "state property" worth £558 million, and a total of accumulated wealth abroad of £2,657 million. 91 Money accorded a positive participation to the shareholder:

"He goes to the shareholders' meeting clamouring for his five per cent, and eager to resist any suggestion that the wages of those who make his profits should be increased." 92

Money estimated the profits had risen between 1893 and 1908 by 49.8%, by 21.2% between 1900 and 1908, whereas in the same periods wages had risen only by 12% and 1%. 93

91 ibid. pp. 65-79
92 ibid. p. 101
93 ibid. p. 112
In fact, although Money's own suggestion was for "the conversion of all common services into monopolies" and "The ownership of these monopolies by the public", Riches and Poverty was a key document of the unrest. It attempted to prove its case partly by the contrast between worker and possessor under capitalism, partly by the failure to democratise economic relations - "The fact is, of course, that while 7,000,000 or more poor householders lack the means to buy boots, some tens of thousands of unduly rich households are squandering those means and in effect commanding men to take up industries which shall serve their pleasure," and partly by a belief that by exposing conditions a sufficient momentum would be generated to transform the existing distribution of property. It was as if, having observed that "Between 'dock service', as an employment, and 'dock labour' there lies a wide social gulf, expressed in the philosophy of clothes by the contrast between a smart uniform and the shabbiest threadbare mufti" - the task of emancipation was reduced to providing a uniform for the labourer.

One must ask whether the strike movement, the growth of union membership, and the interest in "syndicalism" and the "contrast" literature mentioned above, was not a movement of the politicisation of those who had lacked "A major element of a democratic political

94 ibid. p.256.

95 ibid. p.149.

96 Booth, op. cit. vol. vii, p.394.
orientation - the belief that one has some control over political elites and political decisions" - applying the term democracy here to "parliamentary monism." The "subject and parochial subcultures" do in fact seem before 1914 to have set about repairing their powerlessness in response to specific economic pressures - not as part of a cycle of "citizen involvement, elite response, and citizen withdrawal .. (tending) to reinforce the balance of opposites needed for democracy." This would require that "Syndicalism" be seen as a process of politicisation without a party, without a parliamentary orientation - or rather, a movement in which the role of unions as foundations of the Labour Party and as economic and political pressure and bargaining groups was caught up in mass activity to transform them into fighting organisations, possible "successor states" to liberal democracy.

In fact, the process of politicisation and the perception of powerlessness in the parliamentary system seems not to have been a function so much of educational as of economic and social deprivation. Williams put it that

"The farm-labourers proper, though they take a deep and active interest in political matters, and may feel strongly on questions of the hour, seldom or never exhibit enthusiasm and hysteria as you meet with in the towns at such times." Allegiance seems to have been expressive - "I'm a yalla, I be. I

98 ibid. p.386.
99 ibid. p.484.
100 Alfred Williams, A Wiltshire Village (1912) p.249.
I never did vote blue, an' never went neither. I'd sooner die fust"\textsuperscript{101} - but as Wilshire pointed out, the labourer in town or country received the benefits of civilisation second-hand - "adulterated food, shoddy clothes, intellectual garbage" - and his democracy likewise.\textsuperscript{102} Leroy describes Syndicalism in much these terms - anti-parliamentary before it was elitist (i.e. seeking to establish a dominant class or ideology), archaic and primitive in many respects. That is, it was alienated from liberal democracy, it was not pre-political but perceived that in "l'abattoir electoral" what was feasible was not orientated towards the greatest needs of the greatest number.\textsuperscript{103} As Arch said,

"These white slaves of England stood there with the darkness all about them, like the Children of Israel waiting for someone to lead them out of the land of Egypt."\textsuperscript{104}

This phenomenon survived the third reform act - and indeed the vote may have increased the sense of powerlessness. Later still, in the war Orton underlined the fact that working class solidarity and community was "a community of economic disabilities", rather than organisations,

\textsuperscript{101} ibid. p.250.

\textsuperscript{102} H.Gaylord Wilshire, Trusts and Imperialism (Chicago, 1901) pp.5-6.

\textsuperscript{103} Maxime Leroy, La Coutume Ouvriere (2 vols., Paris, 1913). The quotation is from Lefrancais, the communard, p.836, vol. 2.

\textsuperscript{104} Joseph Arch,op.cit. p.75. Mann's campaign could spread by way of more sophisticated means of communication, and cumulative effects of strike action could be ascribed to organised, open campaigns, and to newspaper reports, union journals and so forth. For this reason alone there was less in Mann's work of what Arch described as "All that stirring time I felt as if there was a living fire in me. It seemed to me that I was fulfilling a mission; that I had been raised up for the work,"p.76. Certainly, though, there was something of this Promethean fire in Syndicalism: a small religious revival was in fact taking place in Tonypandy late in 1910 - and by Hyndman's account attracted more than Mann's meeting.
especially as before the war even "the invisible foundations of labour were collapsing."  105

Pataud and Pouget described a society in which the filaments of the proletarian nation scarcely impinged on the bourgeois community, save as an inversion of its fortunes:

"A long, severe winter had emphasised the causes for anxiety. There had been bitter suffering around the workman's hearth; To the season's trials were added the resentment due to high prices, which could not be explained by the shortness of supplies. The people put this to the account of the monopolists."  106

Indeed, this class solidarity, which by exposure to common economic pressures could so rapidly overlap customary craft and regional distances, resulted in crisis in determination to build ad hoc communard organisation. In the North East in 1926 the strikers


that no time be spent on discussion of the purpose of the strike, its national or international implications, but that attention be concentrated on the immediate objective. This was to defeat the civil commissioner appointed for the region by the government and 'armed with the Emergency Powers Act in order to break the strike.'

There is probably a conjunctural and a specific sense in which economic pressures produce a class consciousness suspending other community ties. Just as Dobb made the point that "there is always the strictly relative sense in which a slave may benefit from the prosperity of his master", so slave revolts may be endemic and, specifically, epidemic. The economic pressure can normally be adapted to the dominant ideology:

"This village looks up to those who control wealth as if they were the sources of it; and if there is a little dislike of some of them personally, there has so far appeared but little bitterness of feeling against them as a class."

But this operation of the dominant ideology was ambivalent:

"By..witticisms the edge of bitterness is turned; the string is taken out of that sense of inequality which, as the labourer probably knows, would poison his present comfort and lead him into dangerous courses if he let it rankle."

Indeed, the "reference group" of the labourer was customarily the gentry - and vice versa:

"As my wife says, it was bad enough before (the election of 1905/6). The children of the lower classes used, as it was, to take the inside of the pavement, and we had to walk on the kerb. But now we should be driven out into the road."

107 The General Strike in the North East (Our History, no.22,Summer 1965) p.5.
108 M.Dobb, Political Economy and Capitalism (1937) p.233
109 Bourne, op.cit.p.71. Though as Bourne pointed out, there was a residue of bitterness, as over the loss of common woods "And they en't got no more right to it, Mr Bourne, than you and me have! I should like to see they woods all go up in flames!"
110 ibid. p.71.
111 ibid. p.108.
Equilibrium guaranteed, and was, conflict resolution.

As E.T.D'vies has pointed out for South Wales, the political forms of reaction to economic change may first be directed at sub-cultural phenomena which have become disfunctional: "the urge towards unity grew among the Welsh miners with little encouragement from the chapels."¹¹² That is, the interconnections between various forms of domination were made clear as soon as a movement towards unity began, but this involved the miners in a long struggle not against economic conditions, but against nonconformity. In much the same way, Allen described as obstacles to industrial unionism the revanchisme of skilled men blacklegging on labourers, the treachery of officials, the seduction of leaders - surrenders, as it seemed, to the dominant ideology without which no ideology could remain dominant, but impossible to entertain in a revolutionary movement when such integration had taken place.¹¹³ So it was that activists must be in a minority, and generally opposed to official leaders. "The syndicats do not arise out of universal suffrage and do not represent the majority in the generally accepted sense of that term."¹¹⁴

¹¹² E.T.Davies, Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales (Cardiff, 1965) p.158. Davies stresses (e.g. p.160) the importance of immigration as providing the new leaders of the SWMP - and by implication, the challenge to the old leaders, and nonconformity.

¹¹³ E.J.B.Allen, Revolutionary Unionism! (1909) passim. This, despite the scorn with which it was treated on its appearance by the SLF, is a key work to the unrest - not only in so far as Mann was convinced he had been "converted" to industrial syndicalism by it, but because it is concerned with the qualitative and yet measurable changes in working-class life before 1910.

¹¹⁴ Harry W.Laidler, Social-economic Movements (1948/9) p.300
It was probably fair to say that Mrs Bosanquet's remarks described the neutral attitude of the working class in "normal" times:

"Its sturdy common-sense and self-respect tells it that it is not proletarian, that it has some function in the community beyond that of increasing its own numbers, and that therefore there is no natural ground of hatred between it and other classes of the community. No doubt there is a proletarian class in England which is at war alike with itself and all others, and is ready enough to respond to the cry; but it is a small class, and essentially not that of the wage-earners."\textsuperscript{115}

This is comparable to Fabian Ware's analysis of Syndicalism, wherein "A pride of class replaced the sense of class isolation" - for after all, dominant ideology was a means of making men accept insecurity and enforced poverty: "As class consciousness had grown in class isolation, the working-man had begun to regard himself as the basis of society" - and indeed the "self-respect" the "sturdy common-sense" which were integrative in the dominant ideology were no less serviceable when the dominant ideology changed (as, for instance, to embrace imperialism and social reform, and the modification of competition as motor force) or redeployed its forces - "an advance-guard of instinct was making a new attack on the political interests which had meanwhile been busily entrenching themselves."\textsuperscript{116}

Mann seems to have relied on the apparently unimprovable situation of the worker while the rest of the community was prospering:

\textsuperscript{115} H. Bosanquet, The Standard of Life and other reprinted essays (1906) p.300.

\textsuperscript{116} Fabian Ware, The worker and his country (1912) pp.253 and 250. Helen Bosanquet and Fabian Ware are "comparable", since the former's belief that intra-group conflicts are replacing class conflict - and yet that there is an unreconciled proletariat - and Ware's view that increasing consciousness leads to class unity, are essentially descriptions of class conflict and class conciliation at different stages, complementary and not contradictory descriptions.
"In nearly every speech which Mr Tom Mann, (Syndicalism's) chief exponent, makes to the worker, he always appeals for support to the worst paid, who are not unnaturally ready to welcome, without much consideration as to the means of carrying it into effect, the pleasant doctrine of the overthrow of the capitalist and the acquisition of his wealth for the benefit of the worker." 117

Larkin, on the other hand, was able to present his unionists with a new stereotype - the "industrial octopus", the "tramway tyrant", "financial mountebank" and "social Captain Mick McQuaid" - fulfilling the same role in the Dublin strike as Lord Devonport for Tillett in the London dock strike, but a man recognisably in the Carnegie tradition. 118 Economic conditions did indeed point to the breakdown of the conventional priorities - York families with incomes under 26/- a week were worse fed than workhouse inmates and prisoners - and to worsening and depressing conditions. 119

The indigent worker found

"his discontent becomes more firmly rooted, and when the day comes for decision he will be one of the many men determined to 'down tools' even if the issue of the conflict be very doubtful, and his accredited leader deprecates hasty action",

and the survival of the principles of 1834 could only mock the rise of

117 Watney and Little, op. cit., p.29.

118 Arnold Wright, Disturbed Dublin. The story of the great strike of 1913-4 (1914) p.71. Wright nicely demonstrates that although the strike was caused by the "evil social conditions of Dublin", and that Murphy was a "modern" employer - yet it was Murphy who tried to break the influence of the Irish Transport Workers' Union, and took the lead in fighting the strike, and Murphy's empire which was the target of the strikes in the first instance: to Wright, this was irrationalism and malice.

119 B. Seebohm Rowntree, Poverty, sup. cit. p.258. In other words, those "poor" in work and on the "free" market were indeed becoming poorer.
trust, and the whist drive, and the golf course.\textsuperscript{120} As industrial units expanded, urban workers returned to the position of the agricultural labourers in that in "England very few labourers expect to become independent, and...abroad almost all of them expect to do so."\textsuperscript{121} Mrs Reeves described this process in the towns: "These children never rebel against disappointment. It is their lot. They more or less expect it."\textsuperscript{122} Even so, in a disciplined and hierarchical occupation like the railways, and a disciplined and hierarchical trade union, this "expectation of disappointment" was overlaid by a respect for "the predictability of the rule" - its rationality, that is, and its common acceptance. This need not mean raising the level of aspiration, but one can see the railway unions in country and non-unionised districts spreading organisation, a respect for predictability, the first step to control, among agricultural labourers, as well as the railway workers. On the railways, the government would fall, if things went that far, "solely, be it remembered, because the managers were not required by the Government to discuss matters with the men."\textsuperscript{123} - so vital might thus become a base of organisation.

However, it was possible that such organisation would leave the

\textsuperscript{120} Rowntree, The Way to Industrial Peace and the Problem of Unemployment (1914) p.12.
\textsuperscript{121} Rowntree and May Kendall, How the labourer lives, sup. cit. p.19
\textsuperscript{122} Mrs Reeves, op. cit. p.93.
\textsuperscript{123} PW in the Daily News, 21.8.11, quoted in R.Kenney, Men and Rails (1913) p.190.
workers as "an Opposition that never becomes a Government." There
was a parallel between the old craft or customary control, and the
conscious control respectively of the craft unions and the industrial
unionists: "sharing of work long practised by the Yorkshire Glass
Bottle Makers and rationing of employment demanded by the Clyde
Engineers". For just as the Stuff Pressers, for want of a theory
of control for control's sake, were giving up their right to elect
their own foremen, so too men who had expected transformation of
political and economic life by a successful strike also lacked a theory
of control, not for its own sake, but as conceptions of the possibilities
inherent in the exercise of power by the working class. This is why
direct action was a bigger threat than "political Bolshevism", and
why too

"the seeming achievement of a greater equality of power was
itself one of the influences which made working-class aspirations
in general less a common resentment of the subordinate position
of manual work as such and more and more an individual pursuit
of middle-class prerogatives. This pursuit did not have to be
motivated by a deliberate imitation of non-manual workers;
but it was accompanied by an increasing detachment from the
lateral loyalties of a proletariat still resentful of its
powerlessness as well as its poverty or lack of social esteem."  

124 Tawney, quoted in Carter L. Goodrich, The Frontier of Control. A study
in British Workshop Politics (1920) p.258. Emil Davies estimated that
the railway directors had 35 representatives in the Commons, and 71 in

125 Goodrich, op. cit. p.261.

126 ibid. pp.262-3


128 ibid. p.135.
This, then, can be explained both in terms of the survival of attitudes to a scrapped dominant ideology, and in terms of the integration of labour leaders into a new dominant ideology - in either case, reflecting the dangers of the "spontaneity" of the unrest. It was indeed a revolt against the old and the new - with complaints against the old greatly predominating, and so seen by Lenin, who regarded such unrest as an unconscious bid for the fruits of imperialist exploitation. As Bukharin put it, "The futility of the ideas of Labour democracy must be 'proven' by placing it on a level with the Lumpenproletariat, the workers and the artisans of antiquity."\textsuperscript{129}

For in two ways, the idea of labour co-control, and working-class participation in liberal democracy had already been falsified. Booth wrote of the East End political clubs that

"the tone is not so much liberal, or even Radical, as Republican, out of the lines, authorised or unauthorised, of English party politics, and thus very uncertain at the ballot box. There is also a good deal of vague unorganised Socialism."\textsuperscript{130}

And even this Socialism was different from the creeping collectivism which Booth described in the Poor Law as

"a limited form of Socialism - a Socialistic community (aided from outside) living in the midst of an Individualistic nation. Socialistic also to a great extent are our Board Schools, hospitals and charitable institutions, where the conditions of relief are not the services which the applicant can render in return, but the services of which he stands in need."\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{129} Bukharin, op.cit. p.115.

\textsuperscript{130} Booth, op.cit., vol.1, p.99. Booth related much of East End political activity to the lower middle class, though as he said "it is not easy to draw the line between this class and so-called working-men."\textsuperscript{p.99.}

\textsuperscript{131} ibid. p.167.
Again, the notion that control of industry was the whole of the political battle, or that this could be divorced from control of the economy and the whole machinery of decision-making, was to be proven false in the next fifty years. Firms prefer "interest in participation", rather than intense participation - or complete indifference, though even so "the general level of enthusiasm for participation is largely a product of the personal enthusiasm of the higher status members of the group."\footnote{J.A. Banks, *Industrial Participation. Theory and practice: a case study* (Liverpool, 1965) pp.120 and 133.} One may thus argue that spontaneity pre-empted analysis: that the economic pressures which directed propagandists to consider trade union control as the basis of working-class government helped the movement assume an independence of the existing political modes and structures - but could not convey awareness of the novelty of these pressures, traditional as were their effects.\footnote{One could indeed argue that "spontaneity" increases with social distance: when Colonel Brotherton told Lord Melbourne (quoted in Hammonds' *Village Labourer*) that "The insurrectionary movement seems to be directed by no plan or system, but merely actuated by the spontaneous feeling of the peasantry and quite at random", it might be said that he either could not or did not care to, enquire into the specific and general grievances, grass-roots leadership and agencies of communication among the labourers. In this sense spontaneity, consciousness and organisation are simply different aspects of political action undertaken against or outside the dominant political ideology.}
the phase of competitive capitalism, the labour movement was divided as to whether the new stage would similarly "develop away", or whether, if revolution were necessary, it would come spontaneously, or by a signal from the leaders. In one way, this distinction is unreal and immaterial. Unemployment appeared to exist already and to continue to exist in all corners of the capitalist system, a proof of its incapacity to supply basic needs. The Minority report noted the increase in retirement age accompanied by high unemployment. In 1908, unemployment in engineering and shipbuilding was running between 8 and 16%, after the raising of the load line, involving said Hyndman, a saving of £6-£8 million to the shipowners. The London figures quoted by Chapman and Hallsworth noted that machinery had thrown out of work 5% of those unemployed, illness 7.5%, disputes and disagreements 5%, 6.9% bankruptcy and 8.2% bad marks — while 36.5% were unemployed through the slackness of trade. Such unemployment affecting "the young and those in the prime of life" meant that the prospect of unemployment in a strike was more attractive — and much less common — than the unemployment resulting from technical change, arguments, and financial collapse. Again, if workers' perceptions of capitalism changed slowly, and their position in

135 ibid. p.36.
136 H.M. Hyndman, The murdering of British seamen by Mr. Lloyd George, the Liberal Cabinet and the Board of Trade (BSP, 1913) p.10.
137 Chapman and Hallsworth, op.cit. p.84. In 1909 (March 3) the Manchester City Council found 16100 males unemployed — 6-7% of able-bodied males, of whom 2200 were trade unionists (p.71).
the system was likewise slow to alter, so too were the employers' attitudes to labour firmly unchanging, though all else change.

"When I first married, my servants were the daughters of small farmers and shopkeepers. Later on I had the daughters of artisans. Now I have the daughters of labourers, sometimes even of casual labourers, and lately I have had several brought up in workhouses, or rescued from notoriously bad surroundings. How absurd it would be to expect that, simply because the education of the lowest classes has considerably improved during the last thirty-five years, my present servants can equal in good sense or physique the ones that I used to have. The girls who would have been my servants in the old days are not extinct or 'degenerate'; they are Board-school teachers, cashiers, milliners, post-office clerks, mothers' helps, and nursery governesses. I have lost, but they have gained; and the untrained labourers' daughters, who became civilised in a house that formerly they would have had no chance of entering, have gained most of all."158

This breaking-in of servants to bourgeois modes and deference reverberated through society - down to the children's "'Give us yer fag, sir'" scores of time each day.159 It is easy to forget that a huge group of men themselves employed were employers of servants:

"Labouring people are unable to shirk any of life's discomforts by 'getting a man' or 'a woman', as we say, to do the disagreeable or risky jobs which continually need to be done."140

As Mrs Bosanquet put it, however, whatever the chance of social integration and even advancement lying in service to the bourgeoisie, the rewards were nugatory. "Such hats! and such feathers in them! But even the hats and feathers cannot always tempt them, for it is dreadfully hard work to be a 'general' and do all the housework when you are only fourteen."141 And even when adult life became more supplied with fishing, cycling and rambling clubs, still boys and

138 M.Loane, From their Point of View (1908) p.193.
140 Bourne, Change in the village, sup. cit. p.18.
youths were used as a new proletariat - cheap because they were young - a well-broken new generation of adult workers from schools which "could cope with their task only by gross overcrowding." 142

The ideal, perhaps, was suggested by Bray in his five lessons for the town child - "the lesson of regularity", accuracy - "the second characteristic of the machine", the "habit of prompt obedience rendered to any person who, for the time being, occupies a position of superiority" - and, if more lessons still are necessary, attention and order. 143 Thus unemployment, and the training of the child and the labourer in proper submissiveness and deference were two prongs of the same fork - a mixture of discipline, unproductivity and insecurity. Given that unemployment affected men of all ages, all levels of skill and accomplishment, and that there was a causal connection between the unemployed and those "relying" on casual labour, there is here the same exhortation to work - and the impossibility of keeping work in the system, as for the servant there was the exhortation to ape middle-class manners, and yet the impossibility of attaining the same position. Here was a bourgeois policy with a function indeed, while for the servants, escaping perhaps from houses where good weather "brings out the bugs somethink 'orrible"as Mrs Reeves put it, and where children "sometimes stand round the table for lack of chairs" even life with the Footers had its recommendation. 144

142 S. Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield (Liverpool, 1959) p.195
144 Mrs Reeves, op. cit. pp.36 and 60.
Again, although poverty, as well as hardship could be found at some levels in every occupation, the distribution was not uniform: certain trades and areas of deprivation acted more as deterrents to other workers than indictments of the industrial system. The expected response to social hierarchy was typically that of "One little press girl (who) said in answer to a question, 'Oh, the lacquering girls are ladies'". The range of choice determined the acceptable and reasonable response: asked whether they would prefer domestic service to factory work, one girl preferring service wrote that "When you are in a Gentleman's house you associate with kinder people and learn to act and speak differently", while the factory worker said she preferred the factory "Because their is a fixed time for meals. And you do know when you are done."

Those trades where poverty was most common might often be those where ad hoc organisation and the transmission of common grievances might be most feasible - and local voting power most concentrated. For instance, Mess made the point that in West Ham, 68% of the adult occupied males were casual dock labourers, and in 1910-11, roughly 25% of the applications for free school meals for their children came from dockers. It is, perhaps, in such correlations that the strength of the "unofficial proletariat" lies (of the NASDW Bulletin, no 2, 26.5.55, quoted in Vernon H.Jensen Hiring of Dock Workers (Harvard, 1964) p.181: "All I can say to Mr O'Hare and his friends is that while lining up with the bosses against workers you are really weakening the T & G and making it easier for the employers to settle accounts - here we have the 'white' union (throwing) overboard its basic duty, namely to fight for the interests of its members and (taking) over the role of being an employers' protection association. No wonder we got out of it.")

E.Cadbury, M.Cecile Matheson and George Shann, Womens' Work and Wages (1906) p.70.

ibid. p.118.

The small scale industry, the fastening of aspiration to bourgeois modes, could never transform the whole proletariat into a mass of masochists, relishing their deserved and honest poverty. If the Duke of Northumberland said of Bob Williams that he is "simply an agent of Lenin working in this country for our destruction", the apparently close correspondence between demands for security and a market rate and Leninism could have the opposite of the intended effect. If open warfare was a sign of desperation, there were merry guerillas enough. The ploughman who let his horses eat the fruit trees in the next field, and told his employer when he complained "I've got fifteen pounds in my pocket, and do not care a d—n for you, nor yet your master..." and "simply walked off my farm to the next one, and as not he but his widowed mother was my tenant, I was unable to gain possession of the cottage for another man" achieved his own restorative victory.

In general, however, the annual figures for unemployment mask the dependency on "economic laws" socially subordinating the wage-earner to his employer, while "scientifically" making him permanently disposable and insecure. Beveridge suggested that in a bad year, the percentage claiming unemployed benefit was ten times the mean unemployment figure for the year, and seven times the mean in an average year. So long as 10,000 men competed daily for 3,000 jobs in the


Beveridge pointed to a potent force making for industrial and class unity, in that "This fluctuation of industrial activity has clearly nothing to do with the wishes or characteristics of the men employed. It is not within the control of individual employers. It is not limited to particular trades." p.41.
London docks at 3/- a day, the experience of unemployment — while it might make losses in strikes less alarming — made work under normal, poor, conditions seem desirable.\footnote{ibid. p.87 — up to 1891, the quoted earnings for 1904-6 (p.94) show a daily earning of around the same figure.} If it had been possible to transfer to the union, or the Labour Exchange, the maintenance of an equitable number of jobs — instead of the 98% which made all industrial job-holding a "competitive business" — one might have encouraged a psychological assurance that men had "job rights" as well as "skill rights." To some extent, unions did strive towards that position:

"Organisation among the men themselves helps to unify the labour market and decasualise the demand. Every trade union naturally and instinctively becomes an instrument for promoting the mobility of the labour supply and so for limiting the entry to already overcrowded trades."

Indeed, from that might spring the beginnings of "conscious or contagious" Syndicalism. But often enough it was as the ASE General Secretary observed

"It is cruel mockery... to tell us to revert to old-fashioned apprenticeship or to improved methods of technical education as having any bearing on the question. Our unemployed members are men who have served apprenticeship, and many of them are otherwise technically trained. Carpenters, shipwrights and mechanics of all sorts are standing in the market-place, even in large numbers, and are also duly trained and educated."\footnote{ASE 1907 annual report, p.128, note 1 of Beveridge, op.cit.}

Unemployment, then, had a dual aspect: it underlined the humiliation and waste of insecurity — but was also an active inducement to remain within the system. Only local and state action, union organisation, and a determination of resist imported labour, in or out of strikes, seemed to hold out hope of improving conditions without conflicting...
with the apparently iron law of unemployment. Unemployment may well have been the cohesive force uniting the skilled and the casual before 1914, supplying even as strong a motive to "change" capitalism as did low wages.

The price rise not only demonstrated the industrial insecurity and powerlessness of the proletariat, it meant that those reforms initiated before the start of the unrest, and before the Insurance Act, could not compensate for an estimated rise in retail prices of 13.7% (in the years 1902-12). The 1928 report on the unemployed in the South Wales coalfield, enjoying the fruits of reformism, describes the typical diet of the pre-1914 employed labourer:

"little beyond white bread, butter or margarine, potatoes, sugar, jam, tea and bacon in limited quantity. Meat was seldom eaten except in very small amounts on Sundays, very often not more than a shillingsworth for the whole family. Fresh milk was not seen by us except when supplied from a welfare clinic, the usual milk being skimmed condensed. Fresh vegetables other than potatoes were seldom eaten, and it was noticeable that almost invariably the bread was not baked at home."

154 And its continuing creation - Tawney (in ed. J.H. Whitehouse Problems of Boy Life (1912) p.25) mentioned that of those leaving Glasgow elementary schools, 55.6% were to be milk or lorry boys, 24.6% unskilled and only 12% apprentices of learners: in London, 38.7% were going to become errand, shop and van boys, 28% low skilled and 11.2% skilled workers.

155 Cd 6955 (1913) Cost of living of the working classes in 1912.

156 Cmd 3272 Report on Investigation in the coalfield of South Wales and Monmouth. 1928-9. (Cd 8980, on the rise in the cost of living since June 1914, showed that a family whose budget traditionally included bacon (up 40% 1904-14), flour (15%), cheese (19%) and rice (13%), in considerable amounts, and relatively less of the cheaper commodities would be hard hit - without necessarily seeing why.
Those areas already with a mass of low-skilled and casual workers also suffered most from the price rise: Swansea and Liverpool had rises of 18%, Manchester and Salford of 15%. In the South Wales coalfield, prices tended to be higher as a result of immigration. Throughout the country, rises in price naturally affected the lower paid whose budgets were inelastic and whose resistance low: the family which in thirty-five days made seventy-two purchases of tea and seventy-seven of sugar was budgeting in the least economic manner — making something of a mockery of the tabulated budgets in the "literature of exposure" which implied that men on a daily wage could manage a weekly budget. There would seem here to be a prime facie case for saying that before 1914, "workers' control", that is, control of the economic environment was a natural response to this insecurity, an acknowledgement of the failure of traditional methods of resistance to traditional — and increasingly novel — market pressures. There did not, in fact, have to be repercussions from universal education to explain the desperation in outbreaks of strikes, revolutionary enthusiasm, and resentment of economic inequality.

If employers would not or could not, and government would not or could not, assure a living wage, then a "Syndicalism", an attempt to assume distribution of resources by the workers themselves, was as attractive in immiserated Britain as in those countries where a peasantry was being turned into proletariat, or where a sudden

157 Cd 6955, sup. cit.
158 Rowe, Wages in the coal industry, op. cit. p.32.
159 Booth, op. cit., vol. 1, p.142.
increase of industrial workers had not been accompanied by concessions from the political class.

Not only were familiar pressures increasing, but work itself was becoming intensified, customs broken down, by means and for purposes which had only equivocal compensations. The Taylor system, introduced, said Pouget, "supprimer la flânerie des ouvriers, les astreindre à des mouvements rapides" had, said Faroux in L'Auto, led to a two-thirds reduction in the numbers employed in Bethlehem Steel - for a mere 60% wage rise for those who were left.\(^{160}\) The worker was in fact supposed to welcome the productivity of a system which destroyed the solidarity which alone gave a modicum of control over wages and conditions. This breaking of custom was an influence on the typical CLC student, studying it was said "along certain restricted lines, (reading) little outside his own particular field and (grasping) too readily the shibboleth for the reality", and who thus discovered "Old authorities have been destroyed. The remote has been shown to have intimate and personal importance."\(^{161}\) With a nice inconsistency the commissioners, having criticised the unreality of the worker's study, maintained that "the essential spirituality of education is neglected or forgotten."\(^{162}\)

If indeed it was hoped to gear the industrial system to technical development and productivity on the grounds that technical development was neutral and in the interests of all, they could hardly expect to


162 ibid.
maintain an ideology based on "essential spirituality" - especially when the reduction of labour costs and the restriction of union activity, rather than the raising of wages, seemed the field of "research" most attractive to entrepreneurs. The disparity of the rewards was implicit in Stephen Reynolds's letter to The Times in 1910, "you hauls an' hauls your guts out, an' never gets no for'arder, an' then you dies, an' your chil'ern bain't no for'arder nuther."163

Not only were men like James Connolly at a disadvantage in the speed-up through age, or in his case, short sight, but as Williams pointed out, the speed-up involved producing two, three, or ten times more work, for perhaps 2/- on the daily wage, and a loss of double that on piecework rates.164 Over twelve years, in the Swindon works, there was stricter discipline, a new type of foreman recruited shortly after entering the works - without more attention to consultation. "Men's opinions upon a point are rarely solicited; if offered, they are belittled and rejected".165 There was little technical education for the young recruits: "They called I Pump a long time ago" remarked a new imperial proletarian.166 If there were greater opportunities for mobility under the new system, its introduction and enforcement was deeply resented: the "feed and speed men" resented cheap labour introduced to work new machinery. Crafts like the turners' 163 Reynolds, Letters, op. cit. (28.10.10) p.139 164 Williams, Life in a Railway Factory, op. cit. p.5. 165 ibid. p.6. 166 ibid. p.160. Williams noted with dismay the rapid lapse into illiteracy or semi-literacy of those entering the workshop at fourteen or so.
were undermined. Again, "if technical knowledge and the use of the mind were coming into greater demand, this enhanced demand bore on the skilled rather than the lesser skilled grades."

Levine mentioned six developments intensifying labour before 1914, increasing social segregation, and demonstrating the insecurity and powerlessness of the work group as an economic organisation. These were mechanisation and automatism, factoryisation, increased division of labour and specialisation, standardisation of products, increased precision, and standardised components. Despite this development of productive force, involving a concentration of capital, and hence of control, the compensating advantages were seen to arise, if they did so at all - from institutionalisation of the conflict of interests. Industrial relations, like social relations might be academically justified in terms of the benefits of co-operation, but they were organised round separate functions and differing relations to the mechanical process in which their interests lay. The workers were arranged round the machine "like iron filings along the 'lines of force' round a magnet. For they work the machine; they form one producing complex with it. They cannot regard Nature as a passive shut-in-object of contemplation." In this sense, for reification the worker can exchange reification: the mechanisation of his labour power can be calculated in terms of Halsey or Rowan premiums: or contract piece-work, or Taylorism, or the Emerson efficiency bonus. Each system "values" human labour and incentive

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168 ibid. p.68 et. seqq.
169 Caudwell, op. cit. p.208.
higher or lower, but in all cases it is reified.\textsuperscript{170} If unemployment shows a contempt for human labour, then by the premium systems, labour was forced into a yet closer and more reified relationship with the machine. Bourne described something of this process in "Change in the Village",

"When the half-peasant men of the valley began to enter the labour market as avowed wage-earners, a set of conditions confronted them which we are apt to think of as established by a law of Nature, but which, in fact, may be almost unknown in a peasant community. For the first time the importance of a "demand for labour" came home to them.\textsuperscript{171}

If the market price for labour is, as it were, the "social value" accorded to men's labour, then although any exchange transacted through the market may involve reification, there is high or low compensation, if it is never adequate. But in Allen's description of the reification and defeat of men by mechanical intensification, there is, in these terms, an inadequate compensation. What in bourgeois terms is high compensation becomes a cul de sac for the proletariat.

"In the engineering trades, first of all the horizontal lathes, and now the capstan lathes, amongst a whole host of machines, have played havoc with the men. In the woodworking trades, planing machines, moulding machines, morticing machines, and mitreing machines have displaced hundreds of men and rendered their skill nugatory. In the building trades we find the huge mortar-pans driven by electricity displacing the gangs of labourers on the mortar-beds. The "Scotchmen on the scaffolding", lifting hundredweights of stuff at a time, displace the labourers and their old "jenny-wheel". Huge blocks of stone and granite, cut and polished by machinery, terra-cotta

\textsuperscript{170} of J.E.Prosser, Piece-Rate, Premium and Bonus (1919) passim.

\textsuperscript{171} Bourne, op. cit. p.95.
figures and other artificial stonework displacing bricklayers and masons. Whilst moulded ceiling centres, Lincrusta-Walton, Anaglypta, etc., removes alike numbers of plasterers, carpenters and paperhangers. The road sweepers and navvies are tackled by the motor brooms and the scarifiers that are attached to the sides of the steam-rollers; while the "steam-navvy" and the "German-navvy" put still more out of work. In the printing trades the lino-type, the monotype, and the stereotype mean trades are cut into. The huge Hoe rotary press, driven by electricity likewise reduces the number of machine-minders, while half-tone blocks, "zincos", and various other photo-chemical plates displaces the old steel and wood engravers. On the railways the introduction of electricity as motive power, automatic signalling, besides heavier engines and heavier freights, make the railway workers wonder who is to be "sacked" next. Even clerks are being displaced by the different letter-copying and duplicating appliances, typewriters, and so forth.\textsuperscript{172}

The question here is not one of the quantitative importance of intra-sectoral labour movements, but the awareness that machinery had placed on it a greater value in industry than the men who worked in it, that in the name of the development of productive forces, the proletariat was if anything less in control of its work situation than previously. Neither labourers nor skilled men had an immunity from the imposed transformation of their occupations. To say that the "residuum" of unemployed and discontented consisted "almost entirely of inferior workmen, or of men who suffer from an exaggerated abhorrence of that regular work which is to all of us more or less a burden."...was neither true nor as credible as it might have been before the exposures of conditions in the sweated industries, and the surveys of York and London.\textsuperscript{175} The argument of the industrialists that it was the land which exacted from

\textsuperscript{172} E.J.B. Allen, op. cit. p. 5 et seqq.
industry a tribute of unproductivity no longer accorded with the
degree of mechanisation in industry: nor were there pockets
of self-governing workmen within industry of the type Rae
described -

"The craftsmen wrought and idled as they chose by fits and
turns, and it was their habits that made Defoe say the
English people were the most diligent lazy people on the
face of the earth."174

These broad influences did not account for traditional differences
between trades and hence differing reactions to these pressures,
nor entirely for the customary levels of differentials. Rowe
proposed that the difference between cotton workers and miners was
"nearly as great as the gulf between Marx and Marshall!"175

In some industries, notably railways, cotton and building, the
unskilled improved their relative position, after the war, while
the unskilled and skilled engineers did badly, as did the
unskilled in the coalfields.176 The relative immiseration of the
unskilled in cotton, coal, railways and engineering in 1915
compared with 1886 may be important in suggesting correlations
between intra-occupational wage movements and sectional militancy
- but the general pressures, the national wage movements and
intensification are no less striking. Union came to seem the only
defence against industry-wide developments: no-one in large-scale

174 In John Rae, Eight hours for work (1894) p.5.
175 Rowe, Wages in practice and theory, op. cit. p.166.
176 ibid. pp.46-49.
industry could feel safe from this influence. "I will now dwell for a moment on the nature of our proposals for traffic. Though severely attacked as 'American', they were not really in any sense unEnglish" said the chairman of the Railway Investment Company in 1906 - and the foreign influence was resented not because it was alien, but because it involved processes similar to those in the later wartime dilution -

"You must split the job into simpler processes, fit the machines with jigs and other fool-proof contrivances, and in general standardise your work so that it can be done on simpler machines."^79

Even without a breakdown of skilled manning, this could lead to the complaint of the Verviétois, that

"Sous le faux mobile de progrès, on a fait conduire par un tisserand, deux machines, dont l'une nécessitait déjà suffisamment de peine, étant donnée la difficulté des articles de fabrication verviétoise."^80

Where the changes were seen as coercive, it was hard to distinguish the coercive application of work-study and premium from the situation where shop assistants "In some establishments...are actually fined for leaving any food on the plate."^81 In the railways, too, the speed-up

177 of Hutt, The condition of the working class in Britain (1933) p.169 - "Through the introduction of automatic and semi-automatic machinery of all kinds - such as capstan and turret lathes, pressing, stamping and planing machines - the old cleavage between the craftsman and the labourer has been broken down."

178 A.Emil Davies, op. cit. p.60


180 L.Dechesne, op. cit. p.124.

181 Clementina Black, Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage (1907) p.52.
could be seen as an intensification of conventional discipline:

"Petty officialism - comprising men only one remove from the ranks - is responsible for much of the worst friction that arises...Speaking generally, red tape in the railway service tends to a description of semi-militarism - quite a different kind of thing from the relations which exist between an artisan and his foreman."\(^{182}\)

Many, neither socialist nor Syndicalist, would agree with Daggar, that

"Increased production means a smaller portion of the wealth created for those who produce it. An effort has been made to prove to the worker that Karl Marx is correct in his contentions that 'machinery, considered alone, lightens labour; under capitalism, intensifies it.'"\(^{183}\)

Certainly, there is evidence that such resistance to intensification does not lead to demands for control: "'Miss my Saturday football' is a repeated refrain, although a few were more articulate" in a factory where only \(^5\%\) of the sample maintained that unions were correct to oppose management innovations.\(^{184}\) The innovations themselves before 1914, though they might be carried out in the spirit of entrepreneurial capitalism, were in fact and in function increasingly regarded as improvements to national industries, striving for the condition of international monopoly. Hence "efficiency" (typically national efficiency) was stressed above profit - and, as we have seen, above wages in practice, though not in theory.

J. Slater Lewis talked of

"A manufacturing organisation (being), in a sense, an engine of warfare - industrial warfare - hence it is obvious that readiness, efficiency and perfection of organisation must receive very careful if not permanent consideration, as against

\(^{182}\) Booth, op. cit. vol. vii, p.345.

\(^{183}\) George Daggar, Increased Production. From a worker's point of view (Glasgow SIP) p.90.

\(^{184}\) Olive Banks, The attitudes of steelworkers to technical change. (Liverpool, 1960) p.98. 62\% however, maintained that considerations of profit did not justify dismissals (p.95)
Despite the development of these new ideological forms, and an increasingly monopolistic infrastructure, workers before 1914 could scarcely believe that the pursuit of marginal productivity was sufficient defence and explanation of their economic position, especially when, despite the assault on custom, productivity per head was rising so slowly.

The growth of the trust and the centralisation of control—such as Hay described in "the Beardmore Vickers Octopus"—was for the proletariat a further sign that an amalgamated union was but a necessary response to amalgamation of employers, and to those directors of enterprise as Sir William Beardmore, who said "The workers are flying high just now, but when the war is over we will soon bring them down." Again, survivals of pluralism, backed by a diffuse dominant ideology meant that the panics caused by "Mr Pierpont Morgan...coming to eat up the British coal industry," were shortlived, and "In England, it was possible for the banker to contemplate the decline of British industry with equanimity, feeling that his own interest was entirely unaffected." However, phases of union growth—(the AF of L grew from \( \frac{3}{4} \)m to 1.6 million between 1897 and 1904)—the introduction of "driving" managers, showed that even though the classic joining of finance and industrial

186 J. M. Hay, The Beardmore Vickers Octopus (Glasgow 1920) p. 5.
188 B. Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (1960) p. 145.
capital had not taken place, many "American" features were present in the economy. Just as monopoly led to demands for nationalisation and anti-trust legislation - so too the twenty-nine trusts representing 564 firms in 1910-11 marked but the most striking proof of the "closure" of the economic system.\textsuperscript{189} The changes in the dominant ideology led to such inversions as that implicit in Angell's remark on the "intellectual soldier" - such men "have a life not very different from that of men of any intellectual calling; much less of physical strife than is called for in many civil occupations; less than falls to the lot of engineers, ranchers, sailors, miners, and so on."\textsuperscript{190} For here the contrast is not only with the "soldier as warrior", but also with the "soldier as aristocrat". For this "closure" was not simply a matter of the statistical reduction of the individual worker in the trust, the monopoly, the large-scale factory, but a development subordinating the worker to new technical processes, to a dominant class apparently the more impenetrable and secure through its inclusion of "intellectual" and "professional" characteristics, "even" in its army.

Naturally, this striving for homogeneity and class unity had a function, of which the trust was explicit and material witness, and which was so perceived, for instance, by the Welsh miners:-- the "tendency for colliery concerns to be amalgamated or inter-linked together under the ownership of comparatively small groups of people ... (T)his tendency towards monopoly has aroused considerable alarm in the minds of miners, and many regard the combine movement as being

\textsuperscript{189} Edouard Guyot, Le socialisme et l'évolution de l'Angleterre contemporaine (Paris 1913)

\textsuperscript{190} N. Angell, The Great Illusion (1910) p. 213.
directed towards their industrial subjugation."\textsuperscript{191}

The labour unrest, arising out of frustrated expectations within the old system of industrial domestic competition in a position of world monopoly and inchoate reaction to a trend towards domestic monopoly in world competition "froze" the labour movement in attitudes which were neither wholly revolutionary nor wholly collaborationist - the butterfly permanently stuck in its chrysalis. The gross discontinuities and alienative effects of the political system, however, Reynolds quotes an opinion of the minimum wage, that "All of us working men are Socialists nowadays in things like that. Only I dare say we shall vote Conservative, us that's here, after that" - was offset and obscured by the mixed fortunes and atomism of the economic system.\textsuperscript{192} Aldcroft notes the example of the British car industry, which had produced 200 makes of car before 1913, 100 of which had already dropped out of production.\textsuperscript{193} The development of the new economic base, through capital export, the attempt to achieve political domination of growth markets and raw materials did not overnight displace the old sources and justifications of manufacturing supremacy and competitive modes, and in the same way the traditional parties, as Péguy put it, continued to live by their mystique (or their tradition)

\textsuperscript{191} Cd 8668, sup. cit. p.103.

\textsuperscript{192} Stephen Reynolds and Bob and Tom Woolley, Seems So! A working-class view of politics. (1911) p.171

and transform their policies, however superficially.

This "formation of a new ideology" is necessarily obscure, partly because it is reflexive on long-term economic, social and even philosophical development, partly because its dominant and functional (that is, neutral) aspects are so closely interlinked. The Fabians, for instance, saw in the adaptation of the traditional system to the demands of new management, legislative and technological techniques the suspension of dominance. Until the breakdown of consumer capitalism in the '20s and '30s, Beatrice Webb was convinced that the technocrat had no class, and that a middle-class social conscience was the embodiment of classless expertise. Occasionally, however, this ideology could be seen in formative stage: Andrews of the Titanic in 1905 advised the technical worker to be punctual, not to question orders, to try to get all instructions in writing, treat his superiors with respect "no matter whether they are fools or know less than yourself", never be first to leave the shop, and so on.\footnote{Shan F.Bullock, Thomas Andrews:Shipbuilder (Dublin, 1912) p.39} This non-political element was, however, politicised by the fact that Andrews was an Imperialist, a "big navy" man. Many in the South, said his biographer, thought"Ulster had at last found the makings of a leader." Social reform he wanted, to encourage "thrift, temperance and endeavour" - indeed, "As his real pals he wanted to help the workers, educate and lift them."\footnote{ibid. pp.50-2.} This profile could scarcely, however, be sold to those workers, deprived "d'un...
droit natural, du droit au travail, et elle en est privée parce qu'une minorité possède le monopole des moyens de production."\textsuperscript{196} In a sense, then, the second line of priorities, after the establishment of a commercial and financial base, was to secure for the worker that security and standard of living which would reduce the temperature around those inflammable areas of unemployment and low wages which seemed to lay the foundation for revolutionary workers' organization - be it called trade union, syndicalist, socialist or communist. True, the employers "would rather pay fabulous sums for plant and running expenses than allow the workman to get a few shillings more in wages"\textsuperscript{197} - but the logic was the logic of building Dreadnoughts, and for capitalists in a world dominated by capital, the logic was consistent.

In fact, the emergence of new ideology was transmitted only slowly through society: the more alienated, of whatever class, perceived the more clearly the aspects of domination and its agents: "It is painful to contemplate the ignorance, stupidity, and prejudice of the staff in charge of operations" said Williams.\textsuperscript{198} Socialist organisations - "aspiration touched with emotion" - could not be seduced by Messrs Colman's benevolent despotism.\textsuperscript{199} But some, like Hayes, saw in the trust a superb defensive system for the middle-class. It would be a new Civil Service for the "Gentleman Craftsman" of the bourgeoisie, a nationalisation according to bourgeois modes, underwritten

\textsuperscript{196} M.Tougan-Baranowsky, op. cit. p.468.
\textsuperscript{197} Williams, Life in a Railway Factory, sup. cit. p.229.
\textsuperscript{198} ibid. p.230.
\textsuperscript{199} C.B.Hawkins, Norwich. A social study (1910) pp.288 and 305.
by the Fabians' National Co-operation candidates. 200 Indeed, the maintenance of class dominance in private or public trustified structures could well be assured: as Anderson said, "Free Trade and foreign competition need not necessarily afford protection against the arbitrary despotism of home monopoly." 201 Anderson went on to stress the political implications of such amalgamation and monopoly: it "drives an additional wedge between capital and labour, destroying the last vestige of personal relationship between master and man", leads to unemployment and so on. 202 Again, such monopoly was wasteful - both in its expenses and in its savings: Anderson made the point that Lever Brothers spent £2m to establish themselves in the domestic market - and expected to save £200,000 a year on advertising after amalgamation - a circular and self-generated process which owed nothing to the national, if unreal and unhistorical, processes of supply and demand. 203

The reaction to the homogenesis of capitalism thus demonstrates a confusion between the development of productive forces and relations of production. "Syndicalism" followed the line that Marx took on corporations and joint stock companies: he

"did not regard the process from the point of view of legal ownership - which might be distributed among a large number of shareholders - but rather from the point of view of the magnitude of capital under unified direction." 204

200 F.W.Hayes, The United Kingdom Limited (1910) p.8 et. seqq.
201 W.C.Anderson, The Menace of Monopoly (Manchester ILP) p.11.
203 ibid. p.2.
At the same time this anticipated the Burnham thesis that managerial capitalism was virtually managed socialism. They thus came to identify state socialism with Lever in 1903, who said

"£8 is an amount which is soon spent, and it will not do you much good if you send it down your throats in the form of bottles of whisky, bags of sweets, or fat geese for Christmas. On the other hand, if you leave this money with me, I shall use it to provide for you everything which makes life pleasant - viz. nice houses, comfortable homes, and healthy recreation. Besides, I am disposed to allow profit sharing under no other than that form."

True enough, in a world which had not comprehended de Tocqueville, this was very close to possible forms of Socialism - and it was against these forms that Syndicalists and Socialists like Mann and Connolly themselves rebelled.

At all times, even in the most determined demand for a living wage - a demand apparently susceptible to quantification at all points - there was a non-quantifiable aspect, even when no more than a purely formal or hopeless plea for the end of capitalism. Mallock's figures might be claimed to show that growing income per head showed "The conclusions of agitators generally, (to be) an absolute inversion of historical facts." But just as there were non-quantifiable aspects of what The Economist called a "slipping into a feudalistic system of cartel control," so too an "occasional few" did perceive in employers' associations and Chambers of Commerce "the beginnings of politically potent and monopoly-oriented methods

205 Charles Wilson, The history of Unilever vol. 1. (1954) pp.146-7
206 W.H.Mallock, op. cit. p.37. The "optical illusion" of poverty, "in an otherwise progressive and numerically increasing population" is figured away without reference to purchasing power.
for the centralized manipulation of the business system as a whole.\textsuperscript{208} - though here again, the anarchy of competition was still a resistance to the success of such attempts. The labourer might find not only that control of his environment increasingly receded in possibility, but that social relations condemned him to "other-directedness", that employers

"have new kinds of knowledge; almost one may say that they use their brains in new ways; and the result is that between them and the village labourer mutual understanding has broken down."\textsuperscript{209}

Where the alienated intellectual could disalienate by cultural activity, the worker could not necessarily discover the roots of his alienation, let alone propose a solution which ranged from care for the workhouse children's farthing pat-a-cakes, and the statement about Edwardvii, that "I feel, and I know, at the bottom of my heart, that he is the greatest statesman that the world possesses at this moment".\textsuperscript{210}

Thus the formation of a new stage of capitalism within, and sometimes critically in conflict with, the old, presents the dominant class with an ideological crisis. The resulting pressures and contradictions not resolved even at the verbal and philosophical level may lead to an increase in class consciousness in sections, even large sections, of the working-class. But it leads also to a new "portrait" of the world by the dominant class: the modes of

\textsuperscript{208} Brady, op.cit. p.158

\textsuperscript{209} Bourne, op.cit. p.106

\textsuperscript{210} This was said of Will Crooks, in George Haw, From Workhouse to Westminster (1911) p.305.
dominance and the new structures seem progressively firmer, more stable, more diffuse. Strike action becomes guerrilla warfare. The domestic proletariat bears the full weight of this ideological development, whilst it is the proletariat of the areas to which advanced capitalism is exported who feel its material weight, and have, perhaps, the strongest ideological base with which to resist. Meanwhile, the domestic proletariat could be encouraged to await amelioration over an indefinite time-span, and to fight the old capitalism while new forms emerged.

Even so, the strike was some indication not only that bad conditions existed — which no-one could contest — but that even the humane employers had not found the key to industrial peace. Jacobs biscuits, "Maligned and calumniated to an incredible degree, they have been made the victims of a particularly shameful description", suffered from a strike even though its workers could buy cups of tea for ½d and sit on the roof of the factory in their spare time. However expert the managers, however they might urge that "For success, a forward wage policy demands the abandonment of all restrictions on the adaptability and inventive energy of the capitalist system", behind the managers there were owners who, like the coal owners, resisted wage claims:

"Mr Smillie remarked some years ago that on every occasion of wage settlement during his long experience, the Scottish coal-owners had declared that the new agreement would ruin

211 Wright, op. cit. p.23.
212 ibid. p.65.
213, Rowe, Wages in practice and theory, sup. cit. p.233.
them, and yet they had survived to make even bigger profits".214

Ownership and control were organically and functionally linked even at the level of policy. The problem was to know how to maintain both while stressing the neutrality of one or pointing to their supposed incompatibility. In social relations emphasis on the prerogatives of ownership and the obligations of control, and vice versa, might shift and lead to the blandishments and claims quoted above. It is suggested that an element of the new dominant ideology was to stress the social obligations of control over and against the privilege of ownership, but that clearly the class interests and assumptions of controllers and owners coincided.

After all, even if profits fell, so long as ownership and control remained, the possibility of future profit remained, and so too did class dominance. This dual aspect of the capitalist system - ownership and control - was becoming clearer before 1914. One finds it in Rowntree's plea to workers and masters to recognise those "economic interests which bind them together much more closely than any which can sunder them,"215 and in the statements of the farmer who told Rowntree's team "I used to take an interest in my men; but now I don't seem to care a snap about them, and I don't think they care a snap about me."216 This process of proletarianisation which was being completed before 1914, coincided with changes in the direction of

214 ibid. p.217.
216 Rowntree, How the labourer lives, sup. cit. p.315.
capitalist enterprise, which still relied not on a consensus based on "rising productivity", still less a "living wage", but "in the belief of (the controlling interest's) capacity to be trusted to run the industry for their own interest, and through that for the good of the country as a whole, and the workers in the industry." Tawney saw that this underlay Parliamentary non-intervention: writing on the chain-makers, hardly in isolation a vital material interest of the bourgeoisie, he pointed out that from 1890 "if Parliament did not intervene, its abstention was not due to lack of knowledge." Likewise, since the worker outside of emigration - and Tom Mann himself was to demonstrate that emigration might vary the location but not necessarily the intensity of exploitation - had not the same mobility as capital, there was a sense in which his interests were more firmly attached to the employer than were the employers' to their workers. As Leyland said in 1901, "Capital had no country. By the operation of an economic law as inexorable as any of the laws of nature, capital would gravitate to those countries where it was most encouraged and least harassed." And in order to overcome the defects of domestic competition, the trust itself had to assume a tighter control - no more welcome, and certainly more vulnerable, than coercion by the state:

"Where competition remains free, the result is a chronic congestion of productive power and of production, forcing down home prices, wasting large sums in advertising and in

217 R.C. Smart, The economics of the coal industry (1930) p. 203.
218 Tawney, op. cit. p. 13.
219 Chairman of F. Leyland in The Times, 8.5.01, quoted in Macrosty, op. cit. p. 342.
pushing for orders, and periodically causing a crisis followed by a collapse, during which quantities of capital and labour lie unemployed and unremunerated. The prime object of the trust or other combine is to remedy this waste and loss by substituting regulation of output for reckless over-production...this rigid limitation of trade, though required by the separate economy of each trust, does not suit the trust-maker..."220

In the road to the growth of the self-justifying and self-generating trust - a miniature philanthropic state, generating its own capital, feudalism without a lord - an important stage was this stressing of the normality and reasonableness of a system under violent assault from the workers: "in railway management in England, competition is carried to excess" Lord Brassey told the Association of Chambers of Commerce.221 To aspire to the condition of monopoly, however, should not obscure the modesty of the needs of the system, and, by implication, the aggressiveness and extremism of its critics; - "Well, the situation is that the railways are hard pressed; it is difficult to maintain dividends, which are not excessive in amount."222 The answer, then, must be a private or public monopoly - but without a challenge to the "politics of control" - the latter an ideal and unrealisable mischief.

It may well be that with the establishment of the trust the dominance breeds "guilt and isolation" in the manager - but this leads rather to a crisis where "Personal dominance becomes a socially sanctioned asset that can be expressed without guilt", than to

221 A. Emil Davies, op. cit. p.9.
222 ibid. p.9.
acceptance of expropriative control. It may also lead to the fusion of trust and national interest, private appropriation with public contract, in which the state is primus inter pares, both trust and government sharing the other's values, pursuing its policies, unifying relations of production over the fields of semi-private industry and semi-public policy. Perhaps here there is a distinction between right and need in Durkheim's remark that

"What is needed if social order is to reign is that the mass of men be content with their lot. But what is needed for them to be content, is not that they have more or less, but that they have no right to more."224

In this situation, deprivation generates rights from needs - especially when

"there is here a growing discord between the basis of social economy which has become world-wide, and the peculiar class structure of society, a structure where the ruling class (the bourgeoisie) itself is split into national groups with contradictory economic interests, groups which, being opposed to the world proletariat, are competing among themselves for the division of the surplus value created on a world scale."225

Just as the physical need of the workers may generate belief in a right to control, so too class hostility of the bourgeoisie, displaced away from the proletariat it has to woo, is often transferred to a residual or extremist category of the proletariat: the "Syndicalist", the hooligan, the Reichsfeinde of whatever kind - the Paget M.P. or the Indian agitator.

"If, then, men will only act as animals, I do not see that Christians, acting in their national capacity, are justified

224 quoted in Runciman, op.cit. p.25.
225 Bukharin, op.cit. p.106.
in bolstering up such to swamp the nation with undesirables who may, by intermarriage with better stocks, deteriorate the whole nation. Such bolstering up can only end in national bankruptcy, moral and financial. In my judgement, honourable imprisonment for life, with complete segregation from the other sex, is the only remedy for this evil. Such a course should entail no particular hardship, for it is well known to phrenologists that the sexual instinct ('increase and multiply') is closely allied to the driving faculties ('replenish the earth')."226

The ostensible subject is the unemployable - but the contact with the broad proletarian mass is clear enough:

"The Trades Union policy for many years has been that of reducing activity and skill to the level of laziness and clumsiness; with a view to 'spreading out' work over as large a surface as possible."227

Men could easily appreciate the need for limiting hours when

"The running into the river of the Barnes omnibus was foretold, less than a week before its occurrence, as a thing that must, sooner or later, come to pass."228

Again, "any trade that does not pay a living wage to its workers is a parasite on the community"229 - but the real issue before 1914 was whether the proletariat should have "honourable imprisonment for life" in a system they had not developed, and from which they progressed from the position of "trusties" to becoming in their turn, warders.

This is melodramatic: but there was always an element of truth in Adam Smith's "Masters are always and everywhere in a sort of tacit

226 Alves in Christianity and Socialism (1909) p.29 (Alves was a Tariff Reformer)
227 ibid. p.28.
228 Clementina Black, op.cit. p.95.
229 E.Cadbury and G.Shann, Sweating (1908 edn.) p.65.
but constant and uniform combination". The trust, quite apart from what it produced, made this clear - if clarity was needed - in two ways:

"the greater the capital required, the smaller becomes the number of competing manufacturers, quite apart from the keenness or otherwise of the competition for the sale of the commodities produced."

Thus, for the worker, the politics of the economic system were the politics by which the conditions of his normal existence were determined. These politics were becoming an oligarchic system with an infinite number of "outer offices". In stressing the primacy of economic action, the Syndicalist and the proletarian were showing an awareness of a process of change within capitalism apparently in flat contradiction to the claims of liberal democracy and the supposed powers conferred by universal suffrage.

If the state could only haphazardly, slowly, and grudgingly, redress some of the results of the concentration of aggressive employers then indeed to concentrate on Parliament would be to wait until the interests were installed, like the railway directors, in the legislature. For, in the second place, "In many instances we have in iron, coal, etc., plural Directorships, and a tendency towards

230 G.R. Carter, The Tendency Towards Industrial Combination (1913) p.353. For one could always maintain that if the test of a system be its overall profitability, and if sweating was not profitable in terms of the "national account", then it was a simple matter of economics to campaign against it. This does, however, set a "can't win" argument against a "can't lose" one.

combination of the coal, iron, steel, and armament trusts." Here was a concentration of power and an orientation of poverty which raised the price of a mass-consumer society excessively high — to the destruction of international socialism, and a civil war among the proletariat — as Hervé and Bowman pointed out.

Just as it is not possible to infer national political systems from industry, occupation, or local working-class community, so it is not possible save in an unduly anecdotal way, to infer similarities between the behaviour of the national proletariat from small groups of workers some of whose reactions were recorded sixty or seventy years ago. Connections between intense economic grievance apparently not palliated by traditional political methods, frustration of traditional and modest expectations, leading to awareness of discontinuity between the political ideology and economic needs of local and national groups and the policies of a ruling class, and "unrest" at the point of exploitation are clear enough. What is remarkable, though, is the absence of a more conscious alienation and a more vigorous reaction away from the system of dominance at national level, and the concentration of this alienation not even at local political level, but in industrial relations — an institutionalised, vestigial Syndicalism.

Some lines on the influences linking the classes, ante-dating economic imperialism, limiting perception of class conflict to the workplace may

232 George Harvey, Industrial Unionism and the Mining Industry (Newcastle, 1917) p.86.
be seen in such spheres as the comment

"The front parlour is an almost universal cult in Norwich; jealously preserved for the sole use and enjoyment of the family Bible and the stuffed birds and miscellaneous crockery without which no man can be respectable."233

A city like Cambridge, where the sons of the unskilled scraped a living by running after "the gentlemen's cabs at the beginning and end of term" or minded bicycles, were billiard-markers and so forth might develop that mixture of parasitism, deference and anomie, from which men might well prefer to escape to respectability.234 Most probably, when 70-80% of school leavers went to unskilled trades, pessimism as regards prospects of mobility and security was high.235 Stability, rather than improvement, was the goal, and one seldom to be attained. The signs of material improvement - the branded goods, the popular newspapers and magazines were often enough offset by such arguments as that

"The 'few reforms', whether in the direction of import duties, or smallholdings, or "technical education" in ploughing or fruit-picking or forestry or sheep-shearing, can never in themselves be a substitute for the lost peasant traditions, because they are not the same kind of thing."236

Important though the spread of dominant ideology was, to suggest that mass-consumption materially changed the shape and orientation of the working-class before 1914 would seem most doubtful. In Liverpool where Mrs Barnes of Hornby Street slept on a pile of rubbish, had as her food a "piece of muddy bread, evidently picked

233 Hawkins, op. cit. p.89

234 Mrs Bosanquet, Social Conditions, op. cit. p.25. (by Clara Dorothea Rackham)


236 Bourne, op. cit. pl94.
from the gutter", where "The want of bread, not the excess of beer, is the reason of Liverpool's most bitter cry", there was a residue of non-activism in a political sense, but a spur to unrest as well as, in fine balance, an economic deterrent to strike action. Thus, one might say than an oppressed and exploited class has its individual members attracted to the modes and privileges of the dominant, neutralised by the effects of oppression, and activated against domination by the same processes. The breaking of class lines, the difference in reactions thus does not of itself justify belief that domination does not exist.

237 R.H. Sherard, *The cry of the poor* (1901) p.71. Her neighbour Mrs Williams possessed, said Sherard, a cup of tea, a broken table, a wooden bench, a black cat, two children, and a husband, unemployed three weeks, a casual dock worker (p.66).

238 ibid. pp.74-5.
There is a useful exercise in historiography to be produced on stratifications of the working-class, and attempts to correlate this with political and economic behaviour - but the historical material itself condemns this to be probably historiography rather than political sociology, just as one is in any case struck by the existence of "class" characteristics and influences which cut across stratification.
On the frustration of expectations of local government expenditure, and the trend to the centralisation of expenditure - and hence the relative diminution of local control of the environment, see A.T. Peacock's figures in Peacock and Jack Wiseman, *The growth of public expenditure in the United Kingdom* (1961, Princeton) p.109. This decline is only relative, a slowing down in the rate of growth in local as compared with central government expenditure - but between 1910 and 1920 it was clear that reforms were to be paid for centrally, rather than progressively through local bodies.
One form of reaction to social inferiority was characterised by the cabinet maker, self-educated, who said to Mrs Bosanquet "We working-men can never be properly educated"."It's not so much the want of time, but we have not the perseverance to master book learning." 239 In large scale industry, however, the pressures and the exploitation of inferiority were more direct: only half the sample in Middlesborough read the newspapers, and only a quarter newspapers and books. Only 42% used the Free Library. 240 Keeling made the point that much street trading was simply a disguise for begging, and that in 1901 there were about 50,000 street traders under 16 registered in the kingdom. 241 The isolation of such numbers from a written culture, their isolation from an economic life in which traditional norms and aspirations could operate again makes a prima facie case for saying that such people might well avoid involvement in traditional political activity: that their economic situation might induce anomie - but it might also produce a form of unrest with little or no contact with existing parties, parliamentary modes and procedures. Syndicalism need not necessarily arise from non-politicised groups or strata of the working-class: it may reflect non-urban political modes, or be a calculated and sophisticated mobilisation of men and application of argument in those areas of exploitation or neglect to which the dominant class was indifferent, ignorant, or

240 Lady Bell, At the works. A study of a manufacturing town (1907) pp. 145-6.
241 F. Keeling, Child labour in the United Kingdom (1914) p. 22.
simply callous.

"Syndicalism" in Britain was coloured by all three of these ingredients: first, by those recruits to the proletariat brought up in isolation from other classes and other modes and aspirations. Loane quoted the example of children brought up in a Home who

"were sent out into the world so entirely ignorant of the conventional differences between the treatment of mistress and maid that one of them, having been shown silver fish knives and forks and told to place them on the dining-room table, immediately laid them in the kitchen also for herself and her fellow-servant."242

This is but an anecdotal illustration of a common enough proof that a section of the proletariat, many of whom had not the vote - the majority, if one includes women - had no connection with national politics either in an expressive or purposive sense. Secondly, "Syndicalism" sprang from a working-class political style, not, it is true, based on rural or archaic modes, but with participation in work-group affairs, trade union, political clubs, voluntary political work in parties and groups often chiliastic in tone, sectarian and unsuccessful in terms of winning political power or representation at local or national level. Thus, although parties like the BSP and ILP could claim to have made advances within the existing political system, the traditions and aspirations of their rank and file were all directed towards the supercession of this system and its gradualism. Finally, there were those who proposed that the lesson of the labour aristocracy be learnt, and "conscious" job control be extended by way of union organisation to the whole of the working class

242 M.Loane, op. cit., p.29.
to secure by a progressive movement of unionisation and strikes, for the whole class the privileges of the "aristocracy" - even to the dispossessing the owners of industry, who had made mockery of "union" by setting the aristocracy against their fellow workers.

It is these disparate strands which accounted both for the success and violence of the unrest, for its brevity, and for the difficulty of seeing it as a whole. It was true, for instance, that there were long-term movements to improve conditions - but these could be exaggerated as Dewsnup's remarks on housing here show:

"From 1891 to 1901, a really noteworthy improvement in housing conditions took place. To merely state that the percentage of overcrowding throughout the country at large fell from 11.23 per cent to 8.2 hardly emphasises sufficiently the change brought about, and I may point out that this means that in 1901 there were nearly six hundred thousand persons less, living in overcrowded tenements, and nearly ninety thousand tenements less than in 1891. At the later date, the overcrowded population had sunk to a little over two and a half million persons out of a total of thirty-two and a half millions. The tenements occupied by these two and a half millions would have accommodated, without overcrowding, all but 723,000 persons, so that the overcrowding was caused by 2.2 per cent of the population."243

This improved categorisation whereby "the overcrowded" become "the minority of overcrowders" is comparable to Barnett's categorisation of the unemployable as "the untrained, the untaught, and the dissipated."244 Before 1914 politicians were coming to see that such reassuring fictions reassured politicians less and less, and convinced the working-class with increasing difficulty.

243 E.R.Dewsnup, The housing problem in England (Manchester 1907) p.80
244 Canon and Mrs S.A.Barnett, Towards social reform (1909) p.63.
In Sheffield, for instance, where unemployment in the light trades was chronic, the unemployed were, under existing industrial conditions, always unemployable - and by 1914 reform at national level seems hardly to have penetrated these accumulating problems, while local politics could not tackle the root of wages questions. In West Ham, the "nineteenth century" conditions in local government described by the Webbs' survey still obtained. "The growth in pauperism and in expenditure has been shown to be due to increased poverty, to lax administration, and to corruption." The problem of casual dock labour here was exacerbated, or left untouched, by maladministration.

The oft-discounted danger of political breakdown preceding economic collapse was perhaps after all not so remote, and Lloyd George emerges as a major bulwark against such a collapse. The growth of discontent and disillusion, or absence of illusion, with the political system could itself rapidly lead to changes in the level of aspiration. Rowntree said in 1914

"A man who for the last ten years has lived in the worst slums of London, told me the other day that the deepening discontent of the young men with what satisfied their fathers is extraordinary. When they marry they want to take their wives to better houses, away from the wretched environments in which they were brought up."247

245 S. Pollard, History of Labour in Sheffield, op. cit. speaks of the light trades as suffering from chronic underemployment (p.182), reforms at national level - pensions, national insurance, labour exchanges - having little or no effect on local unemployment by 1914 (p.184), and local politics concerned with housing reform, unemployment relief, and milk supply. p.200.

246 West Ham, op. cit., p.354.

These "young men in a hurry" were not necessarily motivated by the literature of exposure. Probably, like the men in Rowntree's Class D they were devoted to "the evening papers, to more or less sentimental or sensational novels, or to the endless periodicals made up of short stories, scrappy paragraphic comments upon men and events, columns of jokes and riddles, and similar items of a merely trivial character" — but as Rowntree himself said, unrest arose and would arise from conditions "of such austerity, regulated by an economy, a sense of duty, and a practical wisdom which would be deemed exceptional in any other class of the community" especially when even bare sufficiency was "inaccessible to the large majority of our labouring population. Here we have the very root of the present unrest". Syndicalism, then, is not entirely "sous-produit": its manifestations were rising expectation, frustrated expectation, deprivation — and the enthusiastic and near-revolutionary (and revolutionary) forward movement of working-class socialism.

This struggle against brutalisation, conducted with a mixture of self-awareness and anodyne humour — "'We 'ad to keep a sharp eye out for Edie' 'she were so little she were almost 'id'" said a couple of the burial of their daughter — gained strength through the morphology of dominant ideology as it interacted with the material

248 Rowntree, Poverty, op. cit. p.75.

249 Rowntree, The way to industrial peace, op. cit. p.71.

250 Mrs Reeves, op. cit. pp.70-1.
conditions of working-class life. The boy who described Christianity in terms of the fagend of philanthropy — "At Christmas yer gets a bigger bit of meat on yer plate than ever you seen before,"..."and w'en 'E dies you gets a bun," had a clarity of judgement which after all implied that the dominant ideology would not be ingested or rejected, but tested for its functional advantages.\(^{251}\) If the first world war incorporated the non-activists and the alienated in a paradigm of social and political unity, this unity could not pre-empt even so modest a level of aspiration as "The same surroundings with a little more money, a little more security, a little less to do," — "about the best their imaginations could grasp."\(^{252}\) Even where "men are too miserable and too broken-spirited to combine effectively",\(^{253}\) organisation could come willy-nilly — and the motive to industrial action lay always in homes where "few rooms measure more than twelve feet in length and breadth, whilst eight feet is a very normal height. It is in rooms of these dimensions that they are cramped, two, three and more to the room."\(^{254}\)

But if the literature of exposure concentrated on cities, on "single occupation" areas, on poverty and unemployment — it soon became clear that a picture of the broad mass of the working population was emerging, and although there may have been some feedback on the working-class from this "exposure" the workers themselves were aware of

\(^{251}\) ibid. p.189. \\
\(^{252}\) ibid. p.91. \\
\(^{253}\) Mess, op. cit. p.124 \\
\(^{254}\) ibid. p.65.
the conditions in which they lived. It did not take a long process of demonstration and political education for men to interact with the political system. As Macdonald said of the Home Office report on the 1911 railway strike, that some lines were working normally, that despite intimidation men were resuming work, the reaction had been that the report was "inaccurate; the expressions of opinion in the middle were nonsensical; and the effect in the end was simply to make the men more inclined to go on fighting."255 Just as the memory of Featherstone survived, as a reference point of government coercion, so too the desire to participate in national politics - as in the celebration of the South African war and the post-war elections - however keen, was always accompanied by a countervailing movement or accompanying pressure, for redress of economic and social neglect and exploitation.

Those not yet politicised were not apolitical - they were playing for higher stakes than the house limit of the parliamentary system permitted. But this did not mean there could and should be no tactical finesse in movements of protest. Cooper described how in 1842

"One afternoon, without counselling me, some five hundred of the men who were out of work formed a procession and marched through the town at a slow step, singing, and begging all the way they went. It wrung my heart to see a sight like that in England.

255 Kenney, Men and Rails, op. cit. p.193. This applied to the leaders as well as to families like that Mrs Reeves described, where an ex-footman turned cabdriver was made redundant by motor-buses, managed to get a job at £1 a week, and at once sent his daughter to the country, let one of his sons give up work, stopped two of his sons eating at school, the whole family "congratulating themselves on their good fortune" p.182.
"Spontaneity" does not simply mean "passivity" - and although there was a sense in which isolation and powerlessness contributed to spontaneous unrest, it is from the standpoint of organised national politics and the "political classes", that the workers seemed "spontaneous". Not only was there a rationale behind unrest, there was a vast literature and oral tradition of rationalisation of varying forms of protest and activity, carried on out of range of the middle class and intelligentsia: as Swift of the ASE said, "By all but 'dry-as-dust professors' it is generally agreed that it is the monotony of toil that makes life so disagreeable to the workers"257 - and these considerations should lead to suspicion of remarks like Runciman's, that "It is only poverty which seems irremediable that is likely to keep relative deprivation low."258 This statement, like that which suggests "In (no case) did grievance correlate with actual inequality"259 may relate to levels of coherence and articulateness, but occlude a kind of political language which

256 Cooper, op. cit. p.171.
258 Runciman, op. cit. p.22.
259 ibid. p.55.
is itself a symptom, not a description, of deprivation.

And a kind of language which is part of a genuinely revolutionary movement. For so long as the dominant class defines its terms so as to exclude the protest of the oppressed from its approval, the language of the oppressed must have a different value from that of the dominant. To attack the "violence" and "hooliganism" of the strikers is either "mad" or a vicious nonsense so long as the government maintained what Connolly called a "robber Empire". The violence, the hooliganism, was in fact that institutionalised form of the dominant class's behaviour at home and abroad: to avoid the "horror of civil war", the bourgeoisie was prepared to shoot down unarmed strikers - even while it prepared for a world war to defend the fruits of oppression in the empire. Clearly, the justice, peace, compromise urged by the bourgeoisie on the proletariat - these were bourgeois forms intended to perpetuate class domination, and destroy a movement for workers' control. For only control could have - and even so not necessarily would have - halted British imperialism which palliated exploitation at home by the profits from exploitation abroad - and disseminated an ideology which informed the British worker that in time, all things would come to him, whilst in the meantime he could be proud to belong to an imperial race, as a member of which he had inestimable advantages over revolutionaries and other oppressed people elsewhere - providing always that he did not press for control of his workplace, and the expropriation of the masters. Control involved the power to define political terms. Liberal democracy means freedom to the liberal publicist and finance capitalist - but slavery and drudgery to the worker, or the Indian peasant. As Stokely Carmichael says, quoting Humpty Dumpty, the question of definition is a matter of power, not linguistics. Clearly before 1914, there were those who had a "dichotomous" view of society. That is, like Connolly, they saw that to undertake a revolution required the inversion of political language and political forms rather as Marx had done in the period 1842-5. The question about violence was not whether the workers should use violence against the bourgeoisie, but how the workers could fight the physical and mental violence used against them every day - in field, factory, workshop, parliament or servants' quarters. The methodological problem thus becomes resolved in terms not of "ways of describing social organisation, and perception of that organisation", - for instance, dichotomous and graduated - but describing the ideology implicit in viewing situations and movements in these terms. Questions of time-scale emerge here: one might argue that the SDP leadership was revolutionary - for some time in the future: and that it was the Syndicalists, the activists who saw that what made them proletarian was alien control, alien ideology, that it was not the productive forces which enslaved them but a system which quantified and reified their social life, - that it was a class which showed to them for their admiration the benefits of civilisation, of law and order, and of justice - and used the law and order and the justice as instruments of coercion when the proletariat threatened the power structure of which the "civilisation" was the outward form. This, if not the Marxism of the Internationals and Capital, is close to the Marx of the Manifesto.
Alternatively, the language of the deprived and of their gaolers may be a defence against further deprivation, and a self-defending mechanism - yet expressive among peers: "Nos nos foutons du lesconseillers" said the police at Verviers, and in perception of the inverted standards of the oppressors, the use of jokes and understatement and verbal brutality there lies both grievance and a rational assessment of the possibility or impossibility of amelioration.

If the effect of state action was to make the workers pay for their benefits and more besides before 1915, it is not surprising that men should see in parliamentary participation a self-imposed exploitation, and the "solidarity' of interests" the "solidarity of a moment...not that lasting solidarity which welds together the members of the same class" constantly undermined by observations like Fedder's, who watched 23 farmers fail to get through the

261 Dechesne, op. cit. p.406. That is, in social conflict the coercive aspects of "law and order" emerge. Those who feel themselves oppressed can either fight to reverse their powerlessness by direct challenge("workers' control", "direct action") - or they can suffer oppression in the hope that such oppression will become too expensive, too damaging, too counter-vailing to be continued - the system may break down, a foreign war may necessitate a hiatus in domestic oppression, and so forth. Those who "choose" the second response may indeed find themselves connected to the inputs of a political system: but they are unlikely to sympathise with the oppressed, and their status is the status of manumitted slaves.

262 Colin Clark estimated (quoted in Runciman, p.72) that the working-class paid more in tax in 1913 than they received in benefits - and in 1953 paid for four-fifths of their own benefits.

263 Bukharin, op. cit. p.162. Bukharin made precisely this point of the Ford workers - that the "bamboozled' workers are 'devoted' to their masters" - but even if workers believe their interests lie as co-exploiters of markets and empires, their rewards will be duly scaled down, and there will still be masters for them at home.
turnstiles at Cardiff market after enjoying the fruits of prosperity.  Such "adaptive jesting" indicates a class-style, rather than acquiescence. Such men as Booth's Class A were those for whom, if not by whom, revolution would be undertaken, and their relationship to the revolutionary movement was not a passive one. "Their life is the life of savages, with vicissitudes of extreme hardship and occasional excess. Their food is of the coarsest description, and their only luxury is drink." Here was not simply the bourgeois stereotype of its opposite, but the essence of the failure of the bourgeois system of economics, and in the guilt of the bourgeoisie an implicit "memento mori" of its ideology. Booth said in illustration of the religious feeling in the East End, the man who said "If there is a God, he must be a bad one" was one of those "very earnest-minded, and not without a religious feeling"; but only by inverting the meaning of language could such a statement be reconciled with conventional religion. Thus even Booth, who, with his investigators spent months and years with people who "have said that in hot weather they don't go to bed, but sit in their clothes in the least infested part of the room", could seek to reconcile by a trick of dialectics the features dichotomous and hostile to the bourgeoisie of working-class life. The old man in Summer Gardens, who said his brother had served the Lord till he was seventy-four, and "then He


265 Booth, op. cit. vol. i. p.38. Naturally, the question of their effectiveness in a revolutionary movement was another matter: but these were not just people who had "failed to become bourgeois", they were men who had been immiserated.

266 ibid. p.119.

267 ibid. vol.ii, p.47.
saw fit to choke him" was hardly demonstrating a simple piety. 268 Syndicalism was in fact an attempt to turn this alienation into dominance in a single convulsion: it was based on a sharp perception of the conflicts in society, of the antithetical and contradictory aspects of society. The spirit lived in such remarks as Pratt's —

"They are making munitions at Crewe — as everywhere else just now. Everybody's doing it, and I don't suppose it will be long before they start making them in Church on Sunday." 269

The Quadruple Alliance of church, aristocracy, brewers and railway companies showed at once the interconnection between various elements of class and ideological domination, and the source of contradictions in society. 270 Just as the peak of national unity was to be reached with the British proletariat separated from contact with the SPD, so too the summit of the pre-war prosperity coincided with increasing immiseration for a large section of the proletariat. If involvement in the existing political system required acceptance of the machinery of oppression, then such involvement must appear rationally unacceptable. And, after all, though a section of the dominant class sought to resolve the contradictions, bourgeois society produced and lived off its own excesses. The society might deplore poverty, but it produced poverty.

Likewise, the foundations of economic imperialism should not be assumed to have subverted the proletariat, led to instant

268 ibid. p.96. A sentimentalist might indeed see this as proof of a (bourgeois) piety and bourgeois standard, but it is in fact a nice example of social relations displaced on to a higher level of the dominant ideology.

269 E.L. Pratt, "Direct Action" at Crewe. Full story of the dismissal and reinstatement of Chas. Bates (ASE) p.3.

270 Martin, op. cit. p.126.
embourgeoisification and integration within parliamentarism. Just as the period of unrest introduced many of the semi-skilled and unskilled to strikes in a period of the extension of large-scale industry, intensified industrial discipline, and immiseration for many — without compensation in fringe or social benefits, increased social status and mobility, or participation in the making of decisions — so too it marked the first widespread reactions against "Americanisation" of capital. That is, in complaints against trustification, American control, American machines and methods of management, even at the moment of Britain's development of capital export and imperialistic competition, British workers were coming under the direct control of American capital. In the development of ideas of "workers' control", two main influences appear — the awareness that ownership determined control, and that without ownership, pure-and-simple trade unionism would always be defensive and defeated by the greater flexibility of capital. This was urged by the SLP with special reference to Singer's, and later the Clyde engineering works with their American engineers. Secondly, the freedom of British capital now seemed clearly to be restricting still further the economic and political choice open to British workers.

Both influences were felt sharply in the conflict at home between American

271 That is, the proletariat remained proletarian — if increasingly de-activated, especially by the defection of its leaders to those positions whence control was indeed operated — but against proletarians.

272 These may in fact be reactions to two different manifestations of capitalist development: demands for control arising because of the perception of a concentration of control, and intensification of the use of that control to immiserate at home — and secondly, the awareness that economic imperialism was an escape route from the contradictions leading to class war for the capitalists — which might also "pay" the British workers if they followed it, but would certainly preclude a sustained revolutionary movement.
and British imperialists. Cairncross put it that

"More investment at home would have meant better houses, better travelling facilities, and better public amenities of all kinds. Had the rate of interest fallen, there would have been, in addition, a redistribution of income in favour of wage-earners, and it is possible that the slowing down in the rate of capital accumulation would not have been great. The more new countries were opened up, the more apparent did the sectional conflict become. The likelihood that foreign investment would reduce the cost of British imports was less overwhelming, the fear that industries competing with our own industries would be fostered was more intense. Cheap capital for other countries and improving terms of trade and real wages were no longer synonymous. Foreign investment, it was apparent, might lower the standard of living instead of raising it.

"Finally, there was the danger that capital abroad might be lost through revolution either in Britain or in the country in which the assets were situated. There was no guarantee that, if the export of capital gave way to an export of capitalists, the title deeds to foreign property could be easily seized or would be readily honoured. Tangible assets at home can be lost to the nation only through invasion, destruction, depreciation, or obsolescence. But assets abroad may be beyond the reach of expropriation. "Up till 1914 there was a sufficient coincidence of private profit and social gain in Britain's export of capital to prevent the government from exercising more than a minimum of control over investment. Broadly speaking, British investment paid. But it was far from evident that uncontrolled investment would be equally advantageous in the future."

In fact, this divergence of interests was perceived in terms of results rather than theory. The neglect of social problems for want of capital gave rise to more urgent priorities than the sight of the development of capital export and capitalist control away from the domestic market. However, if the crucial side-effect of this was to involve and implicate the proletariat in colonial exploitation and world monopoly position, the immediate result was to demonstrate that the patriotism of the workers would be enforced, if necessary by the

troops, while the patriotism of the capitalists was for ever in search of its 10% over the seas. In one sense Schumpeter's remark that "the mode of life of the capitalist world does not favor imperialist attitudes" is a curious distortion of Lenin's argument that imperialism is the highest, and final, stage of capitalism and as such represents a challenge to, and crisis for, the bourgeoisie. For though the bourgeoisie may have had a "real" interest in equilibrium not imperialist competition, capital export represented a profitable means of achieving domination at home and abroad, transmitting its modes and structures, and the archaism of imperialism, like its militarism, was a function of its dominance and its historical traditions. However "wrong" and inefficient a mode of production, it transcended the contradictions of entrepreneurial competition, if only by raising them to global scale. Since imperialism was a competitive phase of capitalist development it was not surprising that the tendency to monopoly was not immediately achieved, and that there existed large semi-colonies as well as states like Argentina. The world war had the effect of sorting out the financial-industrial sheep from the goats, true enough, but it would be rash to suggest that the pre-war unrest represented a serious challenge to pre-war imperialism, however clearly it showed that trade unionism could be an impediment to bourgeois dominance.

274 cf. Lenin, "Capitalism in its imperialist stage arrives at the threshold of the most complete socialisation of production. In spite of themselves, the capitalists are dragged, as it were, into a new social order, a traditional social order from complete free competition to complete socialisation. Production becomes social, but appropriation remains private." (Imperialism) Quotation from Joseph A. Schumpeter, Imperialism and Social Classes (Oxford 1951) p.118.

275 That is, there was a sense in which the "Unrest" was simply "unrest" - a moistened finger held up to the prevailing wind.
Again, it can be argued that the characteristics of capital were such that the debate as to whether imperialism was a policy or a stage of development was somewhat unreal. For Britain, the absence of investment control, and three centuries of colonial possession reduced the question to one of whether imperialism was to be resisted at home, or by the "imperialised" peoples themselves. And here, to the extent that not only capital, but British industry was concentrating and geographically diversifying, the British workers who fought American capital in Britain could draw the conclusion that the phenomenon of imperialism could and must be resisted at home since they were being "colonised" even at home! Lever Brothers reached the Pacific in 1901, West Africa the next year, and by 1910 were in the Congo and French Equatorial Africa, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Japan, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. So the impulse which drove finance capital abroad likewise operated upon industrial capital, more rigidly determining the political forms of industrial life.\textsuperscript{276} Professor Wilson has made the useful point that Levers' Co-Partnership was a virtual gift from Lever, and the price of this largesse was less than the awards would have been from the Australian Wages Board.\textsuperscript{277} One feels that the social aim of imperialism is close to the farmers' attitudes to the labourer, "If he could be civilized, and yet be made to 'pay', that is what would best suit the middle-classes; and that is really the impossible object at which they aim, when they

\textsuperscript{276} Wilson, op. cit. p.180 et. seqq.

\textsuperscript{277} ibid. pp.154-5. A nice example of the pay-off falling insultingly low - in exchange for the extension of exploitation and alienation.
try to 'do him good'. They want to make him more like themselves, and yet keep him in his place of dependence and humiliation.\textsuperscript{278} and this too describes the conflation of stage and policy, development and archaism, in imperialism - a macrocosm of "change in the village" where

"Instead of being one of a group of villagers tolerably independent of the rest of the world, he is entangled in a network of economic forces as wide as the nation; and yet, to hold his own in this new environment, he has no new guidance."\textsuperscript{279}

Thus at the moment when the national proletariats seemed to be joining together, they were faced with a novel and divisive force - in Britain a heightening of "contrasts" - 1913 was "the most prosperous year that British trade had probably ever seen" - involving fresh calculations of interest.\textsuperscript{280} "The point cannot be too much emphasised that we have not in this country to face the American problem or the German problem, but a problem of our own - the modification of society by a new organisation of industry, a more efficient method of production, evolving normally without artificial stimulus", and Macosty's description, in a way comparable to Austro-Marxists' speculation about Volksimperialismus, raised in acute form the problem of participation in capitalist enterprise at home despite its links with colonial exploitation.\textsuperscript{281}

\textsuperscript{276} Bourne, op. cit. p.107. This gives added point to Arch's "white slaves" image: not for nothing did the social workers and reformers live in "Colonies" in slum London.

\textsuperscript{279} Ibid. p.171.

\textsuperscript{280} B.Mallet, British Budgets 1887-3 to 1912-12 (1913) p.347.

\textsuperscript{281} Macosty, op. cit. p.345.
"It is precisely because of the pivotal part that the colonial monopoly with all its implications has played; precisely because British imperialism, desperate, is using every effort to regain position by the most violent and repressive policy (the Meerut verdicts; the Kenya land robbery; oppression in South Africa, etc.); it is precisely because of all this that it is impossible to conceive of the overthrow of capitalism in Britain, impossible to look ahead to the new, utterly changed Britain of the workers' dictatorship; without placing the struggle for colonial liberation in the forefront." 282

In fact, Hobson's, and thence Lenin's theory of "investment of excessive saving", the theories of gluttability of Aftalion, shortage of real capital goods of Tougan-Baranowsky and Speithoff, Bouvierian and Hobson on income maldistribution, all placed the roots and deprivations of imperialism at home as well as, if not rather than, abroad. 283

Again, it may be said that so long as Britain was more exploiter than exploited, the British proletariat would have an inducement to raise the price of its acquiescence in exploitation - even if the price it had to pay was its own dependence and powerlessness - turning itself into recruiting ground for upwardly mobile de-classed technocrats and meritocrats. But so long as imperialism perpetuated and intensified insecurity and maldistribution at home, and American capital demonstrated the colonial situation in Britain, at least the "unofficial proletariat" could not be permanently bought off, or satisfied with false consciousness. Men like Citrine might say "We cannot await the advent of the breakdown of capitalism before we start marching towards control" - but by then "encroaching control" had become as much of a delusion as

282 Allen Hutt, The condition of the working class (1933) p.252
the "breakdown" thesis had been before a breakdown actually occurred.  The labour movement had in fact become fixed in arguments and attitudes which showed clearly its powerlessness within and alienation from capitalism - but its failure to break by action away from old tactical problems and transitional forms left it fighting the battles of yesteryear. Even the fulfilment of the militants' prophecies hardly shook the faith of labour leaders in the going system. As for the dominant class, it had secured a reasonable bargain: it had not defeated or absorbed the proletariat - but defeat or absorption would mean the end of the proletarian movement, the end of a system to dominate. It had secured a measure of immunity from revolution at the price of permitting a slow upward mobility of such complexity and obscurity that it cannot with certainty be calculated whether this was faster than before 1900.

A movement united round the general strike in fact concealed a deep equivocation, or a deep division as to the advisability and practicability of revolution. The general strike, "apoteosis of the strike movement", a "salto mortale" from capitalism to its destruction by strikes alone was either the traditional insurrectionary utopian revolution - or a fatalistic acceptance of an explosion of the masses. In the sense that revolution required planning to achieve success with economy of effort, the general strike's most lukewarm advocates proposed a general stoppage as the least insurrectionary,

284 Citrine, quoted in Runciman, op. cit. p.128. In a sense, sabotage was the acid test of revolutionary intent, as Fouquet's sophisticated booklet pointed out: the Webbs' refutation of Syndicalism travestied these ideas.

285 Bukharin, op. cit. p.11.
the most legitimate, and the least planned attack on capitalism. There were Syndicalists who "really" intended a general strike - either planned and calculated, or as a mass populist upsurge: but those Economists who saw it as an automatic and inevitable consequence of organisation willed it to defeat by superior force.

"Thus the network of German banks gradually spreads over the entire Ottoman Empire, supporting industry, seizing transport facilities, competing with foreign financial institutions..."

and such a military-financial force spreading out was not likely to crumble at a push. Though imperialism might be the most wasteful and self-destructive stage of capitalism, producing war and armaments, it was also capable of doing the most damage to ill-prepared sections of the working-class.

Above all, despite the promises of industrial unionists, amalgamationists and so on, "Capital is opportunist. It has no rooted objections to representative institutions. It makes only one condition - that it shall somehow dominate them" - and against this anti-

286 Dubief in Revue Economique Internationale, vol. 2, p.7. (1912) quoted in Bukharin, op. cit. p.102. That is, to wait for a "spontaneous" rising at a time when the physical force of imperialism was increasing so rapidly was making such an outbreak unlikely, in view of the risks involved in un-coordinated rebellions. Again, as Aaronovitch said the "crime of monopoly capitalism is not simply that it uses its strength to deprive the mass of the people of the real conditions for a full life but that it strives to eliminate from the minds of the people any true vision of what a full life means." (Monopoly (1955) p.186).
parliamentarism seemed a feeble weapon. If
"in any war which we can conceive in Europe, two armies composed of working-men would face each other in the service of some capitalist intrigue, and in the defence of interests whose chief concern is their exploitation" then this smacks of prophecy as well as warning. For the material basis of imperialism was being laid even while some sections of the working-class were being brought up to the requisite level of organisation to fight conditions which had existed for fifty or a hundred years, and could certainly not recognise the results of export increase, which Lenin described as "closely connected with the swindling tricks of finance capital, which is not concerned with bourgeois morality, but with skimming the ox twice - first, it pockets the profits from the loan; then it pockets the profits from the same loan which the borrower uses to make purchases from Krupp, to purchase railway material from the Steel Syndicate, etc." And yet, imperialism defined and confined the British proletariat not

287 H.N. Brailsford, The War of Steel and Gold (1914) p.124. This "opportunism" may help to explain the reason for the "stage" - "policy" debate (cf. Brynjolf J. Hovde, Socialistic Theories of Imperialism prior to the Great War (Journal of Political Economy, October 1928). In fact, A.J. Brown has argued that capital was not all that opportunist, since the portfolio investor's preference for foreign investment ignored a higher return on domestic risk capital (p.56)(Britain and the World Economy, in Yorke. Bull. of Economic and Social Research, vol.17, no.1. May 1965).

288 Brailsford, op. cit. p.179. Britain owned roughly half the total international investments before 1914.

289 Lenin's Imperialism, p.107.
only in relation to the domestic system, but to the world position of Britain — affecting not just the labour aristocracy, but the organised workers, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled, who by 1914 comprised the major element in manufacturing and service industry. How curious, then, and how touching, that socialists should have prevision of a massive patricidal holocaust — and advocate a pacifist resistance, duly collapsing when the first orders were given, and that so few could conceive of armed resistance by the workers.

It is, of course, possible to argue that in European "national socialisms" there were so many different strands that to talk of the "lost revolutionary moment" of the years before 1921, or 1927 at the latest, is to categorise British socialism too narrowly, and to stress its ideal kinship with the Russian revolution in particular too rigourously. The unofficial movements, the sit-down strike, the shop go-slow, rank and file militancy were no less close to the ideas of the unrest than were those elements — the Communist factory group, the guilds, the schemes of democratic control within state-run nationalised industry — most commonly held to have enshrined Syndicalism. But interest in a criticism of nationalisation was perhaps the major and most carefully argued intellectual aspect of Syndicalism. Pataud and Pouget put it that

"Whilst in the Post Office and railways, Trade Union management was substituted for State management, a like

290 It is tempting to see the Councils of Action as a valedictory gesture to Bolshevism, a bowing-out of the revolutionary proletarian movement — hailed and institutionalised by the foundation of the CPGB, a demonstration of the non-revolutionary character of the mass of the working class."
change was successfully carried out in such national services as those of Highways and Bridges, Water Transport, etc. In the same way the town services were re-organised, which formerly had been either municipalised or carried on by companies or contractors. In both cases, the Trade Unions interested became the centre of the reconstruction."

There was, then, in this not necessarily socialist interest in the supported progression from private to public monopoly a cleavage between the "Syndicalists" and the "nationalisers". Given this, however, the horizontal extension of factory organisation and monopoly, accompanied by unrest and unionisation, led to widespread interest in methods of industrial control — whether by a co-partnership which would leave legal ownership intact, or self-employment in co-operatives, which would leave existing concepts of property rights and labour rights untouched, or a growth of nationalisation justified by "public considerations" and "collective responsibility."


293 R.A.Brady, op. cit. p.162.
From the start, then, even while nationalisation seemed a slogan of proletarian victory to the embattled defenders of the unrestricted rights of the propertied, writers on nationalisation themselves accepted that the rights of property in a legal sense could be, and were, modified, without destroying the power of capital, and that nationalisation was not, and could even be a barrier against, ochlocracy, or proletarian power. E.A. Pratt, himself no Syndicalist, pointed out that the 1904 Hungarian strike on the state-owned railways led to the threat of "death by shooting", and that it was better "that a Government should (where this is practicable) be content to control railways rather than to own and operate them." 294 Mobilisation to defeat the French railway unions in dispute alerted both trade unionists who had no reason to desire nationalisation on the lines of the Post Office, nor extensive legislation in union matters, and also those liberals who conceived of nationalisation as an increase in centralised coercion of men and owners. In general the labour movement proposed nationalisation in areas of private monopoly — like the railways — or privilege, as land, rather than in areas of new and increasing concentration, or conspicuously bad conditions. Here, legislation would suffice. Alternatively they proposed a future in which all industry was under public control. They do not seem to have considered nationalisation as a progressive and cumulative movement — there does not, for instance, seem to have been a great demand for state control of insurance, or health service — nor yet to have considered the classical objections to nationalisation from men like

294 E.A. Pratt, Railways and Nationalisation (1908) p.424.
"The postman is not made free by escaping from the control of an employer, who may be sympathetic; and coming under that of officials, who must obey orders, and have no power to indulge their sympathies."\(^{295}\)

Despite the influences of Morris in the setting of values for socialists, there seems to have been little attempt by men like Snowden and Macdonald to find bridges to link the "practical", or the inevitable, and the "ideal", the unattainable and impractical, given their values and assumptions.

Sir John Gorst had a scheme for conservative nationalisation, - "Nationalisation - that would not be very difficult. There would be no confiscation of any kind whatever. The railways would have to be undertaken by a State Department, which would replace the existing directors."\(^{296}\)

Just as old property rights had become obsolete without limiting the convertibility and profitability of capital, so nationalisation need not affect its mastery of the productive forces. Nationalisation of the railways could be justified on grounds of the inefficiency of control by 570,000 shareholders, the waste, technical backwardness and financial inefficiency, and the additional burden of the doubling of coal prices.\(^{297}\)

The symbolic value of nationalisation, of acknowledging a sectional breakdown of

\(^{295}\) Hutchinson op. cit. p.94.

\(^{296}\) quoted in Davies, op. cit. p.11. This may be compared with the conversion of those "revolutionaries" who waited for capitalist "breakdown" before condemning its inefficiency, where previously they lauded its productiveness.

\(^{297}\) Ibid. pp13-55. Konstantin Katzarov, in The theory of nationalisation (The Hague, 1964) denied that nationalisation had any point of contact with expropriation: it may indeed be true that legal categories define the nature of the transfer of property from individuals to the community - but there would seem to be a real and symbolic element of expropriation involved as well.
capitalism might however be more profound than any restriction of the rights of capitalists thus involved. Yet a capitalist might, after all, benefit from the takeover of failing industries or service industries, so long as he was left unhindered in efficient and prospering sectors. The 1919 report on Unions in nationalised industries postulated public accountability through parliament and a responsible Minister, but did not suggest that the Union representatives would themselves have a measure of public accountability — through their union members. Again, the aim of reducing strikes by way of a Court of Arbitration stressed not only the assumption that capitalist modes would be preserved in nationalised industries, but that extra-industrial forces would determine the conditions and conflict-resolution of these industries. The warning to the union movement from the postmen’s federation in 1915, that

"Whatever advantages we have been able to secure for the postal workers have been wrested from the State; they have never been voluntarily conceded. That is an important point, which should never be lost sight of in our efforts towards the extension of the nationalisation principle; and in order to safeguard the position of workers, there should be a steady demand for democratic control in respect of all the public services taken over by the State."

— implies here a point between the position in the Manifesto, regarding the takeover of the state machinery by the proletariat, and nearer that of The State and Revolution, where the state machinery must be smashed. The distinction here in any case was between the machinery of administration, and that of coercion: the postmen stressed the

298 Trade Unions in nationalised Industries (Min. of Labour Intelligence Div. 1919) p.46.

inseparability of the two in practice.

It is clear that much of the argument of the unrest contained much which was regarded as irrelevant both by the Luxemburg and Leninist strands in revolutionary thought, to say nothing of the representatives of Kautsky's and Bernstein's positions in Britain. Carpenter quoted the organ grinder, breaking his street-organ and saying "You shall neffer play dat tam Alabama Coon any more", and went on to say

"'Work' in the present day is done under such degrading and miserable conditions by the vast majority of the population that the very best and most manly thing would be to refuse to continue doing it". 300

This mood, however, could not by itself describe the increasing pressure to which the working-class was subjected before 1914: the conventions of the dominant ideology possessed no way of rendering sectional grievances over the "normal" terms of employment and remuneration political. "Neither one of the sides is worth voting for, an' if you don't vote, then that don't make nothing no better" said Reynolds. 301 It was not true that "Working-class political opinion possesses no newspapers; no means whatever of publishing itself" - but it was true that such publication was limited, peripheral to the established political system, and both dangerous and often unrewarding to its authors. 302 "People whose weekly income barely feeds and houses them cannot afford to experiment in

300 E. Carpenter, op. cit. p. 82.
301 Reynolds, Seems So! op. cit. pp. 11-12
302 Ibid. p. 158.
changes" — especially when their union possibly merely smoothed 
ext out economic fluctuation, and attained a market price for labour, 
and when the existing parties were so dominated by a narrow political 
caste — which capitalists sought to infiltrate as keenly as workers. 303

In the nature of things, then, the disadvantages to the working-
class attempting to secure concessions from, let alone admission to 
or dominance of, the political machinery were considerable — and 
enforced. In addition, the development of economic imperialism drew 
out those dichotomous features to which Hilferding alluded in his 
defence of Marx, that "It is therefore because labor is the social bond 
uniting an atomized society, and not because labor is the matter most 
technically relevant, that labor is the principle of value and that the 
law of value is endowed with reality." 304 For the development of 
productive forces before 1914, the diffusion of British capital and 
industry abroad, showed that the value of labour, and of the individual 
labourer's skills and his ambitions, was being diminished. By the 
scale of his wage, the insecurity of his skill, the size and 
concentration of industry, the desirability of capital investment in 
the backbone of traditional enterprise, the worker had daily reminders 
that under the existing system of ownership and control he must suffer 
from reification, deprivation, and apparently an intensification of both. 
However, this very intensification involved a sharpening of consciousness.
The position of the French Syndicalists was well put by Lagardelle
"La fiction démocratique efface abstraitement les différences économiques

303 ibid. p.16. "Capitalists" here must include allies and neutrals of 
institutional capitalism.

304 Hilferding, in Rudolf Hilferding, Böhm-Bauwerk's criticism of Marx, 
qui séparent en fait les hommes, pour ne considérer que ce caractère qui leur est commun en droit; la qualité de citoyen."  

If it was the morphology of economic imperialism which seemed to open up or at least display the political system to the working-class, it did not reconcile the workers to capitalist control in industry, nor, in the sharpening conflict between international socialism and international capitalism, did the disruption of the pre-1914 growing international proletarian unity seem to advance the possibility of a socialist revolution in Britain. Certainly it did not point to one enshrining the libertarian modes of the "unofficial proletariat." But the unrest did break through that political fatalism which Bourne described in the village:

"the people have taken their plight for granted, without harbouring resentment against the more fortunate. It may be added that most of them are convinced believers in those fallacies which cluster round the phrase 'making work'. It were strange if they were not. The labourer lives by being employed at work; and, knowing his employer personally - this or that farmer or tradesman or villa-resident - he sees the work he lives by actually being 'made'. Only very rarely does it occur to him that when he goes to the shop he, too, makes work. In bad times, perhaps, he gets an inkling of it."  

This description of reification, increased by the growth of industry which yet provided the preconditions for its dissolution, could only be increased by the development of imperialism.

For some, the traditional "lotus eating a rebours" remained a useful option.  

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306 Bourne, op. cit. p. 70.
307 Sherard, op. cit. p. 90.
what Lipset has, slightly, called the "cult of unity", that is, a solidarity and class consciousness never used, never committed against its causes of grievance. However, this solidarity is on the threshold of action. Cooper described the process:

"Now thirty years have gone over my head, I see how rash and uncalculating my conduct was. But, as I have already said, the demagogue is ever the instrument of the mob. I had caught the spirit of the oppressed and discontented thousands, and, by virtue of my nature and constitution, struck the spark which kindled all into combustion." 308

However, as Goodrich pointed out, solidarity itself does not guarantee perception of separate interests and objectives:

"The line between 'agreeable' and 'enforced' control, or better, between dependent and independent control, must be drawn not on the ground of the origin or even the extent of control, but solely by the test of whether or not the workers' side does actually exercise an independent force." 309

This consideration was seen clearly by Booth and his team; for instance, that

"elements of instability and unrest, and a desire to justify its existence by some extraneous corporate movement, tends to accompany a simply militant organisation and to weaken its power as a persistent and steadying force in industrial relationships" 310

- but simple militancy itself is not static, no more indeed than the active ingredient in perceptions of deprivation. Labriola described these arguments that discontinuities would inevitably be repaired because of the fragmentary nature of social conflicts - and social perceptions -

308 Cooper, op. cit. p.198.
310 Booth, op. cit. vol ix. p.248.
"The assumed inevitable collision between the productive forces and the form of production would never take place because it is reduced, as they claim, to an infinite number of particular cases of friction, because it multiplies itself into the partial collisions of economic competition, and because it meets with checks and hindrances in the expedients and attacks of the government art. In other words, our present society, instead of breaking up and dissolving would in a continuous fashion repair the evils which it produced."\(^{311}\)

This is not to deny that repairs can and do take place, or that these "partial collisions" do not take place. But the morphology of capitalism — and of the proletariat, "grown out of capitalism.... its own peculiar creation and (with) no tradition behind it outside capitalism itself"\(^{312}\) — reflects a dynamic which can entirely determine the conditions under which the "partial collisions" take place.

Concentration on intra-class movements, on attempts to integrate the workers into the capitalist system, can never destroy the proletariat as a class nor completely destroy its modes and consciousness. For just as the strike movement before 1914 had overtones of assuming, and had generated demands for, control, and was in part a movement opposed to the development of economic imperialism, so too these developments were not atrophied by "repairs" within the system, throughout the whole area controlled by economic imperialism. Lukàcs put it that

"comme le prolétariat ne peut se libérer que par l'anéantissement de la société de classes, il est contraint de mener sa lutte libétrice aussi pour toutes les couches opprimées et exploitées."

\(^{311}\) Labriola, op. cit. pp.43-4.

\(^{312}\) Mannheim, op. cit. p.91.
Mais c'est plus au moins au 'hasard' du point de vue de ces couches à la conscience de classe obscure, si, dans les luttes particulières, elles se rangent aux côtés du prolétariat ou dans le camp de ses adversaires. Cela dépend beaucoup, comme on l'a montré plus haut, de la taktique correcte du parti révolutionnaire du prolétariat. Dans ce cas, par conséquent, ou l'être social des classes agissantes n'est pas le même, ou leur liaison n'est pas médiatisée que par la mission historique mondiale, seul l'accord taktique, toujours occasionnel sur le plan conceptuel, quoique souvent durable dans la pratique, accompagné d'une rigoureuse séparation organisationnelle, peut-être dans l'intérêt du développement révolutionnaire. Car le processus selon lequel les couches semi-prolétaire, etc., comprennent que leur émancipation dépend de la victoire du prolétariat est si long et soumis à de telles oscillations qu'un accord plus que taktique pourrait mettre en danger le destin de la révolution.915

In other words, there is not only a theory which distinguishes between partial and total collision, there is a history which also does so, and the development of an infrastructural base which makes the repair impossible.

Lukács remarked:

"Il n'y a pas plus de couches particulières d'ouvriers prédestinées immédiatement par leur existence économique à devenir communistes, qu'il n'y a d'ouvrier individuel communiste de naissance. Pour tout ouvrier né dans la société capitaliste et grandi sous son influence, il y a un chemin plus ou moins chargé d'expériences à parcourir pour pouvoir réaliser en soi la conscience correcte de sa propre situation de classe".

Economic gradations within the proletariat leading to temporary differences in objective are simply gradations "dans la marche évolution de sa conscience de classe.\textsuperscript{314} \textsuperscript{315} The dominant feature in this process, however, was not simply the active "expérience" of

\textsuperscript{315} G. Lukács, Histoire et Conscience de Classe (1960 Paris edn.) pp.365-6 (Remarques méthodologiques)

\textsuperscript{314} ibid. pp.366-7.
the proletariat, but the recasting of dominant ideology and economic base by 1914.

At a time of crisis in capitalism the proletariat is faced with a number of apparent choices. As a result of these choices there may remain a nucleus of class-conscious proletarians, though large sections of the working-class may be transferred to the neutral position described by Lukács, of spectators. Those are the "don't knows". They are "don't knows" about socialism, however, in a different sense from their attitude towards capitalism which might be described as "don't want to know." To choose social harmony and gradualism and rediscover in this alienation and exploitation leads to ever further retreats into false consciousness, including withdrawal from politics to an increasing degree. Capitalism remains the source of mystification, but it is also known by what it does, what it produces, at the material level. Socialism may then appear as utopia - even a utopia vainly sought within capitalism itself. Or else this socialism may simply be an inarticulate and non-specific ideal future, whose values point to the limitations and immutability of the present system.

The assumption that the contradictions in bourgeois society increase with its spread should not lead to the argument that tactical questions involve only a low-level theory. It has been argued above that the issue of economic versus political action reflected a perception of the tensions of capitalism in flux. The choices made by proletarians and their leaders fixed the lines of future development, and determined the terms in which the argument would be continued.
Appendix I

The statistical evidence on which this is based is drawn from:
G. Routh, Occupation and Pay in Great Britain, 1906-1960, Cambridge, 1965) (pp. 4-5).

The distribution of population by occupation, 1911, 1912, 1931, 1951.
Classes: 1A, Higher professional; 1B, Lower professional;
2A, employers and proprietors; 2B, Managers and administrators; 3, Clerical workers; 4, Foremen, inspectors and supervisors; 5, Skilled manual workers; 6, Semi-skilled workers; 7, Unskilled manual workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1951</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>10.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30.56</td>
<td>28.83</td>
<td>26.72</td>
<td>24.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>39.48</td>
<td>33.85</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>32.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>14.17</td>
<td>14.81</td>
<td>12.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also in Routh - table 49, pp. 110-1. Indices of wage rates, the cost of living and unemployment (as % of Trade Unions) (1906-10 = 100) 1906-24.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wage rates</th>
<th>Cost of living</th>
<th>Unemployment %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>111-117</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>122-127</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>143-148</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>185-191</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>223-228</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>276-314</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The article by Prest (Economic Journal, 1948) on the National Income of
the UK 1870-1914 contains material reprinted in the Abstract of British
Historical Statistics. (especially useful is the table in Prest, p.59)
Note, however, Prest (cols. 1 & 2 come from Bowley) Table 1, p.57. Net
national income of UK at factor cost, the section from 1900-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wages</th>
<th>Intermediate incomes</th>
<th>Profits</th>
<th>Evasion</th>
<th>Total (£m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>1067</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>1134</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>1034</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note too in Cairncross, Home and Foreign Investment, 1870-1913 (op.cit.)
Table 47 (p.206.)
Wages and prices, 1870-1914. Table 40 (p.180) Export of capital, 1870-1913.
Table 20 (p.86) Distribution of property as shown by estate duty statistics.
and Table 21, (p.87) Composition of each class of estate (%)
Table 46 (p.203) Investment and national income, 1870-1914 (£m)
Table 38 (p.169) New construction, 1870-1914
Table 28 (p.143) Loan expenditure of local authorities, 1870-1914.
Appendix II

Local variations are covered in Cd 6955 (1913), the report on the cost of living of the working classes, 1912. Wages, 1905-12, % increase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th></th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th></th>
<th>Printing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Counties</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancs. and Cheshire</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. and E.Midlands</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.Counties</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales and Mon.</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A more useful index, perhaps, is the index of wage differentials and local variation in ibid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Rents and Prices</th>
<th></th>
<th>Building</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th>Printing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Counties</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancs. and Cheshire</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midland</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. and E.Midlands</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.Counties</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales and Mon.</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(London = 100)
Prest's figures for total consumption are in his Consumers' Expenditure in the United Kingdom, 1900-1919 (Cambridge, 1954).

Cd 8980 (1918, vol. vii.), the 1918 report on the cost of living since June, 1914, estimated average weekly expenditure for a working-class family (standard). (3.87 men) as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>1904</th>
<th>1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lbs.</td>
<td>£.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread and Flour</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biscuits, cake</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, sausages</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacon</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other meat, fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard, suet</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New milk</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condensed milk</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margarine</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh fruit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice, tapioca</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jam</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrup</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickles</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other food</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals out</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(This, on the basis of similar estimates in Bowley op.cit. p.36, would be equivalent to an income of around 37/- p.w., and (for 3.87 'men') Bowley's estimate had a calorie value of 3,900) It should be noted that in the Autumn of 1911, the average week's earnings for men was 29/- (lads and boys 10/6) and that Bowley's budget(p.36) allows only 5/- for rent, and that his 'sundries' include all expenditure apart from food, rent, fuel (1/6) and clothing (2/6). Rowntree's 'How the labourer lives', Watney and Little's Appendix, and Mrs Reeves book and pamphlet on those earning 20/- a week and upwards have specimen budgets down to 10/- a week and below.
Chapter Three

"Is it a fact that the principal Socialist Parties of Europe have betrayed all their convictions and tasks?"

In this chapter we examine the impact of Syndicalism and the phenomenon of widespread strike action on the Socialist parties of Britain. There was before 1914 in the ILP and the SDF/BSP an intra-party revolt on tactics, theory, and leadership. This revolt was a microcosm of the unrest in the labour movement at large.

The rank and file protest forced Macdonald and Snowden, for instance, to attempt a theoretical definition and justification of their socialism, and of their reasons for rejecting along with Syndicalism, both militancy and Marxism. The arguments they used to resist this attack, on the models of revolution and evolution employed to disprove the thesis that the proletariat was the advanced class within capitalist society, were, it is argued, to account for wartime and post-war attitudes to revolution, militancy and Marxism.

Only with the foundation of the CPGB did the socialist and militant rank and file develop a politically effective party, with a Marxist rationale, capable at least of attempting to work among the mass of workers. By this time, however, the mass movement was increasingly coming under the influence of reformist leaders, and the revolutionary activity proposed by the CPGB seemed beyond the reach of its own organisation, and of a spontaneous movement of the pre-1914 type.

The unrest produced a profound crisis on the socialist parties - ILP, SDF/BSP, SPGB and SLP. Whatever the leaders of the parties might say in dismissal of "Syndicalism" as a theory, or the immaturity of the trade union protest, the mass strikes of 1910-14 were a challenge
both to the socialist leadership of the labour movement and to the role
of the parties in movements of protest. One may thus see within
the parties (the ILP and BSP at least) a miniature mass movement, a rank
and file protest against the party leaders themselves. Men like
Hyndman, who had been struggling against the dangers of Economism
and "tailism" were sharply criticised by their followers on the grounds
that the real problem was of isolation from the mass. In their attack
on "Syndicalism", men like Macdonald and Snowden crystallised their
socialist alternative to proletarian revolution which proposed the
maintenance and development of existing political structures, and
of necessity the actual use of these structures against widespread
strike action. This intra-sect, intra-party division tended to
reinforce the already marked similarities between socialist groups,
and this basis of Marxism, proto-Marxism and militant syndicalism, was
to become the later foundation for the CPGB.

The division in these parties between evolutionary and
revolutionary socialists, reformist and revolutionary socialists,
did not provide exactly the patterns of division in the socialist
movement during the war. Not only were the terms of the international
debate on revisionism transmuted by the structural and institutional
pressures in the British parties, as they were elsewhere in Europe, but
the socialist parties in Britain were markedly inferior in size and
influence to the "labour" section of the labour movement: debates

1 It is difficult to make exact distinctions between Marxism as a
self-consistent group of doctrines, duly traced back to Marx's
writings, and that revolt against industrial and social conditions
in which Marx joined and which is the implicit and constant
point of reference in the works of analysis.
in the ILP or the BSP did not affect party structures of the size of the SPD, the "bricks-and-mortar structure of alienation",\(^2\) nor relations with Trade Unions on the German scale. Such factors as Hyndman's estrangement from party members ostensibly on grounds of personality, the pacifism of Macdonald and the ILP, are clearly important in determining the precise allegiance after 1914 of individuals and groups to anti-War and anti-war issues, anti-Bolshevik and anti-revolutionary strategies.

However, on the crucial matters for debate before 1914 - relations between industrial and political action, party and mass, direct and parliamentary action, colonialism, imperialism, patriotism and the citizen army, trusts and nationalisation - the war-time and post-war split was foreshadowed. Taking "syndicalism" to be an illustrative and symptomatic revolt against discontinuities perceived, and against "disfunctional equilibrium", rather than a movement or a theory or a structure held together by centripetal forces, then the "unrest" was both an unforeseen test of previous analyses, and a magnified form of the spontaneous or rank and file protests within the parties.

It may well be felt that the response of Macdonald and Hyndman was itself a kind of false rebellion - just as, mutatis mutandis, was the Ulster crisis: that Macdonald's opposition to the war was couched in terms so general as to avoid analysis of the specific characteristics of the war, and that Hyndman's support for the war, and his struggle to retain the leadership of the BSP before the war, were consistent with

an implicit desire to retain existing structures which was simply explicit in Macdonald. As Lenin said, "Opportunism can be expressed in terms of any doctrine you like, including Marxism": so long as there was apparently nothing save aspiration in Britain to be called "Socialist", Macdonald's alternatives to syndicalism had a title to be known as socialist alternatives. In much the same way, Hyndman's Marxist critique of Syndicalism can be seen as a purely opportunist device for "disproving" Syndicalism, while doing little or nothing to advance an understanding of new political forces or contributing to the waging of class struggle.

Where Marx had used "ideology" in the pejorative sense of "false consciousness", Lenin seems to have given the term of necessity a neutral sense: it seems fair, then, to suggest that for the ILP, BSP, and SLP, the core of the theoretical argument before 1914 was whether the "spontaneous unrest" was "pure" (in the sense of Marx) consciousness, or false consciousness. This should not, however, be seen as a debate between Marxism and Leninism: in Britain at the worst, the choice for Socialists was between tailism and isolation. To make the main question whether the unrest showed pure or false consciousness remained a negative or opportunist debate so long as the effective function of argument was to keep the parties away from the mass movement. There seemed little point in condemning "spontaneity" in a mass movement and standing aloof


from that movement, while putting every confidence in a later mass movement which would show a "pure" socialist consciousness. This, after all, demonstrated a faith in the evolution of capitalism into socialism which much of Marx's writings either qualified or declared to depend on structural developments which were not necessarily yet apparent.

In this case, then, the implicit argument that "spontaneous" protest in capitalist society must be symptomatic of a false consciousness could only in isolation be used as a non-Marxist and non-revolutionary argument. Certainly there is in one aspect an antithesis between pure and false consciousness: but it does not follow that because one school of Marxist thought calls a movement "falsely conscious" that a notional "purity" cannot develop within it - and vice versa. That is, to project this theoretical debate on to a mass movement in progress is to make revolutionary theory not the basis of, but the substitute for, a revolutionary movement. The unrest surely showed that what Marcuse called

"the total mobilization of all media for the defence of the established reality has coordinated the means of expression to the point where communication of transcending contents becomes technically impossible. The spectre that has haunted the artistic consciousness since Mallarmé - the impossibility of speaking a non-reified language, of communicating the negative - has ceased to be a spectre. It has materialized".5

5 H.Marcuse, One Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (1964) p.68. This passage is discussed in R.D. Laing's Politics of Experience (1967). Throughout this chapter I would suggest that the main descriptive and methodological problem of dealing with British, or "advanced", socialist movements, is that of relating theory to mass action - of explaining the mass in Marxist terms and then explaining attempts to change the action of the mass without changing the theory, or retaining the theory without abandoning the mass. That is, a theory in an advanced country may become so "advanced" itself it ceases to retain more than a wholly symbolic relation to the domestic proletariat, becomes itself ripe for inclusion in the system of dominance.
At least it showed that the Labour Movement's 'lack of a philosophy of action' depended as much, if not more, on the false consciousness of its theorists, as it did on the attempts at resolution of the dichotomous features in social relations, the blending of autocratic and liberal democratic structures into a materialising, "common-sense" pluralism. In other words, the danger that an ideology in Lenin's sense would become an ideology in Marx's, was a besetting one in the European socialist movement before 1914.

The confusion of the active and independent elements in the socialist groups with the integrative and dependent ones is clear in the ILP. Claiming "entire independence of the capitalistic parties..." 7, the party was closely dependent upon a Labour Party allied to the liberals - a dependency arranged by Macdonald. 6 There is thus, in the utterances of ILP men, an institutional schizophrenia: when Jowett said the Liberals and Conservatives were touched "on the raw" by the "class-conscious factor in the new movement", 9 and that "Parliamentary Government in this country is proceeding towards inevitable deadlock", two qualifications had to be made. 10 That in such a deadlock the Labour Party would be involved - and might find itself facing a coalition of the "capitalistic parties" - and that Macdonald had actually and in his theory tied the Labour Party to parliamentary institutions.


7 ILP Conference, 1910 (p.17) (Report of 1909 General Election Conference)


9 ILP, 1910 Conference Report, p.32.

10 ibid. p.34.
Macdonald had

"put before us in eloquent language which we all admired some very
wise reflections concerning the necessity of maintaining the power
and influence of Parliament as the only means of securing social
changes likely to endure"

- and thus had effectively institutionalised a separation between
political and industrial action, and a separation between "political" and
"industrial" consciousness with the political leading the industrial.\textsuperscript{11}

The Labour-Socialist alliance was "at present but an alliance between
various stages of political development", but "will grow in numbers and
influence in our day, until it changes the whole course of politics, gives
dignity and independence to the working man, and heads him straight
towards Socialism."\textsuperscript{12} Thus the definition of Socialism was vitally
connected with the maintenance of parliamentary government, and indication
of the strength of socialism calculated in parliamentary terms: "there
was not a constituency in England where you could win a straight fight
on Socialism."\textsuperscript{13} Given these preconceptions, a "non-socialist", that is,

\textsuperscript{11} ibid. p.34.
\textsuperscript{12} ibid. p.35.
\textsuperscript{13} F.Ingham (Brighton) ibid. p.54. Throughout these conferences, there
was an awareness that tactical questions in Macdonald's hands rapidly
became ideologies, in the sense of false consciousness. Men like
Kehrhahn were constantly trying to demand that "ideologising" should
not become "idealising" or "philosophising", that Socialism had as
its aim the emancipation of the mass, with the co-operation of the
mass in its various aspects - workers, citizens, democrats,
dominated class and so on - not its entanglement in the dominant
modes under one of their more subtle forms - constitutionalism,
parliamentarism: thus "The starving women and children of this
country could not be fed with the 'Veto Question.'"
The SLP at least saw that the "material basis" of a socialist movement
must be the contemporary mass - not the refinement of theory; for
though the SLP laid great stress on theory, this was as much a picket
fence as a living and dynamic analysis. Individual ILP and BSP
members perceived that it was possible to "theorise away" the
socialist potential of the mass of the workers, and continued to work
in the factories for a "socialist" victory which would not be a pure
revolution, a translation of theory into praxis on the verbal plane
alone.
non-parliamentary, anti-capitalism, especially one associated with syndicalism, could only seem peripheral to the aims of the ILP — though the fact that such a movement took place involved the ILP in hasty and divisive revision.

The dilemma, or contradictions, in the ILP position were well brought out by Hardie in 1910: the task of the ILP was "to make the Labour Party stand out clearly and bulk large in the public mind" — but at the same time

"They must not forget that they were there primarily not to keep governments in office, or to turn them out, but to organise the working class into a great independent political power to fight for the coming of Socialism."14

Not only does this appear a somewhat mechanistic schema but it also contains contradictions — brought out the next year by Anderson. "An increasing Labour and Socialist movement, outside and inside Parliament, that has done much to precipitate the present crisis within the Lords" might be forcing a coalition of propertyied interests, or strengthening the hold of the Liberal bourgeoisie over the political system.15 This "crisis" did not necessarily show, as soon became clear, that

"Socialism presupposes no sudden upheaval, overthrow, cataclysm. The present society holds in its hands the threads that will be woven into the fabric of the future Society. Every real reform, every act of Social Legislation that curbs monopoly and vested interests and enlarges happiness and freedom, adds one more Socialistic thread."16

This position inevitably led to the adoption of a policy of collaboration: the Labour Party "must often vote with the members of other parties, thus

16 ibid. p.40.
blurring the lines of party distinction and political difference."\textsuperscript{17}

The division between reformist and revolutionary socialists, evolutionaries and independents, allowed the disparity between these outlooks to remain contained and at the level of argument only so long as there was no mass movement in the country at large. However, the response of men like Anderson to revolution or "socialism" had been determined by their ideas on social evolution and the roots of political consciousness.

"Socialism will gradually come by the awakening of a social consciousness, by the co-ordination and organisation of all Socialistic tendencies, by the widening of the bounds of public enterprise and service, and the curtailment of the area of private exploitation."\textsuperscript{18}

This positive definition has also its negative aspects: "Socialism can never come from the hunger and misery and despair of a people; from that nothing can spring except ignorance, degeneracy and ruin."\textsuperscript{19} - thus Socialism and its modes come to be seen as divorced both from a Marxist consciousness, and at once integrative and ameliorative. Consciousness and activity which does not produce these results, is "non-Socialist" - perhaps insofar as it does not "directly influence(s) the making and administration of law, and produce sound, well-considered constructive remedies of the poverty problem."\textsuperscript{20} In such a view, dichotomy and discontinuity had a role: those who could not "visualise as Lansbury did, that gaunt army of under-fed and under-paid women and

\textsuperscript{17} ibid. p.41.

\textsuperscript{18} ibid. p.41.

\textsuperscript{19} ibid. p.41. Here is nicely illustrated the dilemma that under capitalism there could not be socialism, but until capitalism had evolved socialism would not come. In the present, therefore, the mass of the workers has no specifically socialist role to play, and "spontaneity" confers no legitimacy on socialism: it is explicable, strictly, in terms of the capitalist market situation.

\textsuperscript{20} ibid. p.41.
children, who were to be found in every industrial centre" were
certainly lacking in human sympathy.21 But questions of the political
activity of the proletariat, ways of increasing political consciousness,
remained unresolved. If the hypothesis of revolution from increasing
immiseration be rejected, an argument from increasing amelioration and
constitutionalism could simply mean that the coming of Socialism and
sectional wage increases could seem to be the same thing.

After the 1911-12 strikes, the response of the ILP NAC was that
"all have manifested a desire to secure a larger measure of
justice. We heartily congratulate the workers on the victories
won and the concessions obtained, and regard these as merely
the prelude to bigger things."22

Despite this wholehearted association with the unrest, Anderson reiterated
"industrial action can never take the place of political action.
Syndicalism, about which we have heard so much of late, thanks
largely to the fatuous folly of the authorities, has made no real
appeal to the British workers, and offers them no means of escape
from the exactions of landlordism and capitalism."23

It did, however, offer a programme of action, and a means of direct
protest and defence which membership of a socialist society might not
and a means of resistance and attack whose results were immediate and
practical. In fact, Anderson was deeply impressed by the unrest:

21 ibid. p.80.

22 ILP Conference Report, 1912, p.28. The NAC report did not try to
define whether the unrest was socialist, and if so what this socialism
meant. "The ILP has fully identified itself with the Labour unrest,
and our members in all parts of the country have been in the forefront
of the fight against bad conditions. No small part of the work of the
ILP during the last twelve months has been to aid the organised
workers in their splendid industrial battles and to give legislative
expression to their demands." p.5.

23 ibid. p.41. Anderson in fact attributed the unrest to "an active
dissatisfaction with their industrial conditions", which borders
on the tautologous.
unwilling to sacrifice his opinion that peaceful political action was the most effective strategy —

"Within a few years from now, the workers will learn to vote as solidly as they have learned to strike, and the ballot box, with its conquest of political power, will open the door to full economic freedom."\(^{24}\)

— and to strikes he proposed no simple reformist remedy.

Just as Hardie pointed out that even with a minimum wage, control of prices would be essential to maintain the workers' standard, so Anderson warned against the acceptance of reforms calculated to "buy off" those protesting:

"I have a shrewd suspicion that the search in most cases is for such remedies as will not interfere with rent or profit, or disturb fundamentally an economic system cruel and bitter to the manual workers."\(^{25}\)

If Syndicalism was no more than a tactical protest along a "fault line" in contemporary capitalism, then surely the problem was one of assuming a position where socialists could inform the strikers of the limitations of their activity — and in this respect the electoral powerlessness of the socialists stood in sharp contrast to the optimism and integration of the Labour Party's MPs. Instead, Anderson said

"Much of the present industrial unrest will die down, but it will leave its mark upon the workers' movement and the political situation."\(^{26}\)

This is something close to automatism. For if the strikers had not only a false, or primitive, consciousness, but before and during the unrest

24 ibid. p.42.
25 ibid. p.41.
26 ibid. p.42. "..But I think the strikes have also proved that there are very definite limits to industrial action." This statement was supported by a vote against calling for a general strike.
the ILP maintained that it must collapse — here were reasons why, whatever the day to day enthusiasm of ILP members for the unrest and the part played therein by the party, the distinction between industrial and political action was rigidly, and constitutionally, maintained. Likewise, even on the political field, the ILP rejected the Second International's request that there should be "but one Socialist Party as there is but one proletariat".27

The use of troops was to the period 1910-14 what the attack on trade union immunities in the courts had been in the previous decade. Both seemed to legitimate defensive actions against unprovoked aggression — and to make a legal and peaceful victory for socialism appear temporarily more remote. To use troops marked the intensification of conflict, however, and this was reflected in attitudes on both sides. By 1913, Anderson was notably more militant. In 1913 he said of the unrest:

"Some ascribed it to the increased production of gold, and others traced it to the Trade Disputes Act. Well, the strikers have gone on, and probably will go on, leaving the benevolent gentlemen to continue their explanations. These strikes, practically without exception, have been struggles for food and freedom. For many workers life on the whole is getting harder, grimmer, duller. Capitalism is closing in upon them, gripping them more relentlessly, forcing down their standard of living. Official figures, which need not be quoted since they have been quoted so often, show that during the first 10 or 11 years of the new century, money wages stood still, real wages declined sharply owing to a continuous rise in the cost of living, and the incomes of the rich rose by over two hundred millions a year."28

27 ILP Conference Report, 1913, p.25. This makes a sharp contrast with the NAC's report that "In the many battles for improved industrial conditions, members of the ILP have invariably been found in the firing line, and their services have helped to promote the industrial and political unity of labour." pp.9-10.

28 ibid. p.41.
Increasing immiseration thus adduced turned Anderson to question reform:

"Some of the legislation has placed philanthropy on a national basis - and that no doubt has its advantages. But if I am asked what has been done to stop the robbery of the poor by the rich I am bound to answer: 'Practically nothing at all.' If the reforms of the last few years were intended to keep the workers quiet, or reconcile them to their conditions, or make their lot more tolerable, it can hardly be claimed in the light of recent happenings that the policy has been brilliantly successful. The fact is modern capitalism presses the worker down faster than these timid and tentative reforms can raise him up. After long agitation we concede an old age pension of 5s a week at 70, but in ten years the rise in food prices takes 2s a week from the labourer getting a pound." 29

The growing criticism of the lack of sympathy of the Labour Party with the working-class, made for instance by Lansbury, became associated with criticism of the "financial collectivism" the Party was, willy-nilly supporting in Parliament. With the waning of the movement in 1913, however, one may discern a return to the "other voice" of the ILP. In 1914, there was a welcome for "the growing altruism of Trade Unionism", the "kindlier social atmosphere" which had followed the work of the ILP. 30 Again, Sidney Webb over-simplified the question of what workers voted for when they voted for the Labour Party and what kind of Socialism they wanted:

"The British working man generally wanted Socialism a long time before he talked Socialism, and he sometimes talked Socialism before he voted Socialism." 31

29 ibid. p.42. Anderson even so seems to discount the possibility of a working-class democratic revolution: "This financial collectivism, in which the desire for dividend is the chief factor, must give way to a social collectivism organised to meet human needs and widen the bounds of social freedom." p.44.


31 ibid. p.50.
Between this easy labelling of levels of aspiration and articulation, and the plea of Shaw Desmond for a policy of "militant opportunism" one may perceive both the echo of international debate on mass and party participation in political activity, and the thinness of analysis of the unrest.\textsuperscript{32}

There seemed no way out of the three problems: Smillie's, that the miners needed an Independent party\textsuperscript{33} - whatever reforms the Liberals might promise - Macdonald's, that "So far as actual work was concerned the Labour Party was not\textsuperscript{34} strong; it was not a fourth of that number" - and Snowden's, that "They must recognise that the Labour Party was not a Socialist Party. Many of its members had been driven into its ranks against their will and still continued to maintain the closest possible connection with the Liberal organisations in their constituencies."\textsuperscript{35}

These difficulties, combined with the uncertainty as to whether the requisite level of socialist political consciousness was to arise from immiseration or amelioration, constitutional development or successful mass action lessened the impact of the unrest over the long term. One may say that in the short term demands for "direct representation on all boards controlling such nationalised or municipalised industries of the organised workers employed" embodied the typical demands of "syndicalist" reformists - but such a demand already appeared in the

\textsuperscript{32} ibid. p.75.
\textsuperscript{33} ibid. pp.80-1. Smillie maintained that the miners, if offered reform by a Liberal government would say "No, thank you, I would rather fight on until I get it without an alliance."

\textsuperscript{34} ibid. p.83. Brookway's figures showed that although 38 voted on Home Rule, only 25 did so on the action of the Dublin police in the strike of 1913. (pp.76-7)

\textsuperscript{35} ibid. p.85.
In the absence in Britain of prolonged dichotomy between the developed ideologies of proletariat and bourgeoisie, and indeed the lack of developed proletarian ideology which could exist when exposed to the dominant ideology of a pluralistic — that is diffuse — bourgeoisie, to suggest that a socialist consciousness would follow the development of a bourgeois consciousness was at once optimistic and defeatist.

It was an apology for having no ideology with which to confront with hostility a dominant class — or to identify such a class. The IIP argument that after transcending trade union, or syndicalist, consciousness that "socialism" would emerge during and survive bourgeois democratic society, had two functions. First, it neither challenged nor yet legitimated a system on which it felt (pragmatically) dependent, and yet which "used" and "serviced" the proletariat. Here, the ultimate victory could be only for evolution — not for those socialists able to impose their world-reality on society. Second, if "socialism" was for the party an albeit vague value-system in process of realisation, "evolution" accounted for the actual failures, relative isolation, and lack of enthusiasm, of party members and MPs.

During the war, Russell nicely illustrated the position of the IIP: having transcended labourism — thus incidentally removing itself from the masses — its socialism oscillated between a comparatively short run historicism, and the careful preservation of the machinery of administration and exploitation which might indeed be useful in a socialist future, but were themselves responsible for the alienation of 36 J.T. Walton Newbold, ibid. p.129. The failure of this motion, indeed, whilst it showed how close in fact British "syndicalism" was to the mainstream of socialist thinking, deprived the IIP of the chance of officially recognising the influence of syndicalist ideas: it represented something of a rebuff to the unrest.
the workers the ILP hoped to attract. This comes out clearly in Macdonald, whose contradictory postures survived the unrest, despite being severely shaken between 1911 and 1913.

"I think the labour unrest has been sedulously fostered by unscrupulous people"

he wrote — of a situation where "conciliation was smashed by the railway directors, and Parliamentary methods were smashed by lawyers." He did not wholly withhold legitimacy from the unrest: here "were not the calm counsels of men who have got something to hold on to, but the hasty, angry, enraged counsels of men who have got nothing to hold on to." But although strikes might in this instance be understood and tolerated, a "strike is an antiquated weapon which involved suffering and pain and trouble, and in the end the side that is not right does not win. Trust the House of Commons!" To refer to this appeal of 1906 implied for Macdonald that the apparent class hostility of the railway directors was as antiquated as the methods used to fight it: he said that the "red-tape of the lawyer .. stands side by side with the red flag of the syndicalist — the two things are absolutely the same." But clearly

37 Bertrand Russell to Herbert Bryan, 6.7.15, (Coll. Misc. 314 (LSE) "...I am not a socialist, though I think I might call myself a syndicalist."


39 ibid. p.3.

40 ibid. p.3.

41 ibid. p.3.
there were two aspects to this syndicalist consciousness: on the one hand it might be sectional and market-contained, but at the same time it could easily increase in intensity and aggressiveness. Attempts to share in "this additional national prosperity" might indeed mean simply that a resolution of conflict be reached without developing a proletarian, or challenging a bourgeois, ideology. But if the Government was bound "in times of such unrest" to more "than mere police business, and we ought to take steps to see that just wages and fair terms of service are secured to the wage-earning population", then the unrest became willy-nilly a challenge.

Men like Clynes were anxious to produce reasons for granting wage increases which would not involve questions of consciousness at all – simply an actuarial calculation:

"Poverty is the most costly thing that any community could permit. It does not pay a country to keep the people poor. Any general impoverishment of large masses of the people is bound to cause other forms of danger, and compels you to pay a much larger doctor's bill and asylum bill and workhouse bill than otherwise would have to be paid."44

Lansbury stands on the other end of this continuum of those seeing poverty as a disfunctional imposition by a leisure class on a productive community: he proposed

"to make the poor hate poverty, to make them hate their poverty – never mind about hating their so-called superiors. I do not want them to hate the rich but to hate the idea that they and their children should live under these conditions. If they get a good hatred of these conditions into their mind...(T)hey will bind themselves together in their unions; then in their federations of

42 ibid. p.6.
43 ibid. p.6.
44 ibid. p.7.
unions. Finally they will capture this House, not to palliate their misery, but to destroy the profit-mongering system which makes them poor and a few people rich."\textsuperscript{45}

There are two aspects to this Parliamentarianism and reformism: on the one hand, as Roberts pointed out, class-collaboration might lead to a clear worsening of conditions. Again, not only did the unrest call into question both the history and future of reformism, but it drew attention to resistance within Parliament to reform: when Hardie mentioned that a minimum wage in staple industries would cost £26m, while the annual increase in middle-class incomes was £311m - the winning of Parliament became both a more considerable and longer task than the patience of strikers was prepared to accept.\textsuperscript{46} In fact, reformism and parliamentarism were pragmatically acceptable only so long as there was no protest against them. The unrest brought the ILP theory into question. However although a challenge questioning the legitimacy of the party, standing "with one foot on trade unionism...with the other partly on Socialism - but only partly",\textsuperscript{47} raised the problem of a "spontaneous" rising outside the ILP's guidance, it could reveal inconsistency but not resolve it.

Macdonald predicted the economic crisis which precipitated the unrest:

"Today, at the beginning of 1909, the working classes were receiving a share of the national wealth less by £2,000,000 per annum than they were ten years ago, although in the meanwhile that wealth has enormously increased. The display of riches has become more barbaric, more impertinent, more

\textsuperscript{45} ibid. p.11.

\textsuperscript{46} ibid. p.15.

gross, both in its forms and in its lavishment."\textsuperscript{48}

But in 1909 before the unrest it was not absurd to say that

"socialism is not going to come from the misery of the people... The further Society drifts from a primitive state or organisation, the less and less true does it become that despair and revolution go hand in hand."\textsuperscript{49}

Increasing immiseration was not producing a revolutionary outburst — so evolutionism, with its assertion of biological monism, the vote, could seem a pragmatic code. This was further reinforced by a faith in Parliament and parliamentary socialism whose elements Trotsky described in these terms: Macdonald "endeavours to declare openly that the Labour Party based on the trade unions is a super-class organisation; but the "democratic" State of British capital has a still more super-class character for him."\textsuperscript{50}

Macdonald's evolutionism eliminated the struggle for survival: based on the "internal accumulation of forces making for change", De Vries's and Burbank's mutation theory, Macdonald excluded separately sudden, and anti-parliamentary, change.\textsuperscript{51}

"The Party which proposes to strike at the heart of democratic government in order to make a show of earnestness about unemployment will not only not be tolerated by the country, but does not deserve to be."\textsuperscript{52}

Parliamentary government emerges as a splitting of the dominant ideology: capitalism is inferior to and separate from the institutional supremacy and evolutionary superiority of a Parliament, which is before it

\textsuperscript{49} ibid. pp.2-3.
\textsuperscript{50} L.Trotsky, Where is Britain Going? (CPGB, 1926 edn.) pp.62-3.
\textsuperscript{51} J.R.Macdonald, Socialism Today, p.6. As an alternative, that is, to "sudden change" owing to "force" or "legislative action".
\textsuperscript{52} ibid. p.7.
does.\textsuperscript{53} But the weakness here is that there is little connection between Parliament and its master, the nation, and the capitalist system, itself evolving "into trusts".\textsuperscript{54} On to this model, or series of models, is grafted a social ethic which allows Syndicalism little place in an evolutionary scheme:

"The Socialist believes in a combination of political and trade union action, the Syndicalist believes in trade union action alone; the Socialist appeals to the whole body of public opinion, the Syndicalist considers the working classes only; the Socialist brings about his changes by legislative moulding, he uses the organic State to transform itself by making such alterations in its own mind and circumstances as must precede all permanent change; the Syndicalist cutting himself off from these organic formative influences, has to fall back upon force, either the passive force of social paralysis, or the active force of riots, to effect his changes with revolutionary suddenness"\textsuperscript{55}... "In fact, Syndicalism is largely a revolt against Socialism. Socialism must be Parliamentary, or it is nothing."\textsuperscript{56}

Thus ethical, institutional and evolutionary arguments are used to demonstrate the misguidedness not only of theoretical Syndicalists, but Syndicalist activity. He even uses the argument from historicism about the Syndicalist: "having no appreciation of historical necessity, he regards himself as being consciously victimised, and therefore entitled

53 "The master of Parliament is the Nation, and if Parliament does not do its work it is no use smashing it; it is little use blaming it, because it is a mere thing in the hands of the electors of the country." ibid. p.7.

54 Macdonald, Socialism for Business Men (ILP, 1925) p.8. At the same time, Capitalism had broken down because "it has produced unemployment, a bad distribution of property and wealth, and a totally unjust distribution of the amenities of life." It is hard to reconcile this concept of evolution with that of breakdown: just as most of Macdonald's categories have special meaning: "I believe in historical evolution. I do not believe in revolution, because we have democracy. Russia teaches me nothing - except that you should not have a Czar in this country." p.11.

55 Syndicalism, op. cit. p.6.

56 ibid. p.7.
to prey back;" The fundamental difficulty for Macdonald here was his confusion between theory and the action, or the activities, of a social movement. His opposition to Syndicalist theory cannot avoid becoming an attack on the labour unrest itself. Justified though grievances may be, they call in question not the praxis of Parliament, but the theory which exalts a Parliamentary (organic) system — and the theory of political evolution. Thus the organic, spontaneous movement is seen as an organism damaging the parliamentary organism. The strike is a cancer.

Macdonald himself could not simply condemn activities which had so aroused the ILP — he had, after all, to justify the achievements of the Socialism which he now saw as under attack by a large section of the labour movement.

"A small Labour Party in Parliament could not do very much beyond what was ripe to be done. It certainly could not satisfy revolutionary expectation. In respect to any specific industrial or trade grievance it could not act so swiftly, or decisively, or directly as a trade union. The balance had to be adjusted; co-operation between political and industrial action had to be effected. Each had to discover that it had a field of its own." Thus the challenge to Socialism evaporates: there is a dualism of industrial and political action which must remain in an equilibrium — the unrest itself is simply the operation of a self-regulating mechanism.


58 It is possible that Macdonald's hostility to Syndicalism was caused by his reading of the original or of digests of Sorel, whose "melodrama" he disliked. Macdonald's claim for Parliament, rashly enough, was that it represented a complete substitute for all the claims of syndicalism — even those which were not affected by conventional political systems: it is, perhaps, a mark of the impact of Syndicalism that Macdonald should have felt it necessary not simply to dismiss much of Syndicalism as wishful thinking or peripheral to the conquest of political power, but defective as a Utopia!

59 ibid. p.41.
"All that is happening in England at present is that trade unionism as an active force is reviving, and that industrial action is being resorted to with, perhaps, the over-enthusiasm which always follows upon a period of over-neglect."  

Unrest is acceptable, that is, so long as it can be so contained and theorised that it does not threaten the values of the organic community represented in Parliament. Macdonald proposed as the basis for this unity the fact that society was not in a class sense dichotomous:

"It is far nearer to the truth to picture society as consisting of two great activities - that of production and that of exploitation - with an intricate mass of divided interest joining them together. The two outstanding activities, apart and antagonistic though they are, become in society linked by a system of interdependent interests. The exploiter becomes a consumer, and his consumption becomes an essential part of the social economic order."  

Clearly, if such a schema were to operate, exploitation must not appear to establish a dominant ideology, and consciousness of exploitation must remain "mental": interdependence established a kind of harmony and unity. Yet clearly, the unrest itself would seem to deny this: so, said Macdonald, there are other antagonisms within the two "great activities" - "Within the two camps of exploiters and the exploited there are economic antagonisms of considerable importance," but the superficiality of the conflict is still "like the pattern on a web of cloth: it is not the stuff itself, it is the manipulation of the stuff. Society is the web - the stuff itself."  

The process of exploitation is one of "economic evolution" - but the class struggle is not:

60 ibid. p.45.
61 ibid. p.48.
62 ibid. p.49.
63 ibid. p.50. This is the equivalent of Ossowski's "stratified" view of society.
"The new order is to arise not by the smashing up of the old by Syndicalist method of 'exterior pressure', but by the maturing of old itself. Social growth, not class conflict, is to produce it. Society is in process of change, and the workers who are looking for greater justice are only retarding progress by following the wrongdoing of which they are victims rather than strengthening the social tendencies which make for their emancipation."\(^4\)

Macdonald's, then, is a revisionism without an orthodoxy, a critique of Marxism without reference to Marx:

"the assumption that our economic system is a mechanism itself, and only holds a mechanical relationship to society as a whole, is one of those misleading analogies. It is an organic function of a complete organic social unity, and its transformation must be considered and planned in organic, not mechanical ways. It is to be transformed by the operation of the re-creative impulses which it produces internal to itself."\(^5\)

This rejection of a vulgar Marxism involves not only the rejection of Syndicalism as a theory, but of the unrest as a legitimate and meaningful form of protest:

"Parliament and the historic method, because they do express something deeper than a class conflict, and something wider than workshop antagonisms, are the way in which the expanding life of the community creates new social states."\(^6\)

The unrest and its supporters are victims of a false consciousness: the idea of the class war "is no guide for constructive work, and only suggests an imperfect explanation of the agitations through which society progresses."\(^7\) Unrest thus becomes atavistic and peripheral: it is

64 ibid. p. 52. This most clearly shows Macdonald sliding away from an attack on "Syndicalism" to a sharp criticism of militancy.

65 ibid. p. 52.

66 ibid. p. 53. Macdonald seems to oscillate between suggesting more effective methods of fighting domination and denying that domination need be confronted, or that the domination inherent in a class society is of major significance.

67 ibid. p. 53.
forced on trade unionists by the selfishness of their exploiters, no doubt, but is none the less destructive of the Benthamite vision of statute, as "social legislation...more precise as it is brought up face to face with the actual problems and as its knowledge becomes more accurate." 68

This historical, organic, constitutional and institutional theory brings Macdonald closer to Jaurès: there

"is, therefore, a real unity called a nation, which endows the individual with traditions, with habits, with a system of social conduct. The Syndicalist, in this respect being an individualist - being one who lays it down that this national inheritance is unreal, is nothing - can build up no policy upon it." 69

Sometimes, then, the Syndicalist becomes for Macdonald simply the "revolutionary Socialist", of whatever kind, or one who conceives of an impossible "workers' state". It is in the refutation of Syndicalism, in which Macdonald was joined by "orthodox" and neo-Marxists, that the "super-class" origins of Parliamentary labourism are to be found clearly set forth. Under the blanket-term of "Syndicalism", working-class militancy, and independent working-class politics are subordinated to the capacity of the bourgeois state to transcend its own limitations:

"The democracy can put an end to the bourgeois state whenever it likes." 70

68 ibid pp. 54-5. Macdonald seems to have assumed that under a revolutionary or syndicalist state, there would be no consistency, no predictable legality: otherwise it is hard to see how the specific English parliament should be "the only guarantee we have that bad industrial conditions will be levelled up, that parasites will not be allowed to prey for ever on other people, that the moral inspiration of a few will be secured by law as a privilege to the many, that there is a continuity in industrial policy. Without Parliament and legislation we would have none of these guarantees."


70 ibid. p. 56.
Certainly, there is a dismissive nostalgia about the old revolutionary's watchword of "'Tools up,' not the Syndicalist one of 'Tools down.'" - a feeling too that "the Syndicalist dilly-dallies and will not face the consequences of his own policy. He is playing at revolution." But these observations are peripheral to the main argument: that political and industrial systems are ethically and developmentally separate. The Syndicalist state could only be "an evolution of trust capitalism unchanged in its nature rather than of industrial citizenship broadened in its responsibilities." The industrial system is not only separate from, but subordinate to, the Parliamentary. Macdonald seems in two minds as to whether a political revolution is impossible, or simply unjustifiable: at all events, the scope for industrial action is severely limited - there can be no industrial vanguard:

"in due course, trade unionism had to establish a footing on the field of politics, for there its battles were being fought with an increasing frequency. But it must not occupy that field exclusively. Parliament is Olympian. It is always somewhat apart from the life of the people. Its work is general."

And so, in the end it is not the theory of syndicalism, but the practice of militancy in both industrial and political systems which is being limited.

Macdonald's schema, then, does not permit of a politically active and politically conscious, participating working-class.

71 ibid. p.66.
72 ibid. p.58.
73 ibid. pp.69-70.
"Men are being goaded into revolt; they are prevented from settling down; their desire to remain quiet and to assume that their employers mean to observe bargains and treat them fairly is being beaten out of them, they are being compelled to revolt."  

But however legitimate the strike may be, the possibility of victory is not admitted: crises lead to "flamboyant impossibilism" and the pure consciousness of the workers is simply derived from their "firmer grip on life than on thought." This, to Macdonald, is partly a function of working-class modes of thought, partly a function of critical social situations:

"In these days they left their work like men overwhelmed by some great religious fervour. In such supreme moments, the mass always follows its own instincts. Intellect then bows to intuition."  

Far from defending spontaneity and participation as modes of pure consciousness, Macdonald sees it as a consequence of capitalist "control over workpeople" - but as much to be deplored as that control itself.

75 ibid. p.87. This seems to postulate an ideal non-participating, non-political community.
76 ibid. p.79. "Their ethics are those of the mass more than of the individual. They think of classes and communities." p.79. However deficient this may be as sociological explanation, it poses problems of the origins of syndicalism and unrest which he does not elsewhere consider - as indeed does Macdonald's complaint that the damage done by workers to themselves in strikes was sentimentally exaggerated.
77 ibid. p.96. In fact, shortly after, Macdonald did produce an argument suggesting that domination might well be an important political "trigger": "Mere poverty will breed discontent, but a treatment which does violence to the self-respect and sense of justice in men will breed revolution" - but again it is not clear whether this domination did not, or should not, exist, or whether it should be ignored if it did.
78 ibid. p.29.
The danger to "civil peace" in the railway strike implicitly implicated both strikers and troops.79

True, by the 1920s, Macdonald was more willing to consider separately trade union and syndicalist action; but there is still no more than a subordinate and defensive role for the unions.

"The Trade Union conflict has become the national conflict; the field upon which it has to be fought out is the State, not the workshop; the weapon is to be the ballot-box and the Act of Parliament, not collective bargaining. The levelling up of the submerged sections of society can only be done by the political method of taxation coupled with social legislation, and Parliament will not launch itself upon these voyages unless Labour in its various aspects is united for political purposes."80

Thus, however powerful and successful union militancy or revolutionary syndicalism, Macdonald and a large section of the ILP could not accept the implicit assumptions behind such a movement, let alone the explicit ones. Macdonald's own approach postulated an organic and evolving society in which, however, there was a plurality of ethical systems, and an industrial system which apparently could only be reacted upon by the political system.

The ILP itself was divided as regards Macdonald's interpretation. Hardie spoke approvingly of Marx in terms which admitted a "pure consciousness" (or, in Lenin's terms, simply a trade union consciousness).

"He did not ask the working class to unite as class conscious Socialists, but only as working men. He knew the class consciousness would come in good time."81

It may well be that at the tactical level a greater impression of cohesion existed in the ILP than the long term development of theoretical bases

79 ibid. p.102.
80 ibid. p.105.
81 The Labour Leader, 19.8.10.
justified. In the short term, it was difficult to see how to justify collaboration with the progressive bourgeoisie would immediately lessen the aggressiveness of employers’ organisations, or how Parliament was to help the railway workers when

"Not all of them had a clear perception of the rights and wrongs of the quarrel, but they were all fairly resolved that Union was the one thing needful...It is a monstrous thing that the nation's soldiers should be at the beck and call of powerful corporations who sweat their employees, and fleece the entire trading community...We shall not forget that this attack on civic freedom was sanctioned by a Liberal Home Secretary, and by a Liberal Prime Minister whose whole attitude toward the railway dispute has shown his aloofness from the workers, and his utter incompetence to deal with Labour questions."82

If Macdonald on Syndicalism helps to explain the attitude of his own and subsequent Labour Governments to Parliament, to socialist and ambulance legislation, to union militancy and to the pace of socialisation, then the immediate reactions of parliamentary and all other socialists to the use of troops, attacks on union organisation, help to account for the independence of the Labour Party and its electoral successes.

The perception of discrepancies between organic theories of community life and the practice of dominant groups within that community, discredited such ideas as "Parliamentary neutrality" in the ILP as elsewhere. To some, the unrest was not reactive and defensive, but a sign of consciousness reaching a higher level:

"The unrest which prevailed amongst the working classes throughout the world was due to the spread of education, the possession of economic knowledge, and the growing acquaintance with the circumstances of wealth production and distribution."83

82 ibid. 25.6.11.

83 C.H. Roberts in the House of Commons, quoted in The Labour Leader, 4.4.12.
At the same time, however, the ILF leadership was always more ready to see in liberal reforms a practical advance towards socialism: the Insurance Bill was held to be "due to the advance of Socialism and the rise of the Labour Party", and Dubery stressed the more intimate connection between industrial and political system, that "An educated proletariat will refuse to live at a low subsistence level, and if a high level cannot be obtained by legislation, there will be times of unrest, strikes, demonstrations, and general labour troubles."85

Macdonald implied that there was no contradiction between bourgeois liberalism and democracy, although Brockway pointed to its partiality — "The Government was ready to vote the Railway Companies bigger profits. It was not ready to vote the railway workers 21s a week. And it calls itself "The People's Government!"86

Macdonald was committed to a policy of collaboration with other classes and other parties which necessarily involved him reducing the priority of working-class emancipation, and to referring to attempts to secure some measure of relief as being more instinctive than intellectual.

In part, these preconceptions were based on a misreading of the organisational structure of the working-class: Gosling pointed out that "as we are all members of one Federation, of course (strike action) runs like wildfire."87 Partly too, to use the same episode, it was a false comparison to talk of economic antagonisms within the working-class: when Thomas Reekie spoke up for the foremen

84 ibid. 12.5.12.
85 ibid. 11.8.11.
86 ibid. 11.12.13.
87 H. Gosling in Disputes Affecting Transport Workers (London and Medway) Cd 6229 (1912-13, xlvii) p.259.
"We were not the workers; we represented the management and staff of our employers",

this identification was secondary in importance to the use of Thomas Reekie as a *casus belli* by the employers. 88

There is, then, a major difference between the presentation of demands for reform arising out of unrest, and those produced as alternatives to unrest: one finds this in Snowden's "The Living Wage", where again, though unrest is seen as objectively legitimate, there are serious doubts as to its advisability.

"The Labour Unrest is due to a conviction that the worker has not a wage which is his fair share of the common product; which is not enough to enable him to live up to the standard of life he desires — a standard generally of an extremely modest character." 89

The answer to this problem was seen to lie with public opinion: "No strike can be successful nowadays which is not supported by public opinion." 90 Again, strikers were likely to be defeated in "a contest of endurance, and the workpeople are never so well fortified as the employers." 91 Likewise, the Government itself only saved the railwaymen "from abject surrender." 92 Not only are trade union affairs and working class politics seen as, ideally, peripheral or subordinate to, the wider concerns of community and government, but emotive language is used to question militancy: "The responsible trade union official does not like

88 ibid. p.271.
89 P. Snowden, *The Living Wage* (1912) p.3.
90 ibid. p.84.
91 ibid. p.80.
92 ibid. p.81.
strikes", especially the strikes urged "by the apostles of the general strike policy as a short cut to the millennium." But in fact, this "Syndicalism" was but the theorisation of working-class practice and aspiration at the workplace. The natural response to a strike threatened by blacklegs was to call for a general strike, just as the response of the alienated, let alone the militant, worker to subordination, poor conditions and unemployment was to soldier and strike on the job. To condemn this automatism as a source of theory is something different from a condemnation of the attitudes, the conditions, the experiences which produced this behaviour.

Despite his expressions of sympathy with the workers, Snowden was relatively little influenced by explicitly syndicalist demands: the argument for nationalisation of the mines was that "It will be a good thing for the miners; it will benefit the general trade of the country; and the nation as a whole will gain much advantage." Indeed, "control of industry by the people" was presented as a policy for the consideration and approval of "the trading and commercial classes." Snowden uses the language of class while implicitly denying its political force and ideological modes:

"Though Socialism is primarily the cause of the working-class, it is not in its aim and object a class movement. It seeks the overthrow of classes, and the establishment of a society in which there shall be one class, with full and equal human life."

That is, socialism facilitates the transition from class to non-class

93 ibid. p.89. Snowden's alternative to strikes seems to have been voluntary conciliation – to avoid compulsory, statutory conciliation.

94 Snowden, How to nationalise the mines (ILP Manchester) p.3.


96 Snowden, Socialism and Syndicalism (n.d.) p.15.
(or one-class) society: it is apparently neutral as regards its relation to the working-class. Its strongest appeal "is to the cultured and learned class", for "they have been of exceptional service to their generation." 97 "Class" is further used as a term of mystification, in that there is "a submerged class of homeless, vagrant, unemployable, criminal persons, who are the refuse-heap of our social system." 98 Thus the echo of the revisionist debate comes to Britain, impelled by the same opportunities of political power and relations between parties and trade unions separately organised. The whole "splitting" of revisionism between the preservation of Marxist categories, class and manual attitudes - and the rejection of the class basis and analytical modes of Marxism - can be seen in Snowden.

"The preaching of the doctrine of the class war keeps alive and excites that very spirit of sectionalism and hatred which prevents men from realising that in the highest sense the interest of each is the interest of all. Socialism will come only when the great body of men and women have intellectually become convinced that they can promote their own welfare only by promoting the common welfare." 99

Thus we see that not only do syndicalism and revisionism have common roots - the growth of trusts and the growth of an ideology based on corporate capitalism, labour federations, the development of a body of liberal bourgeois opinion which, under universal suffrage, would maintain some alliance with legislatively reforming socialists - but base their arguments and theory on similar phenomena. "The Trust is a great step forward in economic advance" said Snowden: 100 "not even the

97 ibid. p.16.
98 ibid. p.29.
99 ibid. p.78. Thus we see Snowden almost splitting off Socialism from the working-class, de-materialising it.
100 ibid. p.106.
loudest voiced Revolutionary Socialist expects that the Social Revolution will be achieved in any other way than by the democracy and the gradual transformation of the capitalist system into a co-operative commonwealth." Socialism thus resides in perfected social reform, exploring the deeper causes of inequality and disparity, by means of "Socialistic reforms, each bringing the building nearer the state of completion, when it can be said, 'Though not one of the steps was Socialist, the successive steps have brought us to Socialism'." In fact, this legal and historicist socialism was as open to the critical syndicalist perception of alienation as was the syndicalist theory to complaints that the syndicalists ignored the complexity of social organisation, and the bonds which led the proletariat to seek accommodation within the system of social relations imposed, but with that imposition palliated, by capitalist ideology.

Mann's statement indeed noted the polarity: "I despise the law. I will do my best to bring it into increasing contempt, and I care not for the law nor its administrators." That the British workers did not achieve a Marxist revolution should not, however, lead us to ignore the fact that between 1910 and 1926, despite the blurring of distinctions between revolutionaries and evolutionaries - based in part on the desire for a labour unity which belied the notional super-class unity of the evolutionaries - the advocacy of a participating workers' government, hostile to bourgeois modes and structures, divided the

101 ibid. p.133.
102 ibid. p.185.
103 ibid. p.209.
labour movement as no other issue.

So long as men could say

"This cramped life, this constant penury in the midst of wealth, is not right, not just. I do not know what it may be, but I am being badly hurt all my days. My status is a status of drudgery. My children have no prospect but drudgery. I resent it; something is wrong somewhere in the ordering of affairs", 104

evolution involved an intolerable period of waiting, of minute examination of the work of a handful of desperate labour and socialist MPs. The collapse and discrediting of a left-wing leadership was never complete — but it could do little against the threat of expulsion in the 1920s, the winning of parliamentary power by the Labour Party, and the soldiers' battles of the 1920s. Certainly, as the threat of revolution receded and as the working-class was able increasingly to clothe itself in utility versions, instead of the rags, of the costume of the dominant ideology, the workers could only regard the gains as pure benefit. They had no successful revolutionary past, and no revolutionary example.

Clearly, too, it was only experience of Labour MPs and ministries which could test Henderson's contention that

"political democracy itself does not in the least interfere with the rule of the rich, with servility, with subjection in actual life to the owners of the means of the world's work. Political

104 Fred Henderson, The Labour Unrest (n.d.) p.99. In view of this, Beatrice Webb's conversion to Marxism on the grounds that she had discounted the possibility of breakdown in the capitalist system reads strangely in view of the permanent breakdown cited by Henderson. She would seem to come under the stricture of Henderson's comment that "So far, although the pressure towards the attainment of political power had its origin in the economic and industrial conditions of life, it had been pressure due to dissatisfaction with the pace of social reform, rather than with the direction of economic change. The economic outlook was confined to social reform within the existing order; and no synthetic quality of thought, bearing upon the essential economic relationship of the worker to society, was as yet generally apparent in the movement." p.120.
democracy, which many men, in the fervour of fighting for it, had come to regard as an end in itself, had to be discovered as only a means to an end. The fact that men without votes would starve, be sweated and overworked, remain mere commodities in the labour market, with just as much discomfort and under just as much deprivation as men without votes, until such time as they were intelligent enough to use their votes for the control of their economic conditions, might seem so obvious as to need no demonstration by experience, and to be one of the axioms of political endeavour at the outset. But it was not so. While, no doubt, there was a dim realization of the fact that political enfranchisement would lead to social and industrial betterment, there was a tendency at the outset to leave the thing to work itself out automatically. 

One can only say that before 1914, the parliamentary socialists' faith in Parliament took as much on trust as did the revolutionaries' in their revolution - and though both groups claimed to serve the highest aspirations of the working-class, the parliamentarians read these aspirations as considerably lower for the time being, than the revolutionaries. To suppose that immediate reforms were being passed to produce socialism - to mean by that the equalization of economic and political power for the workers with that of the possessing class (were such a thing feasible) - would be naive:

"a policy of social reform, in the most generous instalments, was not only consistent with the continued exploitation by the master class, but was, in view of the demands of labour for such reforms, in the interests of that exploitation, a form of insurance to the exploiter class against attack on its main position, so long as the minds of the workers could be kept to by-paths within the existing order." 

However, there was no standard of comparison available to British workers:

"If this country were invaded and over-run by a foreign power, it would be a precious clever set of new foreign masters who could skin the English worker more effectively than he is skinned

105 ibid. pp.105-5.
106 ibid. p.126.
by his present English masters and owners."\(^{107}\)

Lacking a peasantry and a conscript army, or foreign occupation, the proletariat lacked those apparently necessary allies, and those fruitful sources of revolutionary enthusiasm and endeavour, which might have prevented the resolution or control of conflict under the formal provisions of advanced constitutionalism.

The ILP was not so much structurally as ideologically riven by the pre-1914 unrest: "lacking as it did any real theoretical basis" is perhaps a shorthand for saying there was a single structure but no one source of theoretical language and analysis.\(^{108}\) There were certainly several theoretical bases, sharply defined during the unrest: if Macdonald and Snowden express the views of a divided leadership against that of a militant rank and file membership, they did so within a debate explicitly launched to provide both a programme and an anti-revolutionary strategy, though there might be doubt as to whether revolution threatened to arise within the party, or from the employers - "This was revolution with a vengeance", said Anderson of Taff Vale.\(^{109}\)

Nor does it seem wholly convincing to say of the ILP, "the opportunist conduct of the MPs belonging to the latter party is giving rise, as always happens, to syndicalist tendencies among the workers."\(^{110}\) For opportunism and syndicalism were divergent theories derived from the same phenomena - but not from each other - (though clearly there is

\(^{107}\) F.Henderson, Socialism and Tariff Reform (Manchester, n.d.) p.12.


\(^{109}\) W.C.Anderson, Parliament and Trade Union History (Hyde ILP) p.15. In this pamphlet Anderson avoids reference to Socialism, perhaps anxious to avoid its unspoken connotations, replacing it by "collectivism", apparently as a synonym, but in fact effectively describing the ideology of managerial capitalism.

here a feedback effect.) The ILP was, in the work of Macdonald, and to a lesser extent of Snowden, both anti-revolutionary and anti-counter-revolutionary. The dichotomy between industrial and political action seen by Macdonald was that perceived, mutatis mutandis, by the syndicalists: Hardie, increasingly estranged from the ILF, represented that school of thought in the party demanding that "Socialism" must be the creation of the "mass" of the people.

"The Labour Party is not avowedly a Socialist Party in its profession, but the feeling grows that so long as land and industrial capital are privately owned and controlled, the mass of the people are bound to be in bondage to circumstances over which they have no control." I

If, then, the "mass" and the "party" line here be seen as complementary, so too Hardie's broad-based movement avoided both the institutional mediation of Macdonald, and gave an important if un-defined role to militancy. It is suggested, therefore, that despite the mixture of complexity and vagueness in relations between structures, and theories of political and social mobilisation, Macdonald and Snowden were busily engaged in building a movement to avoid both existing reaction and revolution. They were aiming, then, to produce the bricks and mortar of opportunism.

Just as Connolly -

"As if repenting of this vagueness, but unwilling to insist on ideological purity, he produced the ILP(I) programme which is remarkable in containing both social democratic and syndicalist formulations side by side....(Connolly) may have been influenced by an article by Jaurès which appeared in L'Humanité about this time, when it was argued that the two conceptions were not really at variance"

- so too English socialists could seek to reach agreement with their

socialist critics by referring, vaguely enough, to common aims, or to a unity of class interest and activity on which their theories did not necessarily depend. Reactions to the unrest showed two main approaches: first, from 1912-14, the revolutionary-revisionist debate was conducted over the living example of the unrest, seen, however, in terms of blurred distinctions between revolution, reform, and revisionism, — theory, programme and ideology. The unrest, that is, ceased to be specific, and became "debate". Secondly, it involved a divergence between two concepts of democracy, centring round a discussion of the ILP's role in the Labour Party, and the Labour Party's role in Parliament. Once admit that the existing suffrage was "democratic", and that popular government was possible through parliament, and it became difficult to draw conclusions other than that the liberal bourgeoisie were potential class allies of the working-class, and that constitutionalism guaranteed the eventual parliamentary success of the "mass of the people".

One discerns in the counter-argument the stirrings of sovietism and Bolshevism: it is not after all surprising that the ILP should be strongest in Scotland, where the parliamentary tradition had weaker roots in popular consciousness than in England, and that men like Maxton could be described as "always impassioned democrats rather than red revolutionaries." And yet the difference between Macdonald and the "syndicalists" was deeper than a tactical question of the nature of

113 This is brought out both by Shinwell's autobiographical writings, and Kirkwood's. In Scotland at least there was little surprise that anti-parliamentarian socialists could be regarded as advanced democrats! This quotation is from Arthur Marwick, James Maxton: his place in Scottish labour history. Scottish Historical Review, April 1964, p.27.
the transfer of parliamentary power: the very fact that the division and the attacks on each others position were conducted in such general terms implies the dissolution of a common agreement - whether this lay in, as Humphrey said, a half-conscious acceptance of class war, or a faith in the principle of working-class representation.¹¹⁴ Although Macdonald himself did not support the war, the key to the support of labour for national war is to be found in his defence of Parliament against strike action. To the "syndicalists", the only way to prevent the survival and dominance of capitalist modes, to break out of the dominant ideology, was to destroy the modes as actively and self-consciously as possible: by transferring capitalism to the control of the workers, the aim was not, as Macdonald feared, to perpetuate the evils of capitalism, but to occupy and transform its structures in situ.

In the BSP too, there arose the same question of unrest as a symptom of false consciousness. Again there was the movement within the party - despite the fact that the movement for unity in 1911 had already attracted branches of other socialist societies in an as-it-were officially sponsored rank and file movement - leading to the defection or apostasy of branches like the Birmingham BSP. Hyndman took the line

¹¹⁴ A.W.Humphrey, A History of Labour Representation (1912) "The difference between Liberal-Labourism and Independent Labour was that the latter, consciously or unconsciously, recognised the theory of a class war, while the former did not." p.118. Cunningham Graham made to Blunt the nice point that to demonstrate the social dichotomy they ought to represent, Labour MPs "when they get into Parliament...are at once bitten with the absurd idea that they are to be no longer working men, but statesmen, and they try to behave as such. "I tell them," said Graham, "that they would do more good if they came to the House in a body drunk and tumbling about on the floor."" (W.S.Blunt, My Diaries, vol. ii. p.197)
familiar enough with IIP spokesmen, that the unrest was a linear movement, representing the struggle of separate groups of workers for "better conditions of existence." He did not consider the unrest as being substantially different from a mass of "strikes", and though he implicitly recognised the need for a trade union consciousness, regarded this as at many points directly hostile to socialist consciousness.

"The drawbacks to strikes it is not necessary to enlarge upon: all workers know them too well. But political action in its present shape having proved wholly untrustworthy and the people being unarmed and untrained, strikes, however harmful to the workers themselves, are naturally regarded as the only weapon available against the labour-robbing class, and one of the most satisfactory features of the recent revolts has been the combined action against their oppressors of both skilled and unskilled labourers."

Hyndman's distrust of the success of the strike movement may account partly for his reluctance to analyse its deeper causes and significance and to consider, as Lenin had done for the Russian strike movement, ways of interpreting strike statistics in terms of a cumulative movement - a profile of working-class militancy - and ways of harnessing the social democracy to the awakened proletariat. This can be traced to his belief in the polarity of political and industrial action. "Nevertheless, politics are not played out because servile Labourists inside the House of Commons have proved worse than incompetent." But in fact, Hyndman was able to offer reforms - as

115 ESP Conference Report, 1912, p.6.
116 ibid. p.7.
117 In Collected Works, vol. 18 - using the figures of economic and political strikes to point to correlation between economic and political activity, and in particular the growth of a proletarian movement as indicated by these official statistics.
118 ibid. p.7.
the eight-hour day, co-operative organisation of unemployment, the
minimum wage — as "stepping stones to peaceful revolution." He
did propose a more participatory political system. With referenda,
and with the initiative passed to the people in "all industrial and
political business", there was however little sympathy for the self-
governing aspirations of the syndicalists. "Of the futility of
resuscitated Syndicalism it is needless to speak. There is nothing
real and nothing ideal in the floundering and hysterical propaganda
of segregated grab." The actual Syndicalist movement was so
small, so deliberately restricted, and its beliefs so popular and widely
held, that the frequent condemnations of Syndicalism are rejections
not only of spontaneity as a socialist mode, but of spontaneous and
organised working-class activity. This unnecessarily lofty position
— one which in any case must sever the BSP from the mass of the workers
— was taken up in the pursuit of a bogus orthodoxy. This was
Marxist evolutionism, which proposed keeping the socialist parties
pure and uncontaminated by contact with the masses until a peaceful
revolution arrived.

Quelch said, referring to the women's suffrage movement,
"They could not support what was an absolutely middle-class,
reactionary, and anti-Socialist movement because they had a
sentimental regard for women who had been in prison for doing
something which they had no right to do, and for which severer

119 ibid. p.8.
120 Rather, he did not perceive in the demand for control of industry a
version, at however low a level of sophistication, of his proposed
democratisation at national level. ibid. p.8.
121 ibid. p.9.
122 The picture at branch level was quite different — as A. Rothstein's
account of the activities of an SDP branch shows (op.cit.) — and indeed
at all levels in the BSP there was a strong demand that socialists
should be encouraged to commit themselves to a revolt of the governed:
to compare 1911-12 with 1889 ignored the points of difference between
the two movements.
punishment would have been imposed had it been done by men."\textsuperscript{123} This short-sighted, inconsistent and non-Marxist position was challenged within the party. Hall, for instance, perceived an historical identity between the BSP and the unrest: "Their business was to link up the new Party with the new industrial movement.\textsuperscript{124} Others, like Garland, stressed the need to work from trade union consciousness as the starting point for conversion to socialism: "they looked at things from the working class point of view, and the question before them was how to get more wealth.\textsuperscript{125} The votes taken showed an overwhelming support for political action - and this in itself implies that, although there were those in the BSP who rejected "politics", the real differences were concerned with the party's relation with the militant workers.\textsuperscript{126}

The Birmingham BSP expressed its apostasy by the use of \textit{REV} language - condemning the Labour movement's domination by "the political fakirs and the "rest-and-be-thankful" job-limpets."\textsuperscript{127} This stress on the dichotomous features in society, on the Government's role in "engineering slim measures, like the Insurance Bill, aiming at the official regularisation of wage-slavery, the stereotyping by law of the social subjection of all non-properied persons; measures that are doubtless in the near future, to be fortified by such instalments of State

\textsuperscript{123} ibid. p.14.

\textsuperscript{124} ibid. p.16.

\textsuperscript{125} ibid. p.17.

\textsuperscript{126} And "politics" here must mean conventional party and parliamentary activity - for since BSP men were active propagandists within the unions, there could be no question of distinguishing between political and economic action to allay the fears of pure-and-simple trade unionists that they were being permeated.

\textsuperscript{127} Birmingham BSP manifesto, 16.9.11.
Capitalism as may suit the book of the exploiting interests, was itself also an expression of the powerlessness of Socialists to influence the course of the unrest. It is a criticism of their theory that the EC members who attacked their colleagues for formalism, and obsession with "their dry theories" should have proposed rejection of theory and the adoption of a programme of industrial unionism. But it does point to profound differences in the party and to awareness of the increase in contradictions in imperialist society, the immediate need for resistance.

Some official care was taken to soften the criticism of Syndicalism and thus preserve the party: this is true of the 1913 conference, in which a softer line was taken than the uncompromising attack of the EC statement of November, 1912. "They did not condemn Syndicalism, but they had to understand that trade union action, whether Syndicalist or Individualist of the old type, were one and the same thing." The two problems remained, however: that socialism seemed to lack electoral appeal — the workers saw elections as they might a football match — and that reforms on the statute book were the only accepted and acceptable instalments of Socialism so far achieved. To go on to say that the BSP would lead the working class, that it would support "active participation in, both as individual members and as an organisation, the struggles of the trade unions against capitalism," 128 ibid. 129 Hall and H. Russell Smart, in the Daily Herald, 1.11.12. 130 BSP Conference, 1913, p.6. 131 ibid. p.6.
and vigorous support for the growing movement that is surely transforming them from mere reformist wage-raising instruments into revolutionary Socialist unions having for their object the emancipation of the wage-earner.”

showed the virtual eclipse of Hyndman’s scepticism.  

The trade unionists in the BSP in particular aligned the party with the leading edge of trade union militancy:

"Taking our stand upon the ground of the class struggle, we co-operate with the industrial organisations of the workers in all their endeavours on the industrial field to wring concessions from the master class and to improve the conditions of life and labour here and now. But, convinced that poverty and all its attendant evils will continue so long as the wages system prevails, we never lose sight of our ultimate goal."  

By 1914, indeed, the lines of wartime division in the socialist movement, and the post-war division too, could largely be predicted from attitudes to the unrest. This is true rather for organisations and the development of theory, than for individuals.

The attempt to produce a Marxist analysis of the unrest — derived, for instance from the hypothesis that

"The economic mill grinds slowly, but it grinds exceeding small, and the concentration of capital, and the development of modern industrialism, with the continuous introduction of labour-displacing machinery (which tends more and more to become automatic, dispensing with the worker almost entirely), serve to intensify the class struggle and bring its revolutionary character ever more clearly before the working class" — tend to show that the BSP had woken up to the novel features of the unrest.  

Not only were questions of political collaboration involved —

"Carl Quinn said that the word affiliation was derived from a Latin root, meaning to thread. To thread a thing was to get it on a bit of string. The Liberal Party had got the Labour Party on a

132 ibid. p.19. Though again, Hyndman could reasonably maintain that the BSP constitution covered such eventualities (cf. p.19, App. A)


134 ibid. p.6.
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bit of string and apparently it was to be our turn next"135 - but even Hyndman seems to have doubted the beneficence of the trust under capitalism:

"Collective organisation and ownership under capitalism, the competitive wage-earning system remaining unchanged, could be nothing better than State slavery for the workers."136

It is doubtful, however, whether Hyndman felt much sympathy for the potential of trade union consciousness, or indeed whether his opposition to Syndicalism as a theory could be divorced from an earlier conviction of the disutility of strikes. The strictures of Hall on Macdonald - "a convinced bureaucrat and anti-proletarian in both theory and practice" - were based on a desire to build defensive positions which could become forward positions for attack.137 Self-reliance and solidarity alone could avoid the "baneful experiments with the kind of bureaucratic messing and Labour-coercionism into which we are even now being hustled by Lloyd Georgian Liberalism."138 This attack on bureaucracy, mediation, and a governmental "state socialism" which was indistinguishable from the continuation of corporate, philanthropic capitalism, appealed both to social democrats and liberal humanists of the Clarion. The Post Office and the Russian Railways were not socialism, but the "Governmentalisation of certain public services

135 T. Kennedy, ibid. p.15.
136 ibid. p.25.
137 Indeed, within the BSP alone there is a full and dense range of socialist attitudes to the unrest - Alfred Segon wrote to Justice, 28.12.12, that the Syndicalists' attitude to Parliament showed "They know no more about that than a pig does about drawing rooms", but "I belong to the speeded-up class, but I am thankful to say that although speeding-up tends to create unthinking, chaotic, Mafeking types of individuals, I am able to profit by the lessons taught me by "Justice" in 1896; that is, to beware of the "cult of abstractions."
138 L. Hall in Clarion.
for the convenience of the bureaucracy and its rich employers."¹³⁹

Nor was this simply a technical debate on the form of nationalisation, but one on the meaning of socialism, and the means for recognising it. To "push for all we're worth the idea and the organisation of the Combined and General Strike as the most potent lever of the Social Revolution" was to recognise that the opposition of the bourgeoisie to the revolutionary symbol "Socialism" no longer gave a spurious unity to Labour and Socialist movement.¹⁴⁰

The centripetal pressures were still great in the labour movement, and divisions between Socialists tended to avoid the formulation of alternative programmes. However, especially in view of the historical reasons for the existence of separate parties and the dual memberships, federal structure and particularist leanings of the societies, the socialists could increasingly see themselves in parallel series if not competition for the political support of the mass of the population. Indeed, given the electoral problems and value-orientation of socialists before 1914,¹⁴¹ it was possible largely to ignore that fact that to have the electoral support of a large section of the working class would give, notionally, more political power to labour leaders than to the...

¹³⁹ Clarion, 22.9.11.

¹⁴⁰ L.Hall to H.B.Williams (BSP Coll. Misc. 155 (LSE)) n.d.

¹⁴¹ An interesting sidelight is thrown on the social roots of "Syndicalism" by the "old Bolshevik" letter from Silvester (Justice, 2.11.12) that "The curious thing is that the members who are most in favour of Syndicalism are not trade unionists at all, but are either middle-class people who would not be seriously put about by strikes, or are clerks or shop assistants who are too indifferent to join a trade union." This points to at least a local movement of white-collar proletarians anxious to have the full weight of the labour movement behind them, and a certain number at least for whom conventional socialist or radical political activity was neither purposive nor expressive.
leaders of any previous dominant class. This made the stakes high—and foreshadowed a further source of danger for the labour movement.

Again, if the desired totality of a socialist ideology rested on the conscious participation of the working-class, what was that class to make of the divisions between socialist bodies, the equivocation over the unrest and so forth? When Quelch spoke of strikes being "crudely economic", and "purely a matter of wages" he could only appear to belittle the sacrifices made in strikes perhaps ostensibly for wage increases, but implicitly as challenges to management rights. To say that some supported

"any riotous disorder, however senseless, futile and reactionary, because they fondly suppose that any form of violence is necessarily revolutionary"

implied that the "cult of abstractions" was indulged in by the mass of the workers.143

"Violence, disorder, riot, are in themselves evils only to be resorted to in self-defence. The workers have no interest, indeed, even in attacks upon property. They made the property, and should own it. How foolish, then, to destroy what they should own."144

But the problem of treating spontaneous forms of collective behaviour as if they exemplified false theories could only be justified if a better theory could change the behaviour: to condemn the workers for a use of violence neither planned or intended seems as absurd as to blame the workers for not voting for a party like the SPD.

"When the British working class are really revolutionary they will show equal voting strength, equal discipline, equal sturdy determination, with their German comrades"

142 The British Socialist 15.3.12 (pp. 99-100)
143 ibid. 15.4.12. p.147.
144 ibid. p.149.
and yet, if revolutionary voting were to be the policy, and the SPD myth to be accepted wholeheartedly, there seemed to be no interim programme. 145 Either vote for an SPD, or else

"Why should the soldiers not shoot the workers? It is pretty evident that the latter like the idea of being shot. Asquith's reputation rests on the murder of miners in the last great colliers' strike nineteen years ago." 146

In fact, the search for historical precedent here, while in a purely anecdotal sense justifiable, seems to be used to obscure the novel features in the use of troops after 1910. It obscures the fact that in Britain before 1914 troops were more frequently being used in strikes where the threat was not so much of damage to property as to the government of a successful strike: that throughout Europe the use of troops marked a response of liberal bourgeois and autocratic governments to mass political and economic strikes – which the Featherstone shootings resembled not at all: 147 that in general, violence and disorder were the natural and

145 ibid. p.152.

146 ibid. p.172.

147 (See, e.g. Sir Arthur Clay, Syndicalism and Labour (1911) and A.D. Lewis, Syndicalism and the General Strike (1912)). Quelch also produced the argument that Syndicalism was a form of Anarchism, and as such had been defeated in 1896: it "really amounts to nothing at all in this country. It has no influence, and is not likely to have any influence, and is not likely to have any influence in the trade unions. Like all other forms of Anarchism, however, it has a mischievous effect upon the Socialist movement." (ibid.) In view of these attitudes among a section of the leadership, it is not surprising that the survivors of the pre-war BSP, many going through to the "overwhelmingly proletarian" CPGB, should have welcomed the Bolshevik revolution – "practically the first instance we had had of a purely Socialist working class attaining the reins of Government." (A.A. Watts, Stepney) (BSP Conference Report, 1918, p.7.)
spontaneous response to attempts to break strikes or prevent demonstrations; and that the willingness of industrialists to buy strike breakers and secure protection from the government marked a corresponding willingness to exploit constitutionalism for a new and increasing policy of opposition to independent working class activity.

Yet, by confusing behaviour with theory, and the "pure consciousness" of the workers with a "false" (ideological) consciousness, BSP writers failed initially at least, to give encouragement or analysis. "We have no sympathy with sabotage in any form," said Justice in 1911: direct action had nothing to do with the modes of socialism, it simply "opened the door to all kinds of criminals." 148 Anxious enough to take credit for their own role in leading strikes, yet the category "strike" was simple and linear and indivisible: the working class seemed "to learn nothing and to forget anything", and the new strikes harked "back to the older theories of the old trade unions, to decry Parliamentarianism, and to declare that, for the working class political action is played out." 149

One might ask, how any strike before 1914 showed this - and indeed, what magic and beneficial properties a faith in Parliament had when no BSP candidate could be elected without the backing of the Labour Party. Not only is there here sectarianism, but the lesson of Germany is taken as a precise model:

"though we think that if the miners strike they will be justified, and we shall support them with all the energy we possess, yet we have no liking for strikes and the bigger they are the more we dread them and their effects."

148 Justice, 29.7.11.

149 ibid. 12.8.11. Yet in September, there was correspondence from Liverpool on the possibility that soldiers would not fire on strikers - a vital point if the BSP was to retain its insurrectionary symbols, against the efforts of Hyndman to turn the party into an evolutionary institution: "we know that among the soldiers mobilised in connection with the railway strike, talk was rife that they would refuse to fire if ordered to do so, or would fire in the air." (23.9.11).
politically, to vote with the same spirit of revolt in his heart that moves him in defiantly dropping his tools, the strike would not be so necessary..."150

Even supposing that in this context a real alternative is being proposed, to strike and to vote are such different activities that if purposively (and even this is far fetched) they might have the same effect, expressively they cannot.

By 1912, the BSP leaders were beginning to dissociate behaviour from theory, though their own internal crisis was increasing in intensity:

"As to ' Syndicalism', it has as much to do with the miners' strike as it has with the rotation of the earth on its axis".151

Still, however, it seemed possible to regard the fate of the spontaneous movement with equanimity:

"It cannot be too clearly understood that the Labour revolt of last year and this has been, and is, a 'soldiers' battle', and not that of 'leaders' or 'agitators' at all."152

What, then, was the justification for the BSP's distance from a mass proletarian movement? Apart from exhortations to use political action, "with the industrial arm as an admirable adjunct in case of need" it is not easy to see that the BSP was officially committed to a working-class movement between its foundation and 1914. Men like John Maclean occasionally were able to make the point that while militants in the

150 ibid. 13.1.12.

151 ibid. 9.3.12. Clearly, under the guise of an "orthodox" rebuttal of 'Syndicalism' as a theory, efforts were being made to discourage strikes and militancy: confused though the criticism of the unrest may be, even in its confusion it shows that beneath the symbolic attacks on "the strike", the "saboteur", a revision was being attempted, based on the belief that revolution by force was not possible or desirable, and that therefore the BSP must be either oppositional in its attitudes, or radical-critical, but accept the rapid development of capitalism. The war and the Russian revolution gave to the rank and file what seemed good reason for believing that capitalism was destructive on a massive scale, and that the possibility of socialist revolution should not be discounted.

152 ibid. 23.3.12.
socialist groups might differ as to programme, there was in fact a unity in action, or at least a basis for cooperation: "Here was a chance for the Industrial Workers of Great Britain, a few of whom slave for the Singer Company"...he wrote in 1911, where there was

"A monopoly centred in one workshop; minute division of labour; unskilled labour; absence of trade unions; a growing group of enthusiastic, hard-working industrial unionists; a sudden and spontaneous strike of unprecedented dimensions in this industry of making sewing-machines."153

When liberal supporters and critics of strikes were pointing to the new features of the unrest, it is curious to find the BSP presenting an analysis based on the statement of 1908 that

"In recent years we have heard a great deal, in this connection, about 'direct action', the 'general strike', the 'mass strike', the struggle on the economic field, and so on, as if the method of action denoted by these terms constituted something quite new and original, instead of being a harking back to means which had been tried, and frequently proved to be futile, long before any practical effort was made to organise the working class into a separate and distinct political party."154

The implicit faith in the continuation of British industrial supremacy, in the perfection of trusts to the benefit of trade unionism, was only shown to be misplaced during and after the war. But the occasion to show that this faith was conditional on the passivity of the proletariat under capitalism had passed by 1914.

153 ibid. 1.4.11. There is also evidence that even the leadership of a small Socialist party to some extent integrated the leaders in the existing political system - that this degree of participation educated leaders in the dangers and unpredictability of insurrection - a degree of calculation which the less politicised worker might not undertake. Compare with this Mann's "snowballing" suggestion for mass action - "there are 850,000 men at work in this (mining) industry. If they can't settle the fight on their own account, the transport workers would help them, every trade unionist and every Socialist would be stimulated to courageous action of the right kind, if the whole of the miners of South Wales will now make common cause in what may yet prove to be a glorious fight with a glorious termination." (Ibid. 14.1.11).

154 The Social Democrat 15.5.08.
SDF leaders themselves clearly found it difficult to see how social structures within capitalism could be socialised: there was no guarantee that reforms acceptable to Socialists but engineered by non-Socialists would not be subsumed into the existing system of exploitation, or remain peripheral to it. Socialist reformism without a large Socialist element in Parliament must place reliance on a radical tradition, exploitable and exploited since 1867, but apparently directed towards blaming the evils of industrial and finance capitalism on to landlordism and a "feudal aristocracy".

Quelch, for instance, might condem the shortsightedness of condemning Territorial and Citizen Armies in terms that it

"shows the leaders of the organised working-class in this country are not yet alive to the fact that all government rests, as a last resort, upon force, and that a working-class which is not in a position to meet force with force, at need, is absolutely powerless when conclusions come to be tried between it and the master class." 155

Such an argument is, of course, in line with Kautsky's calculations of the decreasing proportion of peasants in the Imperial Army, the possibility that within the shell of the old society a new proletarian army would be trained to overthrow its teachers. But these arguments tended to underestimate the inventiveness of the class in possession of political power, and the advantage which that very possession conferred. The Osborne judgment might be

"creating, perhaps, more stir than anything else, and has finally shaken the confidence of the mass of the workers in the fairness of our judges where class questions are involved, 156

- but so long as this lack of confidence could formally be restored by another law, the supposed pluralism of the system could encourage the belief

155 ibid. 15.10.09.
156 ibid. 15.10.09. Article by Hyndman reprinted from the English Review.
that it was infinitely flexible. Likewise, the very developments in
the labour movement which increased the degree of organisation, might
materially change the context for the spread of Socialist ideas: "you
cannot easily have that vigorous expression of opinion in a big
amalgamation." Yet despite qualifications like this last, the
conviction that it was possible to achieve socialism by a nice calculation
of economy of scale - stemming from SPD predominance in the thinking of
SDP/BSP leaders - induced the belief that spontaneity was atavistic, and
force an intolerable barbarism.

"Strikes, Syndicalism, Anarchy, are but varying forms of working-
class ignorance, or despairing revolts against unendurable
oppression." 

Attractive as the picture of Socialism derived from a trustified and
benevolent capitalism might be, it did not give much hope to the hundreds
of thousands of industrial workers on round about a pound a week. The

157 Fred Knee on The Revolt of Labour, ibid. 15.11.10. Knee made out a
convincing case that the miners at the Ely pit were sinned against,
that an aggressive mood in a strike might simply reflect a reaction
to a period during which old customs had been broken down.

158 H.M. Hyndman, Further Reminiscences (1912) p.459. Anatole France looked
with considerably less hope to a trustified capitalism in Penguin Island
(1909 edn., pp.529-530) "Doubtless it would have been possible to find
a certain number of discontented and rebellious persons among the
immense crowd of engineers and accountants, but this powerful society had
imprinted its firm discipline even on the minds of its opponents. The
very anarchists were laborious and regular.

"As for the workers who toiled in the factories that surrounded the
town; their decadence, both physical and moral, was terrible; they were
examples of the type of poverty as it is set forth by anthropology.
Although the development among them of certain muscles, due to the
particular nature of their work, might give a false idea of their strength
they presented sure signs of morbid debility. Of low stature, with
small heads and narrow chests, they were further distinguished from the
comfortable classes by a multitude of physiological anomalies, and, in
particular, by a common want to symmetry between the head and the limbs.
And they were destined to a gradual and continuous degeneration, for the
State made soldiers of the more robust of them, and the health of these
did not long withstand the brothels and the drink-shops that sprung up
around their barracks. The proletarians became more and more feeble in
mind. The continued weakening of their intellectual faculties was not
entirely due to their manner of life; it resulted also from a methodical
selection carried out by the employers."
effort required of a worker to relinquish his ragged-trousered philanthropy and become a socialist may indeed have been so great that he became declassed, incapable or reluctant to see in the fellows he had, intellectually, left behind the "new class" of socialist industrial citizens. Occasionally, a clear voice hoping for a revolution in the real world using existing material sounds forth:

"He was not going to oppose reforming and tinkering on the political field and then go and support it on the industrial field!..."the business of the organised Socialist movement was to give voice to that unrest, and, by directing and organising it, point out to the people that what they had to do was to get behind the guns."159

One is concerned here not so much with the feasibility of revolution, or the definition of how to recognise or justify, such a revolution: "revolution" in this context is a cluster of concepts — clarified, for instance, in Hyndman's case, by his attacks on the "reactionary violence" of Syndicalism, and the revision of Marxist theory to postpone or disqualify militant action.160 Many of these attitudes were reflexes conditioned by the sectarian past of the SDP/SHP/3SP, and the centrifugal forces in its organisation:

"the SDP was originally a partly-unified aggregate of local units. The ILP at first continued this to the point of declaring for 'branch autonomy' — and calling its central committee a National Administrative Council. Some branches of the ILP (which had come over bodily from the defunct Socialist League) were openly anti-Parliamentarian, and virtually Anarchist."161


160 H. N. Hyndman, 4.4.12, quoted in C. Tsuzuki, H. N. Hyndman and British Socialism (Oxford 1961). In the Daily Herald, 31.10.12, he was pointing to the "community of interests" uniting the workers as producers and consumers; any policy ignoring this dual function must be disruptive — far from Marxism, as Tsuzuki points out. (Quoted op. cit.)

161 T. A. Jackson, Solo Trumpet, 1953. p.57.
It is, perhaps, curious that British Socialists should be so influenced by the history and iconography of organisation and so little by the forces which produced and influenced the organisation itself - the Socialist Unity conference clearly marking a peak of "openness" to ideas of direct action - though almost at once attempts were made to restrict the operation within the movement of those very forces which had helped to create it.

One might in this context argue that Connolly's political development was marked by a willingness to break with organisations as they became unable to adapt sufficiently quickly to the potential of an often notional mass movement: "'We are going out to be slaughtered!' he told William O'Brien as he passed down the steps of Liberty Hall" - one feels that in this he had escaped from the SDF equivocation as to whether it was after all a party of action or propaganda.

This dilemma was perceived by Quelch in the aftermath of the Boer war: "Everything is ready and ripe", there is "no further economic development to await". But "armed insurrection" is "entirely out of the question", and again, the only road is seen as political action: "This revolt against political action, however, is but a harking back to the old methods from which the movement of the organised working class was itself a departure." Naturally, it can be argued that Connolly failed miserably to create a socialist revolution. But at least an insurrection justified the long debate on the use of force: in Britain before 1914 there was a mass-participation which, though it was not unrest in the sense of insurrection, might have left a more sympathetic residual attitude towards other revolutions, and a more critical appraisal of the sources of British prosperity and the machinery for its distribution at home and abroad.

162 C.D. Greaves, op. cit. p.350. Naturally, it can be argued that Connolly failed miserably to create a socialist revolution. But at least an insurrection justified the long debate on the use of force: in Britain before 1914 there was a mass-participation which, though it was not unrest in the sense of insurrection, might have left a more sympathetic residual attitude towards other revolutions, and a more critical appraisal of the sources of British prosperity and the machinery for its distribution at home and abroad.

163 H. Quelch, Social Democracy and Industrial Organisation (SDP) p.5.

164 ibid. p.8.

165 ibid. p.10.
Thus the problem of a legitimated but impossible revolution being, in the name of orthodoxy, transformed into a dubious, unsatisfying and corrupting reformism continued — all advances towards a measure of socialistic social justice being performed, and having to be performed, by "betrayers" of a revolutionary tradition whose hagiography was more impressive than its achievements, and for which its exponents had only a nostalgia "for a revolution which never had been and could never be."

This idealism in turn blinded British Socialists to the efforts of the proletariat in Britain and elsewhere, with whatever allies, and with whatever "mistakes", to emancipate itself.

It is probably true to say that during the war the BSP came to terms with the influences forming and transforming it: "the prevailing mental confusion within the branches (which) made it difficult to distinguish between the two" (orthodox socialism and syndicalism) was later accepted for the ferment, the desire for action it surely was. Tom Quelch made the point in The Call, in 1917 that the new tools for socialists were imported

"by good comrades here, particularly the conceptions of the anarchist element of the French syndicalists and the Industrial Unionists of the United States. The Marxians in the Trade Union movement set to work to apply the philosophy of the great founder of scientific Socialism to the new conditions — and now a formidable conflict is being waged in the Trade Union movement itself and the old Craft Unions and the new Industrial Unions."

Once more, Quelch — this time Tom Quelch-declared "Economic Conditions are Ripe for Revolution", but as usual the first problem was the conversion or superseding of the old leaders to whom the rank and file owed a debt of loyalty and to whom they had after all given their mandate.

167 The Call, 5.4.17.
168 ibid. 5.7.17.
This "conversion" must be indistinguishable from weakening and disrupting the labour movement itself:

"the pompous subservient fools who strut about with their PC's and CBE's - prefer that your organisations should be crippled and destroyed - just as, in the early stages of the war, they delivered up, without consulting you, your hard-won Trade Union rights at the Treasury Conference."169

It is hardly surprising that given the agonising tension between the desire to adhere to the mass and to quit the organisations of the mass, the militant movement should have split so frequently, and that the CPGB's application for affiliation to the Labour Party and the reasons for its rejection should have given in microcosm the whole dilemma of the separation of the revolutionary and militant groups from the potential of the mass.

The nature of the connection between socialism and revolution - whether there was, after all, a fundamental reason why those believing in socialism-with-revolution must be divided from those believing in socialism-through-peaceful-development - was one of the central points of discussion in the SLP. Paradoxically the strictest and most sectarian, the SLP was not only close to the actual movement in Scottish workshops and unions, but in the industrial union had a revolutionary organisation novel and distinctive to a level not achieved in the programmes of BSP or ILP. Yet this faith in cohesion and organisation was shaken in the war:

"While modern Capitalism is forcing these organisations to amalgamate, such amalgamation is showing itself as the tool of the Capitalists and Imperialists."170

169 ibid. 28.8.19.

170 SLP Conference Report, 1921.
The SLP had had considerable success by 1920: it had not severed all connection with BSP/ILP members, it had introduced and rewritten a large socialist literature, and had related its own existence from the start to local, and particularly Scottish, conditions. Despite the stern laying-down of a "political" line, the presentation of De Leon's Marxism as a hallowed orthodoxy which so severely limited the value of Marxism as methodology, and characterised the SLP's contribution to and influence in the CPGB, the SLP had rehearsed the theoretical justifications of the unrest in terms of a militant rank and file movement. In 1907, there were signs that the SLP was active in anti-militarist propaganda, and certainly the SLP had defined its position vis-a-vis French Syndicalism, and with reference to the American SLP's anti-political movement, by the middle of the year. However, there is evidence too that the SLP was rapidly swept up in the excitement of the strike movement, early identified it, and was so organised as to regard it as an integral part of its sphere of interest.¹⁷¹

The SLP was concerned with the peak of development of Capitalism as demonstrating the point at which class struggle would be fiercest, and at which social revolution would come. Having cut off its members from official positions in the labour movement, it was committed to a revolutionary rank and file struggle at those points at which capital was most strongly organised — and labour least strongly. Thus concerned

¹⁷¹ The SLP allowed no Trade Union officer to become or remain a member of the Party, it was quick to distribute propaganda to the soldiers (The Socialist, November 1907). It was throughout concerned to point to evidence of increasing immiseration (of November, 1908, The Socialist estimated that 20,000 dock labourers had had their wages cut 50% in the past few years), as well as of the living conditions in Scotland — connecting the Dundee strike in 1906 with the percentage figures of those living in tenements — 83.2% in Dundee, compared with 74.1% in Glasgow, 69.2% in Aberdeen, and a mere 59.1% in Edinburgh (John Leng and Co. report, 1905). For all the SLP's sensitivity to the distinction between political and industrial action, its newspaper said in August 1909 that the "fighting will have to be done in the workshop."
with an analysis of capitalism at its most mobile and flexible, the SLP took as its weapon the most unyielding impossibilism.\(^{172}\) Alone among the Socialist groups, the SLP saw it as its duty to produce - albeit adapted - the most advanced international orthodox and "left" theoretical literature. The modes and attitudes of the SLP, for all that it voted to join the CPGB by a minority of 5 - 17, were at once that party's source of strength and isolation.\(^{173}\) The anti-officialism and anti-"intellectual" attitudes of the CPGB emerged from the experience gained by the SLP in the front-line of militant action. The experience of the pre-war unrest and the wartime and post-war Scottish strike movements was at once the rationale for the SLP's adhesion to its theoretical and organisational isolation, and an active justification of a policy basing a party on small rank-and-file workshop cells - without at all being committed to Syndicalist notions of political or economic decentralisation, or an idealisation of strikes as a kind of proletarian art-form.

Indeed, this SLP work and programme was in many ways the most satisfactory, combination of, to rephrase Beer's advice to Hyndman, "a simple labour programme having recourse to the usual revolutionary vocabulary."\(^{174}\) The enthusiasm with which the SLP attempted to organise

172 On the American and trust influence on the SLP and the industrial experience of its leaders, see H.Pelling, America and the British Left from Bright to Bevan (1956). See too, on the influence of the American SLP on the Scottish SDP before 1900, C.Tsuzuki's The Impossibilist Revolt in Britain (Int. Rev. of Social History 1956, p.364). In addition, one should note that de Leonite and SLP propaganda was widely read in the Plebs League, and hence in Ruskin College and the CIC (cf W.W.Craik, The Central Labour College (1964)). In other words, however sectarian the sects might be, they dealt with a stock of common ideas, and common socialist sources.

173 SLP Conference Report, 1921.

174 Tsuzuki, The Impossibilist Revolt, sup. cit. p.360.
classes in economics, and yet made the workshop concerns of its members and their comrades an integral part of the wider class struggle, showed first that a party close to the workers could maintain a level of theoretical commitment that must have seemed impossibly high to ILP and even BSP leaders, and again that a "correct" or plausible, analysis of the Americanisation, internationalisation of capitalism and the speedups, immiseration, alienation, produced results on the tactical, as well as on the intellectual, plane.

This should not obscure the absurdities of sectarianism:

"De Leon, in America, after preaching for years dogmatically that the Trades Unions, to justify their existence, simply must 'endorse' and work under the tutelage of the 'true political party of Labour' - meaning the SLP - threw a somersault and (taking occasion from the launching of the IW) declared that only the industrial movement can set on foot the true political party of Labour."175

A certain amount of dogmatism was required as a centripetal and self-protective force to maintain a party in which theoretical dispute must be a feature, if not a function, of factional rivalry. It at once gives substance to the rivalry and a guarantee of survival, of identification and of continuity to the party rank and file, but "theory" could easily appear as the mantle of righteousness worn by the dominant group. The argument that Marx had said revolution would come where capitalism was furthest advanced, used by Hyndman and De Leon - by De Leon perhaps to assert the supremacy of the American movement, by Hyndman perhaps to avoid the disruption of a society whose achievements he admired and whose unity he cherished - led to the Pittsburg SLP arguing that as Pittsburg was the most advanced capitalist city, so their branch would be the vanguard of the vanguard.176

Not only did the unrest make clearer the lines of cleavage in the

175 Jackson, op. cit. p.73.
176 ibid. p.70.
British labour movement, forcing socialists into alliance in unions, workshops, branches and communities, but it gave some idea of the potential mass bases for anti-war protest after 1914 - from the SLP's point of view, the eradication of spontaneity and the false, or un-consciousness this implied. Indeed, the Scottish movement as a whole seems to have achieved some fusion of theory and practice, with Maclean as its most important spokesman. From the November, 1915, rent strike, "the first step towards the political strike so frequently resorted to on the continent" to the statement in August 1920, that

"I favour a Scottish Communist Republic as a first step towards World Communism, with Glasgow as the head and centre. We must have a rank and file dictatorship through delegates directly representative of the various workshops and industries. Let then at once a Central Committee be formed in Glasgow, and on with World Revolution" 178

Maclean provided a synthesis of the national, workshop and internationalist aspirations of the Glasgow militants, providing institutional forms which acknowledged without over-emphasising, the distrust of Parliament in the "democracy" of the left socialists.

Maclean himself, however, could never wholly solve the problem of the spontaneity of the mass: he stands opposed to Lenin's concept of the party as regards spontaneity in that he proposed

"such a programme that no capitalist government can concede, one that necessarily must bring about a clash of the dominant class; a programme that may not immediately inspire the workers to action, but one that in a crisis might so rouse them that by effective spontaneous effort they will sweep the capitalists out of power." 179

In this, Maclean shows his debt to the unrest, and its optimistic fusion of heterogeneous and even unconscious elements: "Bob Smillie has

177 Tom Bell, John Maclean, A fighter for freedom. (Scottish Committee of the CPGB, 1944) p.54.
179 ibid. p.102.
centred attention and thought on high prices and Tom Mann is going strong on economic security.\textsuperscript{180} Maclean shows nicely this progression – in his case by way of the BSP – from a "syndicalist", activist position, to one where –

"Trade Unionism...up to the present, has been a defensive movement. The workers' position has been slightly bettered, whilst the capitalists' has been immensely improved. While from this point of view it has failed, trade unionism has kept the workers together and enabled socialists to vastly swell its numbers.

Our policy will be the advocacy of Unions by industry, and unions of these Unions on a world basis with a world coordinating system – keeping pace with the trustification of the money power, and the using of these unions towards a complete control of the organisation and the running of the workshops, mines, and land of the world. We are not for the absolute control of each industry by the workers engaged, for that would be trustified caste control, the final control and destiny of the products of an industry must be in the hands of humanity as a whole..."\textsuperscript{181}

His final position was one where there was such deviation between the concepts of "reform" and "democracy", the role of party and unions between Maclean and the Macdonald group in the ILP, that it was virtually impossible to conceive of a united labour movement in Britain. The historians of the British Social Democracy could write of Connolly, for instance, that he believed in the SLP line, that

"the working classes were an 'unconscious revolutionary mass' kept back from revolutionary action by 'freaks and fakirs' of labour leaders, when all who were doing their best to 'educate, agitate and organise' them knew only too well that if the majority of the working classes were 'unconscious', they were certainly not 'revolutionary'."\textsuperscript{182}

Connolly did in fact produce, by his work for the Rising, a situation where revolution was possible: that the development of Ireland's industrial base was too slight, and the political power of Socialist leaders too small, to make the Irish liberation movement what Connolly

\textsuperscript{180} ibid. p.104.
\textsuperscript{181} ibid. p.41.
\textsuperscript{182} Of course, the "democracy" of the unrest, perceived and accepted to a
greater or lesser degree by Socialist bodies, meant the
emancipation of the workers by themselves and for themselves,
as a class: it involved new and responsive organisation of
political and economic institutions in the interests of all
workers — that is those who had no domination over anyone,
those who shared a powerlessness and exploitation derived from
a common industrial source. This direct, popular democracy —
emerging from the insecurity, poverty, and social degradation
of industrial life, could be criticised on grounds of its
simplicite, but there was a prima facie case for maintaining that
such a programme, involving directly the mass of the population
was a valid extension of political and social liberal democracy.
One might go on to argue that such a movement, when it died away,
left only those concerned with the problems of attaining power,
and that the seizing of power in the name of a class did a
violence, however inevitable, to the theory of the movement —
much the same argument as Kautsky used in his critique of the
Bolsheviks in "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat" in 1919.
The quotation here is from Lee and Archbold, op.cit. p.146.
The SDP leaders would justify themselves by saying that if a
popular movement was not capable of capturing power, its "democracy"
had not matured — but this postulates, as Hyndman maintained,
that evolution should be on your side.
would have appreciated does not warrant the dismissive note in the criticism of Connolly. However negative the symbolic uses of "democracy", "revolution" and so on may have been among the members of socialist organisations, the basic division in the labour movement characterised by the foundation of the CPGB had had its shadow forms before the war.

In discussing the split between the two wings of the labour movement, between the "parliamentary" and "revolutionary" socialists, one may say that the division was not organisationally precise: the CPGB did not exactly represent the revolutionary tradition in the British labour movement, nor indeed did the Soviet Union seem to many to offer that kind of direct democracy which would commence with the emancipation of the rank and file. As Sartre said, in his discussion of Merleau-Ponty in "Situations", 1917 is both the start and the "incarnation" of Socialism. It both recruited and trained, in other words, members of a mass of potential class warriors. It demonstrated that there was a division in the labour movement, but it was not itself that division, nor did that division exist only in relation to Socialism in the Soviet Union.

Likewise, one may make the point that one of the indications that beneath the sectarian fissures there lay a divided labour movement - probably no longer to be defined in occupational terms as labour aristocracy in opposition to the rest of the workers - was the very phenomenon of Syndicalism in Britain. In one sense, this Syndicalism can be seen as a small and poorly organised sect itself, with a largely Marxist or vulgar Marxist theory, but a fairly precise programme, deriving its strength from the tactics, rather than analysis, of trade union, and
peasant movements. Syndicalism was indeed based in many countries on a notional combined programme for workers and peasants - the last great attempt to base a populist movement on parallel activity between peasants and urban workers, scaling down urban and industrial production to rural levels and organising it in rural modes. These Proudhonian roots had some faint resemblance to the aspirations of the IWW frontiersmen and migrant farmworkers, and indeed to the unionised rural workers of Australia and New Zealand. But in these countries, Syndicalism was heavily coloured by the need to resist the rapid transformation of industry into trustified and near-monopolistic units, becoming a handy defensive and oppositional weapon and, in the IWW, an odd amalgam of particularism and centralisation, representing in the one organisation the workers' aspirations and the capitalist reality against which these must be seen.

In England, Syndicalism in these senses had little natural basis: but although it was used as a cant term to describe such varied things as working-class "obscurantism" or "obstructionism" - and class-conscious militancy - it can genuinely be applied to a movement running across the traditional "fault lines" in capitalism. There are objective economic and community reasons for the predominance of ideas of workers' control in certain occupations, and for the militancy of miners and transport workers before 1914. But there are also forces at work - the socialist societies, working-class education, socialist propaganda, the narrowing of differentials, the speed-up, dilution, blanket welfare legislation, the concentration of capital, the "de-skilling" of men and jobs - which were working in the opposite direction (often enough producing similar results), to make the working-class politically more
conscious, economically more homogeneous, so that on the micro level, studies of the genesis of local militancy should include description of organisation and opinion leaders, as well as specific working conditions.

Before a political split could appear, it must be the Labour Party which, as an organisation, benefited from its identification of a spurious low-level unity of the mass of the workers. If Syndicalism be taken to represent "the illogical, instinctive gathering of force of the revolt of the governed", the Labour Party could interpret this spontaneity as justifying its policy as easily as might the BSP. This rank and file Syndicalism could have its effect in terms of awakening interest in producers' representation in nationalised industries, in the use of the strike as political pressure, and of showing that a political movement might be able to use its supporters organised in their workplace to initiate and agitate for reform by legislation. At the same time, theorists like Macdonald and Snowden, by accepting the political advantages of a spontaneous movement, but rejecting the theory of Syndicalism, and, under this heading, militant class-war Socialism, they could remove a challenge to their leadership and to the accomplishing of their programme, simultaneously "sealing off" the majority of the working-class from the attractions of dichotomous political organisation - either by splitting the working-class or proclaiming a class war.

The militant Socialists were thus left with a difficult choice:

wishing on grounds of theory to refute "Syndicalism" no less than the

183 Fabian Ware, The Worker and his Country (1912) p.viii.

184 This phenomenon, the construction of reservoirs of political consciousness, may help to account for disparities between levels of militancy in organisations not obviously explained by the specific conditions of that industry or trade.
Parliamentary leaders, they could not lay claim to the "spontaneity" without splitting the working-class movement - which in turn they could not do, since the socialist movement was already (illogically) split, and the socialist societies, save in some workshops and some urban centres, had no direct control over the organisations of the workers at work. The challenge from the left was always latent, potential - but could never be put: so long as Britain remained an advanced industrial and constitutional country, the historical development of the labour movement precluded a freezing of the line between revolutionaries and reformists. In a country accustomed to economic supremacy and development, the idea of "reformism" and the reality of economic change have a common source and appear to reinforce each other. Thus, too, the historical divisions of the left wing socialists come to appear immutable and institutional - the British government might reach a rapprochement with foreign communist governments before British Socialists reached a similar understanding with or of their own communist party. Hartshorn thus

"spoke bitterly of the syndicalist movement, which has for its object the overthrow of the existing order. He says the syndicalists are working to capture the new organisation by altering the rules so as to take away all power from the leaders, who would thus become mere instruments to carry out the men's resolutions. Hartshorn wants to improve the condition of the workers on existing lines. He said he feared Lloyd George's land policy would cause much class hatred. I introduced Hartshorn to the future Marquess of Winchester. It was curious to see how much interested they were in each other. Each acted as if he were meeting a new animal for the first time. They got on well."

This quotation from Lord Riddell has all the elements referred to above - Hartshorn himself a "new" leader, seeking an accommodation with

185 Lord Riddell, More Pages from my Diary, 1906-1914 (1934) p.38.
the existing order, and acceptance within it — accommodation and acceptance which was "correct" in the historicist sense that it could easily be achieved — but in which his leadership had to become responsible for the suppression, distortion, or nonawakening of rank and file demands. As to these

"Hysteria, as in all such deliriums, was never far away; women shrieked aloud at meetings, and had to be removed; madness fell upon a boy of twelve, and he stood on the top of a barrel, talking Tariff Reform. The extraordinary good-humour, the extraordinary stupidity, and the extraordinary latent forces, so concealed as to be unknown even to themselves, in their shabby, cheery, inefficient multitudes of bewildered and contented men and women, were the dominant impressions of this gigantic entertainment."186

This is the potential which Dangerfield chronicled more precisely after 1910:

"They were, obviously, lit with something akin to a joy in conflict itself. There was, about the strikes of 1910, 1911, 1913 and 1914, a curious electric quality, heady and exhilarating to those who came in contact with it; just as there was an almost mystic exaltation about the women's movement."187

This is fair enough, so long as it is not taken to be an adequate definition of the place of the unrest in the development of theory, consciousness and organisation in the labour movement. Bell seems to confound movement and theory with a "pure consciousness" when he writes in similar terms of "syndicalism":

"In reality, the syndicalist movement had no organised mass basis. It was a froth on the surface of the popular mass movement of the time, which had its roots in the struggle for better living conditions; conditions that were aggravated by the pressure on the workers by the capitalists, by the rise in the cost of living."188

Here, after all, in the unrest was a movement which rejected the dominant

188 Tom Bell, The British Communist Party (1957) p.23. Pribičević gives an excellent account of the organised Syndicalist groups — and naturally, in terms of numbers, as of theory, Syndicalism comes off relatively badly.
ideology's version of "democracy", and the attempt made by parliamentary socialists to enliven a dying and exhausted party and class ideology.

How false to the spirit of Marx were the Marxists who refuted the unrest: here was a movement, running through different theories and organisations, proposing to put the programme of the socialists on a mass democratic basis, a democracy transcending and humanising the parliamentary democracy of Macdonald, which could only be thwarted by a drawing together of the old class interests, resolving their former conflicts in a form which Lenin called "Imperialism" - a form which must render impotent or nugatory, the workers' democracy of "Syndicalism".

The Syndicalism which "rejected the concepts of national unity and national interests" was not a sentimental proletarianism, of limited vision and romantic aspiration, but the determination of the powerless, alienated and materially deprived masses to take action to change their environment. It was a sign of the defeats sustained by the movement that by 1917, the Russian example should have to furnish a real context for discussion of the future of popular democracy, and that many British Marxists should blame the "syndicalists" for the defeat of their own movement. Thus Brendan Clifford's bitterness emerges, when he described Connolly's development as "always away from syndicalism", and yet his proposed society as governed by a "dictatorship of 'people's' anti-imperialist forces", a "joint-dictatorship". "Syndicalism" is what Marxists in the West call, from easily-understandable motives, a movement which appears to have failed: if men have a party but no movement, it is probably as well that they should keep the history of past failures as symbols of striving - and poor analysis: but the movement is not the party, nor is

it the theory. As Peter Nettl has said, in the West Trotskyism is Luxemburgism, still concerned with participation - though for some curious reason Nettl thinks this pushes it away from the concept of "democracy"!

In fact, Luxemburgism fulfilled virtually the same role within German Social Democracy as "Syndicalism" in the British labour movement: not only did the SPD take for granted its theoretical basis, instead of constantly re-applying and developing it, but Rosa Luxemburg was able to use the same slogans as Mann, Hervé, and so on, to emphasise the potential of mass action, and insurrection. Perhaps even at this point the old parliamentary myth of numbers - that revolution to be legitimate, must be majoritarian - was dominating the Luxemburg-Leninist dispute. It may well be that Rosa Luxemburg's idea of the mass strike as "social funnel" or "acceleration chamber" and the immediate needs for self-defence and insurrection would have placed her closer to Lenin. She seems, however, to have seen the "closing of ranks", the dialectical movement from competition among the bourgeoisie to corporate capitalism and monopoly, as taking place on the periphery of its activity, rather than at home - surely Lenin's greatest contribution to Marxist perceptions, that the extension of capitalism must be cumulative and intensive and not linear. In Britain Connolly is in fact a fine example of Marxist thinker and Syndicalist tactician - his populism seen as complementary to his Marxism: "mere

192 see Nettl. passim, especially the account of Rosa Luxemburg's trial in 1914 for calling on the troops not to shoot (vol. ii, p.469)
193 see too Renato Risaliti Plechanov, Lenin, e l'inizio della lotto contro il rivisionismo. (Rivista Storica del Socialismo, no.24, April 1965)
194 Nettl, op. cit. vol.ii. p.509.
195 ibid. p.533.
anti-politicalism so unfortunately and unnecessarily introduced as a fresh dividing line at this juncture when all our minds should be set upon unity" thus seemed to him an irrelevance.\(^{196}\) The rejection of parliamentary democracy did not lead logically to a rejection of political action - it simply demanded and justified different and new kinds of political activity.

It would also seem that it is only partly helpful to talk of the unrest as arising upon "the new basis of fully developed imperialism."\(^{197}\) It arose from the perception of a collapse of parliamentary, economic, and democratic modes which had gone to form the old dominant ideology - a collapse to which not only the unrest, but imperialism itself was a response. It required indeed a proletarian ideology, which included a "practicalist outlook", an "odd emotional amalgam of revolution and reform": the active ingredient here, however, is the revolutionary one, for what revolution was conceivable without a reform?\(^{198}\) Desmond Greaves also makes the same attempt to confound Syndicalist theory with the force of a movement:

"The nearer he was to Ireland the clearer sighted and happier; only twice did he obtrude syndicalist theory into purely Irish affairs, once in comparing the IWW with the Land League, and again in seeking a parallel between 'building the framework within the shell' and Sinn Fein."\(^{199}\)

Clearly, Connolly here was comparing movements rather than theory: Murphy saw this distinction from the beginning - even quoting the passage on

\(^{196}\) Connolly in Forward, 18.4.14, in Socialism and Nationalism. (Dublin, 1948) p.149

\(^{197}\) Greaves, op. cit. p.199.

\(^{198}\) ibid. p.200.

\(^{199}\) ibid. p.175.
pure consciousness from the Communist Manifesto and elsewhere obliquely describing his own shadowing of the development of syndicalism in Britain. "My first acquaintances in this union were syndicalists of the amalgamation committees", he wrote of the ASE, going on to describe the work of the GIC, the influence of Connolly, and the demand for a class party as being

"under the banner of Marxism, but it was nearer to the Marxism of the syndicalists than to the Marxism of Marx."

As elsewhere, the "Marxism of Marx" and that of the Syndicalists are not exclusive: to leave the CP because it had lost touch with the masses is something quite different from rejecting the democratic movement of the masses because it was not "Marxist", or rejecting the masses because it appeared that they were no longer democratic. Certainly Murphy realised that the tasks of a revolutionary party must change when the mass movement is not pointing to discontinuities in the former dominant ideology: after all, if an ideology is not dominant, it is simple enough to organise, with due economy of effort, its destruction. Only when an ideology is dominant is at once both hard and important to fight - hard and important in proportion.

"Communists do not form a separate party conflicting with other working class parties. They have no interests apart from the working class as a whole. They do not put forward any sectarian principles with which they wish to mould the proletarian movement...."

J.T. Murphy, Preparing for Power (1934) p.17.

In fact, Syndicalism can be related to early and First International Marx. Murphy himself shows the agonising problems facing a man working for a spontaneous but conscious popular democratic movement - but finding that the maintenance of the party led to a course divergent from a notional mass-movement. Murphy did in fact remark that Connolly's "syndicalism" was "clearer and more precise than anything I had read or heard from other Socialists."
Hyndman's attack on various aspects of French Syndicalism moves over from being an attempt to retain the most popular and effective tactics, meanwhile harnessing his organisation to the movement, to being a condemnation, implicitly, of "unorthodox" forms of organisation.

"It is certain that there is no effective Syndicalism in the French sense in this country. Syndicalism is a bastard form of anti-political Anarchism. Each Trade Union is to be a law unto itself; to eschew all idea of political action; to resort to rattening, sabotage, and wrecking wherever it seems likely to be effective; to adopt such methods as may break down profit in each trade in turn, and organise wholly and solely for the benefit of the workers in that trade. There is, I repeat, practically no effective Syndicalism or Industrial Unionism of this kind in Great Britain, nor do I believe it will ever have much influence here."[203]

Two main points arise here: first, that Hyndman's expectations of what was "political" action were thoroughly traditional. Next, that a workers' movement might well have a phase in which, in quantitative terms, anarchy of production was simulated. This would not simply be dialectically induced - it would be a process of education, of emancipation - an irreversible process of education, and no longer one as Hyndman suggested, of dis-education. If a workers' democracy thereafter failed to "produce", to make use of their labour, it would not be a failure induced by their ignorance of the processes of production, a symptom of alienation and reification. Connolly put it that Syndicalism was a "discovery": a discovery that

"the workers are strongest at the point of production, that they have no force available except economic force, and by linking the revolutionary movement with the daily fight of the workshop, mill, shipyard, and factory, the necessary economic force can be organised. Also that the revolutionary organisation necessary for that purpose provides the framework of the Socialist Republic."[204]

The problems of historical development, adopted from the post-Jacobin


204 E. Larkin, James Larkin 1876-1947 Irish Labour Leader (1965) p.96
bourgeois historians, of language about freedom derived from bourgeois politicians, thus affected not only Macdonald, but Hyndman. For him, the BSP was a party presenting a programme which one day would be accepted by everyone – or a majority of the population: and that, of course, would mean that capitalism had produced socialism, that at some to-be-defined point in the future, everything which had been termed liberal-capitalist would be known as democratic socialism. Yet as Connolly had said,

"the fight for the conquest of the political state is not the battle, it is only the echo of the battle. The real battle is the battle being fought out every day for the power to control industry." 205

Traditionally, this has been read as a contribution to the heresy of the primacy of economic action: in fact, the key words here are "every day", the problem how to build up a mass, participating, conscious movement able to challenge existing structures and dominant ideology directly – not by substitution. To oppose such a movement was to oppose democracy, not, surely, to stand out for the purity of a non-existent social democracy. 206

It is easy enough to suggest ways of demonstrating that the consciousness developed within and in opposition to the industrial system was less alienated than anything possible under a system even of delegated democratic government: in material terms, the vote did not emancipate the

205 In the Axe to the Root, quoted in J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland (N.Y. 1925) p.233.

206 Wallas described this as: the workers seem to find it so hard to vote for a revolutionary workers' MP, "The Syndicalists therefore look for a Will-Organisation which has behind it some stronger emotion than that produced by the accidental residence in a few score of adjoining streets of a few thousand men who have adopted a common party name for their opinions. This Will-Organisation they find in the fact of common industrial employment." p.325 – though Wallas went on to point out the inadequacy of this categorisation by referring to its non-specificity: Oxford dons, he said, would vote against Syndicalism – but in favour of their own occupational autonomy. (in Graham Wallas, The Great Society. A psychological analysis, 1914)
workers from economic subjection and insecurity. In economic-political
terms, the effective political power of the individual worker in monopoly
capitalist conditions – leaving out of consideration the exact nature
of the division between labour aristocracy and the rest – must seem to
be diminishing. This can easily enough be deduced not only from the
literature of the Syndicalists themselves – but also from the work of
social psychologists like Veblen and le Bon, the "metropolis" fantasies
of France and Musil, and the liberals like Easterman and Hobhouse, trying
desperately to revise liberal democracy in favour of some kind of increased
participation, but in so doing having to deny state sovereignty, and the
legitimacy of the class interests which had constructed the system.
Something of this connection between the conditions of industry and the
development of political movements was seen by Veblen – albeit in an
unnecessarily mechanistic way:

"The prevailing characteristic of the trade-union animus is the
denial of the received natural-rights dogmas wherever the mechanical
standardization of modern industry traverses the working of these
received natural rights."

But mechanical standardization was just one aspect of a concentration of
power, a resolution of conflict and competition among the parties and the
industries of the bourgeoisie in an attempt to shore up and, if possible,
replace, a flagging ideology. "The loss of self-reliance; the partial
depresentation of reason; the blunting of the moral sense; lack of
individuality and initiative; apathy and indifference" – these alleged
defects of parliamentary democracy are in a sense not capable of resolution,
and improvement since they reflect, ultimately, tension at the level of

207 T. Veblen, The Theory of Business Enterprise (1904), (1932 N.Y. edn)

208 J. Blair Smith, Direct Action versus Legislation. (Re-issued by
material conditions determining political forms. However much the women's suffrage movement may arouse excitement, and however incredible may seem Macdonald's faith that socialism would come without reform of Parliament - the syndicalists' rejection of Parliament (which was not, surely, a rejection of the authority which parliament possessed) was a realisation that the new democracy must transcend delegated government.

The mockery at "Unconscious Guerilla Warfare", in the "Sentimental Revisionist Period" can easily enough be illustrated: but only in the terms of another consciousness, and a new realism. There is clearly a functional use for this kind of historical superiority: but to condemn precursors for optimism when you yourself are less hopeful and have less chance of success is vacuous. When FE said "Indeed, Society must beat Syndicalism, because the failure to do so means the dissolution of Society" he was making an identification of a force more to be reckoned with and, to him, as alarming as the Socialists who so often took Syndicalism to be their rival.

Like Tom Mann, Connolly separated the issues of theory, organisation and movement: his criticism that De Leon was "condemned to futility", "engaged too much in Rabbinical disputation over revolutionary texts" was a part of his general attack upon those who had so lost touch with the popular movement that they could not make effective tactical use of their own organisations.

"After the final concession to the Unionists, when Redmond accepted the principle of the partition of Ireland (that is to say the split in the bourgeoisie was to be made the basis of division of the national territory) the need for a revolution which would precede the establishment of Home Rule and thus avoid

209 The Workers' Dreadnought 17.4.20.

210 Rt. Hon. F.E.Smith, Unionist Policy and other essays (1913) p.238.

211 R.M.Fox, James Connolly the Forerunner (Tralee 1946) p.60.
partition became a matter of discussion. When successive postponements aroused the suspicion that Home Rule was not coming at all, a revolution to free Ireland once and for all became the obvious alternative."212

To maintain that the popular movement thus encouraged was not that which Connolly intended is a valid observation, but no criticism of Connolly's analysis in 1916.

Clearly, an apparently spontaneous movement, to which an insurrection gives an example, whose links with the insurrectionary group are emotional and exhortatory only, cannot be expected to shape the direction in which men seek to pursue their interests and react to their environment. All that Connolly could do, in fact, was to join the strands of thinking into an emotive and comprehensive statement whose aim was to re-structure aspiration:

"And up from the blood-soaked graves of the Belgian frontiers the spirits of murdered Irish soldiers of England call to Heaven for vengeance upon the parliamentarian tricksters who seduced them into the armies of the oppressor of their country."214

Just as the British Syndicalists saw that the parliamentary system and its opportunities for encouraging direct workers' participation to the management of their own affairs could not be improved or extended, so too Connolly saw that there could be no "benevolent association" between Britain and Ireland - the relationship between the countries could only be formally renounced - or it would remain an intensifying relationship based on coercion.

On this basis, then, lay the popular movement - whether it had a theory and organisation or not, whether men were conscious of the fact that together they had a potential programme on which to challenge their masters. Hence came "'the tired feeling' that comes across us in Ireland.


213 Irish Worker, 29.8.14 quoted in A Socialist and War, 1914-16 (1941) p. 70.
when we witness the love embraces which take place between the Parliamentary Labour Party and our deadliest enemies - the Home Rule Party." But the answer did not lie in organisation alone - the NTWF had led to "the freezing up of the fraternal spirit" - nor yet in theory. Probably it was to be found in the largely intuitive attempt to preserve the clan and inventiveness, the "forest-fire" behaviour of crowds and masses of people who, though they might indeed be brought to the point of insurrection by their membership of certain occupational and class groups, acted in times of the perception of disparity and discontinuity in a much wider context. Certainly this leads to theoretical imprecision: as Larkin's biographer said,

"this very lack of precision seemed to be an integral part of a period whose values were rapidly disintegrating..."216

Clearly, too, in all social conflict, speed and the ability to improvise are, early on, an essential part of the conflict itself: later it may be possible to develop machinery for the resolution or postponement of conflict - thus ensuring that the initial crisis should lose both force and validity for the workers' movement.

Not only, then, is the division between the parliamentarians and the democrats visible in the British labour movement, but also a division between the socialists and nationalists in Ireland, and the trade union consciousness of British workers - even then moving towards imperialist anti-democracy. "The full significance of Easter Week was completely wasted on British Labour. The Rising had not sufficed to shed the

216 E.Larkin, op. cit. p.97.
faintest glimmer of new light on the position of Ireland." Major White said of this situation that he and Connolly together could have led a Labour revolution in Ireland before 1914, but "To draw together the Labour and Nationalist elements in Ireland was not, and is not, possible."218

Given the polarity between the democracy of the left and the antidemocracy of the parliamentary socialists, the stress laid by both on the importance of education and propaganda can no longer be seen in neutral terms.

"That is the war which must be preached - the war on the ignorance which is so blind as to think that such an economic order as the present is in the real interest of any class" said Snowden - who had already proposed that the workers would never be revolutionary because of their "conflicting personal interests".219

Thus education was to be propaganda, not demystification. The attempt by education to demonstrate that the dominant class was not pursuing its interests efficiently could only work so long as there was no element of coercion in that class's dominance: given the organisation of working-class groups, not only in the workshops, but wherever "The tenement system, combined with factory life, draws the workers close to each other

217 Clarkson, op.cit. p.409. Clarkson dates this neglect from 1910, when "Ireland was forgotten; the woes of Ceylon loomed so large as completely to obscure the growth of nationalist sentiment in Ireland." p.398. Emmet Larkin, however, suggests that still in 1913 the reasons for the lack of British support for Larkin was the labour leaders' knowledge of their "own organisational weakness", plus the suspicion that "the British workers would not respond to a declaration of industrial war, especially if the issue was purely Irish." p.157. Neither of these suggestions seems penetrating.

218 Captain J.R. White, DSO. Misfit (1930) p.304. There is an interesting account of the role of English militants in Irish labour matters, also in Fred Bower's Rolling Stonemason (1936).

219 P. Snowden, Socialism and Syndicalism, sup. cit. p.79.
There are quite extensive circles where everyone knows each other", the organisation of the educational group itself could be of as much significance as the material studied. Jackson proposed that "The whole movement for Independent Working-Class Education was, in fact, a by-product of our 'impossibilist' revolt against Hyndman": propaganda in fact depends on the medium as much as on the message – it has a function over and above the dissemination of information. The value-orientation of a movement is both proclaimed and determined by the content and dissemination of its propaganda. "We 'Impossibilists' all had a passion – that may seem to you inordinate – for the Communist Manifesto and for Engels's Socialism Utopian and Scientific." This "passion" thus not only helps to give a clue to the theoretical content of this grass-roots education – classes like Maclean's using Wage Labour and Capital, Capital, and Value, Price and Profit – but shows how this "education" had two further functions. First, it attempted to raise consciousness by information as prepared by and for the working-class alone, and next to make propaganda a kind of "forest-fire" organisation. The biographies of labour militants carefully chronicle not only the literature of their conversion, but the key texts of their early, pre-1914, propagandist

220 Tom Bell, Pioneering Days (1941) pp.18-19. Accounts for the transfer between socialist groups, and of the literature available will be found in Hobson's Pilgrim to the Left (1938), Pollitt's Serving My Time, (1940) T.A.Jackson, op.cit.

221 T.A.Jackson, op.cit. p.145. Jackson noted too that "There was quite a demand for expositions of Marx and Marxism in the anti-Macdonald strata of the ILP, and I had the repute of being a 'crack' Marxist opponent." To Paton, for instance, the Ferrer case showed an occasion for mass protest, uniting socialists across party divisions and hence against the leaders who maintained the divisions and had it in their power to merge the parties (in Proletarian Pilgrimage (1935) p.211)

222 ibid. p.147.

223 Bell, Pioneering Days, op.cit. p.57.
It was through literature rather than the kind of "education" which liberal analysts said had awoken the workers to their deprivation and Snowden proposed as a remedy for it, that the socialist democrats hoped to make contact with the mass movement. Such literature represented a challenge to the system, to the non-Marxist socialist leaders, just because it was by Marx and Engels. This was a literature of the underground - but without a censorship!

Again, this protest by propaganda formed a basis of unity cutting across the organisational lines of the socialist parties. Its aim was not simply to inform - but to bring to full realisation that latent consciousness and latent force of movement manifested in the unrest - and to bring it out by self-education, independent, direct and ad hoc.

In discussing ways of transforming pure consciousness into effective political organisations, or of raising trade union, or false consciousness to an awareness of class interest, the unrest seemed to promise one of two methods. Snowden started from the premise that

"Poverty is an opiate which produces a feeling of contentment with or resignation to conditions which ought to excite a righteous discontent. The heaviest price which is paid by the community for low wages is the loss of a rational ambition for better conditions."225

This proposal to re-structure the level of aspiration Snowden saw as safely contained within a system of rising expectations and rising prosperity. In one sense, then, Snowden's problem was no problem:

"New expenses have come into the category of necessaries. The development of tramways, the cheap but better-class music hall and the picture palace, the cheap periodicals and books, the very

224 See, for example, Tom Bell's list of SLP literature before 1908, p.260, op.cit., lacking all Lenin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht, and with but little Vandervelde, Bernstein, Jaurès, Guesde, Plekhanov.

225 Snowden, The Living Wage, sup.cit. p.55."
municipal enterprise which was intended to produce free libraries, free parks, free concerts, has added to the expenditure of the working classes, who cannot take advantage of these boons without incurring some little expense in sundries. The features of our advancing civilisation are always before the eyes of the working classes, and they fall into the habit of indulging in the cheaper ones. People cannot see tramways without wanting to ride sometimes; they cannot see newspapers without at least buying one occasionally; they cannot see others taking a holiday into the country or to the seaside without desiring to do the same. 226

On the face of it, this is a set of modest demands, designed to allow a section of the domestic working-class to enjoy the benefits of the mass market which some workers were already doing. The mass market was being developed to reach as large a part of the population as possible, and the only question was whether a traditional wage structure could be readjusted without upsetting traditional pricing mechanisms, and whether the older and less flexible industries, clinging to older forms of worker-management relations and economics, could be induced to join the more advanced sectors. Again, there was clearly a sense of crisis induced by the fear that economic rearrangements might not only damage the immediate interests of some sections of the possessing class — the attack on the privilege of the landowners is an obvious case — but that in the process of developing a dominant ideology which retained many of the tested features of the old, parliamentary Socialism might become un-parliamentary (as was seen in the '20s, and later, despite the efforts of parliamentary socialists to demonstrate that the reverse was true), 227 and that a consumer democracy might encroach upon the rights of ownership.

Snowden, despite the fact that there was really no reason why a capitalism moving towards a position of monopoly should not be able to

226 ibid. p.66.

227 For instance, the Zinoviev letter, if it cannot be shown to have lost Labour the election, was strong enough to carry a last minute campaign.
distribute its newspapers, its tramways, and its hotels and entertainments for its own greater profit and security, did perceive several ways whereby the system might not so develop. First, there was evidence of immiseration: "the struggle to support the average standard of working-class life was never so hard as it is at the present time".228 Again, there was evidence that a substantial part of the bourgeoisie preferred at least to make a show of force against organisations attempting to encroach on the sphere of political power — even while the government was making concessions to the workers — and there were those who seemed anxious to fight a rearguard action to prevent any change to the dominant ideology, and any improvement in the material condition of the workers. Snowden, half aware, provided his own critique.

If the policy of concession failed, there was always a counter-revolution prepared: the use of troops in 1910-12 showed the extent of the defence in depth. Although the suppression of competition and the expansion of markets gave opportunities for supplying the proletariat with a greater purchasing power — and thus securing immunity for the possessing class from revolution — there was evidence that the system could not be readapted so swiftly. If the demand for a few shillings a week rise for workers earning under twenty-five shillings a week was to be fought and discussed as if this were itself the social revolution, and as if a major victory would have been won if the owners "gave in", at the same time such an increase severely strained the system.229 Moreover

228 Snowden, op.cit. p.66.
229 That is, in one sense, such a rise involved no necessary loss of authority to the employers, a fractional and incalculable financial loss to the propertied, and a possible rise in freight rates which could probably have been offset by more reinvestment and better internal fund-raising mechanisms — but in fact, by their resistance, the employers risked greater humiliation and loss than a token resistance. The desire of employers to prosecute the class war showed perhaps a greater strategic sense than they were credited with.
not only was a capitalist breakdown a possibility, but there was evidence that the profits of the new system were being used simply as spending-money - not for re-investment, philanthropy or strengthening the system in other ways. If one man could leave £14,000,000 on his death - more than 700,000 others - the concept of a unity of national interest, of the rights of the 250 millionaires to the money they had accumulated, could only seem one of absurd trickery.\(^{230}\) Hence came the frenzy of the period, the impatience with the diehards in the Lords, the fear that disaffection in the army would imperil its loyalty, Asquith's pique with women's suffrage - and indeed, the Janus-like policy of coercion and concession carried on against the unions. The vision of Lloyd George of the necessity for parts of the possessing class to make sacrifices to retain the class unity of the possessors could not be accepted lightly by those who were to lose money and prestige in the process. In the same way, the workers were to be urged to take some sacrifice of privilege for the sake of unity, and to retain this unity as a first and vital line of defence: as Zinoviev convinced Murphy in 1920 of the need for "co-operation of the vanguard of the working class with the rearguard",\(^{231}\) so too there was constant criticism of craft unions showing themselves "the tool of the Capitalists and Imperialists".\(^{232}\)

Compared with other European countries, there was less need for counter-revolutionary measures after the war than elsewhere - though

\(^{230}\) As Graham Greene said in The Comedians, "When a capitalist state gets too repulsive, it is in danger of losing the loyalty even of the capitalists." p.159 (1966) Figures from Snowden, op. cit. pp.73-4.

\(^{231}\) J.T.Murphy, New Horizons (1941) p.149.

\(^{232}\) SLP Conference Report, 1921.
the organisation of these measures was particularly efficient. The new dominant ideology was rapidly established: in 1919 Maclean could write

"View it as I may I cannot see the possibility of a financial collapse arising out of the contradictions of the capitalist process of production".235

The workers were in considerable disarray after the war: in 1920 The Call was still proposing to contact the "un-classconscious workers",234 and the Comintern realised that in case of revolution or counter-revolution it would have to rely on "all workers who at the critical moment will be capable of revolutionary mass action."235 This would indeed not be the mass enthusiastic democratic takeover of 1910-14, but a reliance on spontaneity faute de mieux. The summer unrest of 1911, where in the "mingled smell of jam and glue, biscuits and pickles, the sickly odour of jam predominating, the streets were packed with people"236 had seemed a time when the power base of the old system was crumbling: but what seemed like the destruction of decay was the sign of repair work.

Thus Beatrice Webb could announce here conversion to Marxism after the collapse of capitalism in the late twenties - a collapse of the mechanics of the system which, severely though it shook the dominant ideology, did not endanger the political supremacy of the dominant class, and over the next twenty years permitted the government to do for the ailing capitalist sectors what private investment and private capital was unable and unwilling to perform. But she was converted only after she had played

233 The Call, 13.11.19.
234 ibid. 24.6.20.
235 The Communist International Documents vol.i. 1919-22, (Oxford 1956) p.73.
236 M.A.Hamilton, Mary Macarthur (1925) p.103.
a part in providing a fresh justification for bourgeois dominance, and
stern warning against working-class attempts to seize power as a class.
One might then expect that counter-revolutionary preparations and signs
of breakdown would raise the level of consciousness - especially when
at least a large, probably a major, section of the bourgeoisie was
proposing that capitalism should distinguish itself in the realm of mass
consumption: as London said, labour "is beginning to realise that it all
depends upon who is behind and who is before the Gatlings and injunctions."\(^{237}\)
The government too had collective and individual fears that the system's
"pluralism" (reflecting its anarchic production, a Marxist might claim)
might cease to prevent confrontation. These fears were often unjustified:
Masterman "instanced Llanelly, where two men were shot during the strike
riots last August, but where a Liberal Member has just been elected in a
by-election. He said that Macnamara, Financial Secretary to the Admiralty,
had said when the shooting took place, "No Liberal will be elected in
Llanelly for twenty years".\(^{238}\) There was, too, a limit to the extent to
which a new dominant ideology could be enforced and expressed: the aim
must be to avoid a direct challenge, any sudden attempt to transform
working-class values and traditions -

"The people don't like the prospect of compulsion. They don't
look forward to life in the barracks square. They never see
anything of the bright side of military life. Soldiers, like
convicts, are carefully kept apart from the people."\(^{239}\)

If this meant, however, that the working-class never quite entered
into the spirit of imperialism, it could also ensure that no BSP citizen
army would arise within a home defence force. In much the same way if


\(^{238}\) Lord Riddell, op. cit. p.39.

\(^{239}\) ibid. 19.3.15. p.131. And had been since the French Revolutionary Wars.
"ignorance" simply led to pure consciousness and rioting, education which might be expected to produce a class consciousness on the contrary might mean that "the great majority of the children of ability in the industrial classes are being intercepted before the opportunity of becoming 'Labour Leaders' will arise." So long as Socialists were in doubt as to the dynamics of their own movement, they might well be confused as to the dialectical transformation of the bourgeoisie:

"In view of recent events they were forced to the conclusion that the industrial movement was far ahead of the political movement among the working classes, and it was therefore their great work to bring the political movement abreast of the industrial." This mechanistic image was still pursued by Macdonald eight years later

"The great curse of the Labour Movement was that for 10-12 years it had leaned on industrial action, but it had not yet learned to use all its powers in conjunction." But there are two points involved here - first the relation of the party to the masses: "if it makes for improving the economic condition of those who work", the masses are devoted to the party.

"Nor can it be otherwise, for the living conditions of the workers in "ordinary" times is incredibly hard. As it strives to improve its living conditions, the working class also progresses morally, intellectually and politically, becomes more capable of achieving its great emancipatory aims."

Lenin in fact makes the point that the "pure" consciousness of the worker at the point of production is, in terms of effective political action, only of latent potential: when the Liberals say "You are strong when you have the sympathy of 'society'", the Marxist replies "You have the sympathy of

240 Masterman, op.cit. p.220.
'society' when you are strong." Whatever the deficiencies of this as an analysis of Marx's own theory, there is a good, if historicist, reason for believing that Hyndman and Quelch's determination to avoid Bakuninism and Lassalleanism, and the pitfalls of trade union consciousness, involved a divorce on dogmatic grounds from the mass of the workers and their democratic aspirations which, far from showing the atavism of their "political movement" showed a desire to take or share power at the most basic level.

"Mass strikes in revolutionary epochs have their objective logic. They scatter hundreds of thousands and millions of sparks in all directions - and all around there is the inflammable material of extreme bitterness, the torture of unprecedented starvation, endless tyranny, shameless and cynical mockery at the 'pauper', the 'muzhik', the rank-and-file soldier." 245

One feels, indeed, that the BSP's leaders' search for consistency at this time ignored the rapid transformation of the system, and the "closure" of the routes used by former leading sectors and ideologues, and replacement by more functional ones. Even if quantitative analysis showed Lenin to be mistaken in his analysis of parliamentary representatives of the working class, the emphasis he placed for 1912 on the structural difficulty of pursuing proletarian policies in parliament was justified by events, by the acceptance by parliamentary socialists of the constitutional conventions which prevented persecution - but also prevented the democratisation of the relations of production.

"The social revolution for Maclean was much more than a battle

244 ibid. p.85.
245 ibid. p.108.
of ideas. It was a war of the classes..."246 Those whom we have termed socialist democrats — men like Mann, Connolly, Fred Henderson, J.T. Murphy — would not, surely, have denied the universal applicability, in a Kantian sense, of their laws: indeed, one may say that, as is shown by the quotation from Maclean, they were concerned with finding the correspondence between party, mass and class, rather than seeking to separate these concepts by reference to a constitutionalism which at best was the institutional shell of the legalised and legitimated status quo, and at worst a vehicle for class domination. Maclean certainly went on to propose the development of a "Class patriotism", refusing to murder one another for a sordid world capitalism."247 The mass democracy could not exist without its legal — or rational, predictable — modes: to oppose constitutionalism against this supposedly anarchic system is itself a mark of false consciousness — rather as appears in Drachkovitch's remarks of nineteenth century Marxism, that it had

"une volonté passionnée de l'action, C'est ce deuxième aspect qui, détachant le socialisme de la réalité, lui enlève tout caractère scientifique."248

This simply means that action not only becomes detached from reality(!), but that science ceases to have its historic social role of changing and reinterpreting the social environment. In part, this may have been due, as Drachkovitch said, to the fact that where Socialists could have had a

246 T.Bell. John Maclean op.cit. p.10. Remembering always, of course, that the trade-unionists "knew that while they wanted workmen to represent them, a majority of their rank and file were still Liberals, and a minority still Conservatives." (M.A.Hamilton's Arthur Henderson, p.63) It was the incompatibility of these two ends — working-class representatives and liberal or Conservative government which showed, in however obscure a way, that representation alone was not sufficient: the power to implement working-class policies was the essential element.

247 Tom Bell, sup.cit. p.28.

revolution they did not, because "leur volume même les poussait vers la modération et le réformisme." But this was only their interpretation and rationalisation of "leur volume même"; since the majoritarian principle had been enunciated by the theorists of a minority class domination, it seemed as if all socialists had to do was organise a majority of the population, and the next stage of human development would be reached. Led by liberal theorists of democracy to believe that majority rule was the basis of democracy, socialists who had trusted this quantitative guide were nonplussed when universal suffrage did not bring all power to the working class. This could be explained as Churchill did, in terms of social interdependence:

"The fortunes of the trade unions are interwoven with the industries they serve. The more highly organised trade unions are, the more clearly they recognise their responsibilities; the larger their membership, the greater their knowledge, the wider their outlook." But this majoritarian outlook and the actual location of authority and legitimacy did not precisely coincide - no more than did mass democracy and revolution:

"Whoever expects to see a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip service to revolution without understanding what revolution really is."

For there is a sense in which the mass democracy is, in historical context, spontaneous: just as the bourgeois state can turn its dominance into universally binding rules, or legality, so too the aspiration to working class dominance had required a legitimacy and a predictability either as the framework of a revolution - revolutionary justice - or in the

249 ibid. p.39.


251 Lenin, quoted in Greaves, Easter Rising, sup. cit. p.18.
institutions of the new society.

In pre-1914 discussion of class consciousness, however, there was an element of Nettl's description of it as "one vast international waiting room in the best nineteenth-century style, from which all trains departed for the same destination" - an observation which only partly, through the mixed metaphor, defeats its own purpose. It is, after all, usual to buy a ticket before proceeding to the waiting room, and to enquire as to the destination of the train: given Nettl's railway system, however, the image is wholly satisfying.\textsuperscript{252}

When Gompers saw the Amsterdam reed bottom weavers working for 40 cents a day, he asked, "Why not revolt against it somehow?"\textsuperscript{253} In liberal democracies, however, the political forms and slogans conditioned the form of the protest. In this, though Connolly might often be tempted to bitterness, always his concern for the re-integration of industrial and political forms was based on the perception of the class context of the concepts of liberty and democracy..."this false exaggeration of political forms which has clothed in Ireland the struggle for liberty, must appear to the Socialist an inexplicable error on the part of a people so strongly crushed down as the Irish."\textsuperscript{254} Majority rule could be seen in the political forms of universal suffrage. As Connolly put it, however, the majority could be made up of exploiter and exploited: "The British Empire is a piratical enterprise in which the valour of slaves fights for the glory

\textsuperscript{252} Nettl, op.cit. p.240.

\textsuperscript{253} Samuel Gompers, Labor in Europe and America (N.Y. 1910) pp.67-8.

\textsuperscript{254} J.Connolly, Socialism and Nationalism, sup. cit. p.33. (From L'Irlande Libre, Paris, 1897).
and profit of their masters." The problem is that many Socialist demands are, verbally, those of other previously dominated classes. Where freedom for a new dominant class has been achieved, the slogan of "freedom of the proletariat" is either perceived as meaningless within the conceptual framework of the existing system, or interpreted by the dominant class and its supporters as a request for integration into the dominant system, and for indoctrination with its modes. Within this difficulty, however, there lies a more than linguistic difference over the form of conceptual emancipation. De Leon, for instance, "as an opponent of reformism in its European form...offered only a form of Lassalleanism against American reformism", and thus hardly touched on the problems concerning the use of liberal-bourgeois slogans to make the proletariat's revolutionary demands. Yet acquiescence in a dominant class ideology and language is not democracy - or is not the final definition of democracy - any more, in Macpherson's sense, than a society can be wholly democratic which excludes a section of its members from participation in the political process.

255 ibid. Labour and Easter Week, sup.cit. p.109 (The Workers' Republic) (20.11.15)
256 G.D.Greaves Life and Times of James Connolly, sup.cit. p.166.
257 C.B.Macpherson, The Real World of Democracy (Oxford 1966) Macpherson sees as not necessarily democratic that "system of alternate or multiple parties whereby governments could be held responsible to different sections of the class or classes that had a political voice"(p.9). Even liberal democracy in a capitalist state involves a non-compensatable transfer of powers from non-powers to owners (pp.48-9). Connolly, Mann and the other socialist democrats were thus attempting to preserve the liberalism of the system but destroy the economic insecurity and domination, plus the elements of class domination, which diminished the potential of supra-class development. Connolly could see in any case that the 'liberalism' of the system was conditional on opposition being English and integrative: Mann, by preaching non-violence to the troops in 1912 was able to show that the maintenance of state sovereignty necessarily involved in Britain a free hand to shoot down striking workers: the freedom guaranteed by Liberal law and order was practically and firmly based on the maintenance of management rights.
The problems of a socialist party in opposition are particularly desperate: its programme must seem "impossibilist" - the CPGB "antagonized the workers to revolutionary theory and strengthened the hands of the reactionary and conservative elements within the Labour movement,"258 - and its talk of "democracy" bewildering and suspect in a system already calling itself "democracy". As Murphy said,

"isolation is the price the revolutionary movement has to pay for making a formal challenge on fundamental principles abstracted from the immediate struggles of the workers and without regard to the relation of forces."259

After 1914, the drive for unity of the working class was bound to conflict with that for a workers' democracy:

"This record shows the SDP, the SLP, the syndicalists, the shop stewards, and the Communist Party, pursuing a sectarian policy which has left them only on the fringe of the working class movement."

That is, despite the local victories of these parties and groups, the limitation of pre-war visions dropped the central pre-1914 issue of democracy in the list of priorities.260 Thus it was that the General Council could declare in 1926 that the mass strike had nothing to do with the attempt to found a workers' state, but was only a gesture of solidarity for the purpose of securing economic security.

In discussing the formation of a dominant proletarian ideology - or rather, the failure so to do - one is struck by the late date at which Socialists recognised the full extent of their task.

"I now saw political power to be the organised will of a class ruling over society in the name of society, and that it could only be transformed into the organised will of society as a whole

258 Murphy, Preparing for Power, sup. cit. p.18.
259 ibid. p.219.
260 ibid. p.283.
when society has itself become a classless community,"

wrote Murphy in 1920. 261 Many Socialists required the trip to Russia in 1920-21 to see that the "democracy" adumbrated before 1914 and the revolution so ardently desired were incompatible with parliamentary democracy and its constitutional modes. Gallacher made a similar point about the Clyde:

"A rising should have taken place. The workers were ready and able to effect it; the leadership had never thought of it". 262

Indeed, it was from such a judgement that Lenin proposed a realignment of party and mass:

"To be told, even in the most pleasant manner, that my opinions represented all the mistakes of the German 'Lefts', was a bit more than I was prepared to swallow". 263

Again, with Gallacher, one sees the same reliance upon spontaneity, and the same difficulties in converting this unforeseen reaction of a movement for power and resistance into effective action.

In part, the very nature of a sprawling and inchoate movement - seeming to suffer defeats through lack of organisation and inter-communication - and then just as "mysteriously" overleaping these lacunae - encouraged concentration on the one common factor on which there was no dispute - strikes. This symptom, with some attention to its ally "organisation" was discussed to the exclusion of others. Strikes, said Hyndman, did not necessarily lead to the control of industry, "especially with an uneducated and undisciplined population such as

261 Murphy, New Horizons, sup. cit. p.160.
262 W. Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde (1936) p.234.
263 Gallacher, The Rolling of the Thunder (1947) p.11.
ours. And yet such a diagnosis required some dazzling gymnastics: if "going Syndicalist" was like going Panti, and still

"The same men who had been locked out by coalowners and cotton-kings voted steadily for the candidates of their masters (whom they could not trust for five minutes not to cheat them on the weighbridge or in the sheds) and handed over the control of the national interests to the dominant class."\(^{265}\)

it would seem that the working-class was engaged in a movement, and in the grip of pressures, which did not necessarily conform to the BSP time-scale - "The political upheaval will follow hard upon the industrial stir."\(^{266}\)

A static analysis of capitalism, just as much as a mechanistic version of the relation of a socialist party to the mass - something from which Marx and Engels had always tried, at the apparent price of consistency to avoid - could always lead men like Hyndman to smile knowingly as the proletariat took "wrong" courses of action, secure in the knowledge that when a strike movement was exhausted "Socialism" would be as pure and unattainable as ever, while another false god, Syndicalism would have been found out. In this, Wilshire's remark that "Syndicalism" is at once an interpretation and a prophecy of the Labour Movement... not so much a creed as it is a statement of what is and what will be"\(^{264}\)

\(^{264}\) Hyndman, Further Reminiscences, sup. cit. p.455. It might even be said that to concentrate on the phenomenon of strikes, taken quantitatively, was simply showing the defensive and reassuring elements of ideology - that here "ideology" was standing in for analysis (cf Alan Fox, Managerial Ideology and Labour Relations, in British Journal of Industrial Relations, Nov. 1966, vol.iv. No.3), what Samuel H. Barnes talks of as a political organisation providing "the functional equivalent of ideology" or "ideology by proxy", Journal of Politics, Aug. 1966, vol. 28, no.3, p.516.

\(^{265}\) Hyndman, op. cit. p.73.

\(^{266}\) ibid. p.73.
seems a just corrective."

Syndicalism gave the greatest tasks of reorganisation to those parts of the movement which were strongest, best organised, most comprehensive: the multiple aspect of the large union, its comprehension of various aspirations of its members - their class, occupational and economic interests, for instance - being the clear vehicle for the drive against the bureaucracy and the concentration of capital which seemed to close the roads both to material well-being and the realisation of that self-government which liberal democracy had ever promised, but never managed to combine or free from the modes of a dominant class. This was what Wallas described as the attempt to break out of a system closed institutionally and intellectually to the emancipation of a subject class - "An intelligent workman during an election often feels something of angry impotence of a bull in a Spanish bull-ring."  

This "uncertainty of allegiance to the received foundations of law and order" which emerged in the late nineteenth century revolt against religious orthodoxy and religious institutions, grew into an anti-capitalist campaign which rapidly moved beyond an attack on the privileges of the landed and aristocratic section of the dominant class. Socialists like Maclean similarly hoped to escalate a movement in this way: 

"All revolutions have started on seemingly trifling economic and political issues. Ours is to direct the workers to the goal by

267 Gaylord Wilshire, Syndicalism, What it is (n.d.) p.7.

268 G. Wallas, Our Social Heritage (1921) p.103. This impotence being derived, said Wallas, in the last resort from the fact that the workers could not, if they wished, buy out the directors of joint-stock enterprises: where fund-raising internally had been perfected, indeed, the secret of capitalist perpetual motion would be discovered. The workers could thus only coerce or dispossess them (p.103).

pushing forward the miners' programme and backing up our 'black brigade.'

Clearly, however, the difficulties attending an attack on the weakest, and most expendable section of dominant class interests were much greater than an attack by one section of the possessing class on the privilege of another - as Brockway put it,

"because the working class is the subject class and emancipation can only be achieved through the realisation of its need by, and the persistent effort of, the subject class, for freedom cannot be given from above, it must be won from beneath."  

In the process of seeking to win this power - or even to secure accommodation within a changing system, the spontaneity must necessarily be lost, and the grass-roots democracy, which is neither constitutional nor institutional because it is from the old concepts of legality and institutions that the movement shrinks - must become itself mediated, or at least re-directed. T.E. Stephenson describes the process at branch level, where "the role of the branch has become confined to decision-making of limited effectiveness, in contrast to the decision-making of the past", because centralisation formalises leadership, weakening loyalty to the organisation, and hence, in time, leads to the weakening of the position of the leaders itself.  

Thus it comes to seem as if this "spontaneity", whether admired as a source of legitimacy and improvising strength, or rejected on grounds of low level of consciousness, could not be transmitted to the "new society" through the process of disruption needed to dispossess the possessing class.

In a similar manner, as the SLP version of Kautsky on the class struggle

270 The Call, 23.1.19.
271 F. Brockway, op. cit. p.89.
put it, after the news of victories in South Africa there had been an "inundation of every large town by a tidal wave of filthy, degraded, and dehumanized wretches in the guise of patriots." Those who had most to gain, apparently, from a change in the relations of production might often be those who most eagerly supported the development of the old dominant ideology, on the grounds that at last the dominant class would embody and materialise its benefits to the "black hundreds", who had no quasi-socialist culture and organisation to act as alternative and defence.

The argument from economics clearly shows the "linear" analysis of men like Snowden -

"A rough measure of justice is the best we can hope to secure for each, and it is more important to see that no man goes with an insufficiency than to be over-anxious that no man gets more than he may need"

- an approach akin to the "Economists", tending to diminish the importance of the political system in securing this equity. The State and the economy are seen as separated, "The State here has deliberately discouraged the employment of women; but it is finding it increasingly difficult to keep back a tendency which is influencing all outside employment"

273 K. Kautsky (tr. De Leon) The Class Struggle (adapted to GB by the NEC of the SLP) (Edinburgh, 1907) p.8.

274 It is, however, to be noted, that it tended to be the more atavistic parts of the dominant ideology which attracted, even in the period of reformation: Tariff Reform had little working-class support as such, and popular enthusiasm was for "vulgar Imperialism". On the determinants of intergroup relations, especially the standardisation of stereotypes, and self-justifying attitudes, see M. Sherif (ed) Intergroup Relations and Leadership (NY 1962) pp.10-12. For a description of the short term discontinuity "triggering" political consciousness, see especially N. J. Smelser's Theory of Collective Behaviour (1962) pp.248-52.

275 Snowden, The Living Wage, sup. cit. p.5. This diminishes the importance of the political system since this material calculation is not only vague, and based on psychological and emotive criteria, but supposes that "a rough measure of justice" is a self-explanatory and self-justifying political aim.
Snowden perceived the connection between the unrest and a movement to democratise social relations and institutions - but his aim, if only for tactical reasons, was to show the reasonableness of the demands, the contribution to the existing system that higher wages and greater political participation would produce.

"The labour unrest is not a desire for more wages to spend in unworthy ways. It is the stirrings of a new life; for more abundant life. The justice of the workers' revolt should not be ignored, sympathy with their conditions should not be withheld, help should not be refused to them, because their discontent expresses itself in ways which may not be approved. Democracy is only just struggling to its feet. Through all the ages the common people have been kept in ignorance, deprived of the light of learning. They have been stunted in body and brain. Slowly and painfully they have groped towards the light. At times their sense of wrong has found expression in violent outbreaks; but the most striking feature of working-class history has been their patience under injustice, their quiet submission to oppression and wrong, their resignation to poverty as part of the order of Nature."277

Although Snowden's argument seems on balance to have suggested that the workers had "earned" better conditions, that it was good business to raise their wages, and that the guarantee of peaceful development was the peaceful character of proletarian politics, clearly the unrest showed that a crucial point had been reached. Many statistical series showed that immiseration, rather than improvement had been the most recent trend - and as Snowden himself pointed out, "so long as private landlordism and capitalism exist mere Social Reform

277 ibid. p.168.
will never touch the problem of the disparity of wealth." 278  Convinced though Snowden was that "democracy" and revolution were polar opposites, his economic arguments rested on the need for the capitalist system, in process of its smooth development into socialism, to produce immediate amelioration. That in fact capitalism was capable of just this recovery, and that the corporate capitalism developing before 1914 could, with an effort, be taken as a progress to socialism - as Hyndman, for instance, saw the trusts - could only confirm Snowden's analysis in his own eyes, turning him into a fierce anti-revolutionary after the war.

This formative period, of 1910-14, tended to show the parliamentary socialists looking for proof of economic improvement under capitalism, and the revolutionaries, the "direct democrats", seeking evidence that capitalism could not survive democratisation and popular control: as Henderson said, capitalism was

"this great slave organisation of industry, under which men have no right to work (and, consequently, no right to live, which is involved in the right to work) except by permission of an owner" 279

- how then could there be a smooth growth of socialism within capitalism?

That the form of the dilemma might take one which Plekhanov described, in which the development of the productive forces is hampered by resentful

278 Snowden, Socialism and Syndicalism, sup. cit. p.181. Given Snowden's premise that capitalism was socially and morally indefensible, it is not easy to estimate whether the trust, that "great step forward in economic advance," "doing necessary work" (pp.106-7) belonged to the world of capitalism, or a transitional one of "pure" production, which could produce, neutrally, that "measure of rough justice." It might be thought that to insert a new step in the transition from Capitalism to Socialism - the Trust - might lead to greater flexibility. In fact, Snowden argued from a position which recognised that the Trust was a dialectical transformation of Capitalism, that it represented a higher stage of capitalism - and yet because, in this linear model, it was "nearer" to Socialism, it seemed to him easier to deal with, less dominant.

and illiterate proletarians, fighting a rearguard action against the forms of existing production and thus slowing down the development of productive forces, was one fear shared by socialists and capitalists — but it might be a necessary delay if it meant making concessions to the grass-roots democracy — a kind of NEP, in fact. 280

By 1922, when the Federation of British Industries was saying "wages must come down...workers must give a higher output and extend working hours", the process of "closure" in the economic system was nearly complete. 281

The era of "cheap labour and labour saving machinery" which the BSP and SLP had predicted for a generation demonstrated the powerlessness of a labour movement without full control of the economy. 282 It is not suggested that the socialist economists of a notional socialist Britain would necessarily solve the economic problems of the country: the only guaranteed change under a socialist government would have been a socialist government and a socialist dominant ideology — and the expectation of a certain approach to economic and social questions. Without this economic and political control, the labour movement found its vanguard turned into its rearguard: the MBGB could organise the "widest and most disciplined" strike in British history" and yet be presiding over "probably the last phase of the British mining industry." 283 This "old Proletariat" had developed its organisation and a value system which was increasingly precluded by occupational and political factors from taking a position of leadership in the labour movement.

Meanwhile, the concentration of capital, presenting the challenge

281 Mark Starr, Trade Unionism: Past and Future (Plebs League, 1923) p.29.
282 Tom Quelch in The Call, 9.3.16.
suggested by Anderson as "If the British people do not publicly own the
Trusts, the Trusts will privately own the British people" had two aspects.\(^{264}\)

In the first place, the disparity of wealth continued: but the myth of
the similarity between private property and private possessions,
developed in the seventeenth century, could be used to suggest that a
measure of increasing prosperity carried commensurate sharing of property
and participation in political decision-making.\(^{285}\) As Churchill put it,

"in modern States, such as we see around us in the world today,
property is very widely divided. I do not say it is evenly
divided. I do not say it is fairly divided, but it is very
widely divided. Especially is that true in Great Britain."\(^{286}\)

Thus was the old ideology produced in defence of the new.

One feels that Snowden's emphasis on economic improvement simply
suggested a price at which the acquiescence of the proletariat in its own,
and others', exploitation could be secured. Put another way, this meant

"What you have to do is simply to take a share, and then go and
have a good time whilst the Russian railway workers, whom you do
not know, working in a country you never saw, speaking a language
you don't understand, earn your dividends by the sweat of their
brow."\(^{287}\)

Only under capitalist modes could property and possessions appear
synonymous - along with labour power and capital. Snowden and Macdonald
did not in fact make the point. But their arguments left the question
open as to whether it might not be so made. The strategy is that of re-
action to economic movements - the attitude which Gompers described

\(^{264}\) W.C. Anderson, The menace of monopoly (Manchester ILP n.d.) p.12.

\(^{285}\) C.B. Macpherson in The Theory of Possessive Individualism, passim.

\(^{286}\) Churchill, op. cit. p.77. But see the estimates in Cairncross, Home and
Foreign Investment (Cambridge, 1955) especially Table 20, p.86, in
photostat, Appendix to Chapter Two. The quotation from Churchill,
however, has the consistency of a myth - rather than a flatus vocis.

\(^{287}\) Connolly's criticism of the improvement of capitalism is in Socialism
with some amazement at Dublin, where

"The chairman spoke of there having been not one suspension of work (strike) in the previous year that was caused by the demand of a union. All the disputes originated in orders by employers for reductions in wages or through similar aggressions on labor."\textsuperscript{288}

The elaborate self-justification, the tactical subservience to considerations induced by the trade cycle and the reserve army - those two most potent class allies of the possessing class in the nineteenth century - gave cohesion and confirmed the sense of moral righteousness of the trade union movement: it also encouraged a high standard of professionalism in negotiation giving status and success to the movement in collective bargaining. But it also subordinated and divorced the question of improvement of conditions from that of control - and it tended to make the area outside union organisation a featureless desert.

In fact, however, the very efficiency of the system might show the devaluation of labour as part of the economic process:

"We have reached that position in industry where the six million persons either in or helping the army could be dispensed with - could be wiped out - and hardly be missed."\textsuperscript{289}

A government which would delay the unemployment insurance act's starting date to July 1st to avoid heavy winter claims from Scotland surely showed that not only the reform, but the administration of the reform was of vital and immediate interest to those in whose supposed interests it had been passed.\textsuperscript{290} It was value judgement only which could lead P.E. to suggest that "The country has been striking ever since Mr Lloyd

\textsuperscript{288} Gompers, op.cit. p.17. It was a nice tribute to the progress of the British system that Gompers could exclaim "In England it seems as if there is no place where you may go in which a poor fellow is not immediately upon your heels craving for something." p.42.

\textsuperscript{289} The Call, 9.3.16 (Tom Quelch).

\textsuperscript{290} Viscount Simon, Retrospect (1952) p.88.
George gave them the measure (the People's Budget) which, like its more pallid successors, the Insurance Act and the Land Campaign, was to be the panacea for every human ill. But that part of the dominant class and dominant ideology with which F.E. identified himself missed the point in believing that social reform was of actuarial interest only: when he suggested that the unrest was caused by class hatred, Free Trade, the growth of ostentation, and disillusion with the Labour Party, he called up the old dominant ideology of nineteenth century liberalism. He did not realise that Lloyd George was re-creating a dominant ideology on the basis of an industrial and working mass consuming society, in which the organised labour movement had no special political role, and in which English Toryism, if it was to retain its property, must lose its privileged position in the dominant class.

An ideology based on nineteenth century Toryism had a role as adjunct to social-imperialism, to which Lloyd George was an enthusiastic if late convert — but it could not be the ideology itself. If the workers got


292 Using "class" here in the sense described by Richard Centers in The Psychology of Social Classes. A study of class consciousness (Princeton, 1949):"psycho-social groupings, something that is essentially subjective in character, dependent upon class consciousness (i.e. a feeling a group membership), and class lines of cleavage may or may not conform to what seem to social scientists to be logical lines of cleavage in the objective or stratification sense" p.27. This description in fact accepts both the behaviour of classes, which may be due to false consciousness, and an undefined, but scientific, definition of class and class interests. These seem to be different ways of describing the latter basis of class: insofar as not all members of an objective class will behave equally class-consciously it is both reasonable to talk of this consciousness as being "subjective", just as it is also collective, and a more or less correct evaluation of class interest, interest-articulation. If Centers's description be used, this does not exclude the primacy of the objective sense of class.
concessions from this economy they would not be concessions from a socialistic democracy.

It is strange then that the orthodoxy of Snowden and Macdonald, that "Every class in history which has emancipated itself has done so by political means" should have been used as an argument against economic action, rather than as a strategy justifying and indeed demanding a similar vigour and improvisatory zeal - above all singling out the element of strikes from the unrest. Thus it was possible to argue that though the unrest was justified, strikes were disfunctional and counter-vailing: secondly, and alternatively, that any justification of strike action became "syndicalist", and that although strikes were acceptable, because inevitable, they were neither educative to the workers, nor informative to the socialist analyst. Snowden carefully pointed out that strikes looked large because of the federation of capital - "There have often been times of labour unrest quite as widespread." "Strikes in this country have always been for extremely modest demands" - again the bogey of basing a movement or a theory on trade union consciousness, when the whole internal mechanism of the collective consciousness was at worst a mystery, and at best a dim memory of quasi-Marxism, was used to classify syndicalism and the strike alike as traditional and merely "trade union." Thus, the impulse to strike might be true, and discontent "justifiable" - but syndicalism itself remained "fanatic and impracticable". The movement, said Snowden, was over by 1912: it

293 Snowden, Socialism and Syndicalism sup. cit. p.221.
294 ibid. p.221.
295 ibid. p.223.
"has already practically joined the previous similar outbursts of working-class impatience which are now only historic incidents."  

But just as it was possible to say that the young supported Syndicalism because it was in the nature of youth to do so, so it might be arguable too that this was one method of placing the unrest in a (transitory) historical setting - a case indeed of si la jeunesse savait, and si la vieillesse pouvait.  

Where Snowden feared lest a too-vigorous movement would disrupt the ILP and the whole labour movement - not only bringing the old divisions into new prominence, but making it possible for an attack from parliamentary draughtsmen or employers to destroy the trade unions section by section - the Syndicalists themselves never resolved the question of whether the social revolution would come by means of active minorities, or cumulative mass action. In a way, the problem was unreal: the strike, after all, even when sectional, involved men who did not at first believe they had a grievance - their grievance lay in the grievance of others: there was no discrepancy here between the minority and the mass. As with so much Syndicalist theory, the argument is based on description and intuition - and for that reason possibly a better guide to immediate events than theories based on a false analysis.

297 ibid. p. 247. Snowden's "answer" to Syndicalism could not have been more utopian and confident if he had been Joseph II: give freedom to men in co-operative concerns, reduce hours, organise the workers fully, and democratise local government, and Syndicalism would cease to exist. But of course!

298 Lenin indeed used this argument that only the young were revolutionary against the old - pointing out that restrictions on the suffrage affected the "young, more politically-conscious and active sections of the proletariat", just as the "representatives of the workers' parties have a more opportunist composition than the workers' parties themselves", because "under any suffrage in bourgeois society, the non-proletarian elements of the workers' parties - officials of workers' unions, small unions, small proprietors, office employees, and particularly the "intelligentsia" - specialise more readily in the "parliamentary profession". Pravda 191, 12.12.12. Collected Works, vol. 16. p. 438.
This flexibility re-emerged from the approach of men like Connolly:

"We neither exalt (physical force) into a principle nor repudiate it as something not to be thought of. Our position towards it is that the use or non-use of force for the realisation of the ideas of progress always has been and always will be determined by the attitude, not of the party of progress, but of the governing class opposed to that party"

he wrote in 1899. Interestingly, Connolly held at various times for tactical reasons many of the "prepared positions" of the British socialist parties, which they conceived of as either fundamental theory, or fundamental heresy. By 1914, he had slightly shifted the emphasis on the use of force to hold that

"To my mind an agitation to attain a political or economic end must rest upon an implied willingness and ability to use force. Without that it is mere wind and attitudising"

The fortunes of the British parties seem to follow the curve not of their effectiveness, but of the mere conjunction between their stated theory and the actual unrolling of events.

The role of theory as providing a means of self-maintenance, and internal cohesion, seems particularly strong in the socialist movement - after all, the functions of socialist parties in a society dominated by a capitalist class and capitalist modes appear to that class somewhat limited: they may protect the workers from "syndicalism", organise and discipline the labour force, provide a coherent and negotiable programme - but there can never be a question of the dominant class wholly accepting a party of theory opposed to its modes and ideology. Not so with trade unions: Warwick talks of the war accelerating "immensely the progress of the industrial side of the movement; whose support had to be courted by the coalition governments of, first, Asquith and then Lloyd

George."\(^301\) If indeed the Socialists were "merely the fighting head of the movement\(^3\), they were also responsible for giving it direction:\(^302\) for instance, "Nothing has kept the British Trade Unions so free from revolutionary aims, so averse from sabotage, as the interest in politics."\(^303\)

Only the SLP seems to have officially renounced the hope of joining in coalition with liberal or labour parties in parliament, and thus had nothing to lose by backing revolutionary economic manifestations. As for the others "No Government, from whatever Party it is drawn, could possibly submit to a General Strike\(^304\) - and this argument profoundly affected the ILP and BSP leaders. From this to Simon's declaration that the General Strike was unconstitutional because it attempted to "overawe Government" was but a short step.\(^305\) The legal and parliamentary modes might thus come to unite even the socialist leaders and P.E,

"no Unionist Home Secretary could or would hesitate for a moment to take a course which would preserve the community at the expense of the strikers. We are not going to let England starve because the dockers are dissatisfied with their conditions."\(^306\)

However, if the alternative to a strike was to be kept in permanent insecurity in a secure and prosperous industry, or to receive a rise in rates, with little, if any, greater security, it is hard to see how the implicit majoritarianism of the community versus strikers' interests can be the sole argument. The price exacted from the socialists was "responsible attitudes" within a political system whose dominant ideology


\(^303\) J.Clayton, The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain 1884-1924 (1926) p.149.

\(^304\) Viscount Swinton, I Remember, p.47.

\(^305\) Viscount Simon, op.cit. p.137.

\(^306\) F.E.Smith, op. cit. p.245.
only with reluctance had come to admit an obligation, a responsibility, for some of the unemployed, some of the underpaid, old, and sick.

In terms of social cost, the price of using constitutional procedures was beyond calculation. Likewise the belief in nationality involved an unforeseen and incalculable commitment to the physical losses of war, the suspension of trade union liberties in the war, and was an element in the separation of the British and Russian socialist movements after the war — as well as marking the collapse of the socialist super-state, the International.

What Macdonald and Hyndman had done was to concentrate on the traditional forms and justifications of the dominant ideology — failing to see that the tendencies they welcomed — Macdonald collaborating with the Liberals, Hyndman welcoming the trusts — were the forms which the new dynamic and ideology was taking. The lack of "dialectical perception" led both Hyndman and Macdonald to concentrate on the archaic aspects of strike action: in one sense, indeed, strikes had no place in trustified industry and large bargaining unions — but in another sense they showed the continuity of the domination under new forms, and showed its intensification. In the debate over nationalisation, this emerges clearly: to Snowden, there would be "chaos" if miners shared the management of their industry. 307 "Managerial efficiency" became the mystifying argument first against state management, and later against extending public ownership into areas of efficiently managed capitalist enterprise: Fred Henderson "de-mystified" the argument for public ownership: "we should be swindled and poisoned right and left if we did not inspect and pry and interfere"...state supervision "is only a temporary 307 Snowden, op.cit. p.230.
thing, a necessary device for keeping a little clearance in the constantly recurring muddle of life under private capitalism."  

Pollitt's formula that "the factory will be theirs to administer in the interests of the community", was, as Haywood's remarks in Russia showed, the uniting aspiration of the workers' movement, as distinct from the trade union, or socialist, movement, before and for a few years after, the war.

Connolly too saw this as an essential part of socialism: it "implies co-operative control by the workers of the machinery of production; in the absence of such control we have nought but State capitalism, as the Post Office at present." Fineberg made a similar point in 1916, that "Participation in the management of industry under present conditions means for Labour participation in its own exploitation." To call Fineberg's remarks "syndicalist" and Snowden's "socialist" is simple nominalism - but under the labels can be seen a difference involving Snowden, willy-nilly, in the new dominant ideology, and Fineberg in pursuit of that popular democracy based on direct responsibility for group and class interests at the point of exploitation, or production.

The CPGB in its origins and original members united the SLP "church" concept of party, with the broader and only partly Marxist elements of democratic revolution - what Jack Jones described as "Shop stewards, Cockneys and Clydesiders. Ex-ESP'ers; ex-ILP'ers; ex-SLP'ers, all of


309 E.Pollitt, Serving By Time, p.163. Bill Haywood's Book described how Haywood asked Lenin "if the industries of the Soviet Republic are run and administered by the workers?" to which Lenin replied, "Yes, Comrade Haywood, that is Communism." p.362.


311 The Call, 21.12.16.
had combined to form the Communist Party's most able team of 'national' speakers." 312 Before the CPGB began to look like one of the weaker links in the Comintern to many of its members, and before it took the oppositional stance, partly desired by its own members but strongly enforced by its opponents in all parties, there were those like Roberts of the Openshaw BSP who said in 1918 that the Russian revolution "recognised that it was absolutely and completely in line with the BSP." 313 Many continued to preserve the optimism of SLP particularism - "Naturally, I was a bit disappointed in the decision to affiliate with the Labour Party" wrote Bell in 1920. 314

One might say that the early history of the CPGB showed the difficulty of resolving other than on a tactical level, the question of how deep ran the split in the labour movement, and how compatible with parliamentary social democracy was the fusion of socialism, syndicalism, and direct democracy which underlay the CPGB's earliest propaganda. The contribution of the SLP'ers to the modes of the new party has probably been underestimated: but the rigidity of the SLP's attitudes must not be exaggerated, nor should it be forgotten that the CPGB was a fusion at national level of groups whose characteristic was their regional or sectional importance. As Murphy said of the Clyde Workers' Committee, it had been "essentially a local

313 BSP Conference Report, 1918.
314 The Communist, 5.8.20. Jones's Autobiography, sup.cit., gives a good picture of the difficulties of keeping in touch with the proletariat, and at the same time maintaining the status of a Comintern party. During the early twenties, the common sectarian, syndicalist, industrial unionist, militant proletarian background provided a common reference point for working-class members of the party - but the Soviet Union in the late twenties and thirties was no place from which to maintain this tradition in Britain (cf. Margaret McCarthy, Generation in Revolt, 1953).
movement”, and despite the growth of a loosely organised shop stewards' federation in the war, the formation of the CP in Britain marked the gathering together formally of groups who shared the same anti-reformist, militant attitudes, rather than of organisations oriented towards the Russian revolution.

Indeed, the post-war

"wave of Socialism, and a very strong reaction against Parliamentarism, helped by the almost inevitable weakness of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, where it confronted a vast coalition majority"

was in many respects similar to the pre-war wave. The disruption of international socialism, the conformism of many trade union leaders during the war — and the speed with which many former militants joined in attacking post-war and wartime strikes — as, for instance, Tillett's campaign in November 1918 against "Bolshevism, Capitalism, Militarism" — seemed to militants a gross and irremediable betrayal. The militant pre-history of the CPGB, stemming from a time when the unions were "open" to waves of mass popular discontent, predisposed the revolutionary democrats to regard the "closing" of the debate in the unions as a truncation and restriction of their true functions. As Bell said

"The Russian Revolution, in February, 1917, came to us as the culmination of a tremendous movement of mass discontent with the war. To me it was the opening of the direct revolutionary struggle with the forces of imperialism."

This process of clarification, however, was vitiated by a weakness in penetration, described by Guillebaud as

"The decisive factor in the victory of the Unions, apart from the discipline of the majority of Trade Unionists and their

315 J.T. Murphy, Preparing for Power, sup. cit. p.125.
317 quoted in Tsuzuki, H.M. Hyndman and British Socialism, sup. cit.
318 Bell, Pioneering Days, sup. cit. p.148.
natural reaction to the bitter attacks of the extremists, has been the failure of their opponents to create anything in the nature of a widespread regional organisation of Works Councils.”

Indeed, this failure may be said to have encouraged the conversion of the first proletarian Communist union militants into political Marxists — leading duly to the restatement of the same problem which Murphy found —

"We had roused great sections of the workers by the unemployed marches, mass conferences, extensive programmes about the wrongs which Capitalism imposed upon them, but their instincts and their experience would not permit them to vote against their own organisations.”

Often enough, militants came to Marxism to account for the slowness with which the "spontaneous" movements they had known were converted into effective political pressure — and of course, this slowness represented both a strengthening of the dominant ideology, and of the machinery of coercion — and the institutionalisation of older forms which spontaneous protest had taken. Thus the unrest at once legitimated the militancy of the rank and file and socialist movements, and at the same time left them subservient to spontaneity, growing increasingly embittered as no revolution came, and as trade union leaders themselves came to be incorporated into the dominant class.”

Yet, whatever the


320 J.T. Murphy, New Horizons, sup.cit. p.239.

321 Murphy described the defensive attitude thus engendered as "The smaller the party became the more we consoled ourselves with the quality that remained. A member of the Communist Party is not content to allow history to prove that it is composed of "the best workers", "the most clear-sighted, etc"; but he develops quite a conceit about it until he thinks of membership of the party much in the same way as the Catholic priesthood thought of the Church in the days of Joan of Arc. If you are in you are sure of your passport to heaven; if not you are damned. If you are in the Communist Party, you are regarded by the members as a cut above the rest of the people." p.182.
bitterness, whatever the tedium of the treadmill of tactical exercises and discussions of tactics - and however far from a Marxist analysis the populism of their labour history - there remained men in the labour movement who, despite the various forms of organisation which separated them, perceived in the movements of protest by the workers before and after the first world war, a challenge to the class structure and authority structure underlying liberal democracy. They had seen at close quarters the profound crisis in the ideology and domination of the bourgeoisie before the economic crisis of the late twenties, and saw behind the attempt of the grande bourgeoisie to collaborate with the petits bourgeois before they were overwhelmed by them, the attempts sometimes to crush, sometimes to court, organised labour. In this process, it was predictable enough that these signs of crisis should be taken for signs of inevitable collapse, and that some men should mistakenly take the liberal reforms before 1914 as being effectively designed to democratise the political system, and socialise the social system.
The Impact of the Labour Unrest, 1910-14, on the British Labour Movement

by John Fraser

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Chapter Four

"States to be curb'd, and thoughts to be confined...."

This chapter is concerned with the government's attempts to secure the co-operation or acquiescence of the domestic proletariat in the continuing dominance of the propertied class. The dominant class itself was in crisis, and this crisis was reflected in violent oscillations in policy between conciliation of the workers, and attempts to smash their organisations by force.

It was essential for the protection of their interests that the dominant class should escape the possibility of revolution at home while it was engaged in the erection of imperialism on as broad a scale as possible abroad. Consequently, although a policy of concession was pursued, a counter-revolutionary ideology and counter-insurgency force was also developed. Conciliation could not wholly conceal the fact that capitalism depended on the exploitation of the domestic, as well as the colonial and peripheral proletariat.

The impact of the unrest on the government is significant for three reasons. It both demonstrated and re-formed attitudes of politicians to the workers, to social reform, to socialism, and to the crisis in the dominant ideology and dominant class before 1914. It showed the fear of revolution, and of workers' democracy, which many believed must be the inevitable result of the development of trustified industry. Those Conservative diehards who believed that industrial and finance capitalism was sowing the dragons' teeth of socialism fought a desperate rearguard action before 1911 to preserve the old props of dominant ideology - revival of the countryside, of the House of Lords, opposition to bureaucracy and the standardisation this encouraged in the
field of political and class unity - with the example of German industrial and finance capital and the SPD as the fearful example. It showed too the first trials and tests of a new dominant ideology. The Agadir crisis, the ministerial interventions in strikes marked the first attempts to seek actively the co-operation of now the workers, now organised labour, in that blend of imperialism and social reform which would permit of a widened class basis to the political system, and yet allow the continuation of a system in which the aristocracy, the grande bourgeoisie, entrepreneurs and experts, and their class interests were not essentially restricted.

Interconnected with these features and indeed underlying them was the problem of accommodating a new dynamic, the development and export of the forms and contradictions of bourgeois capitalist society to overlay and dominate pre-existing global forms. Such a new "stage" in capitalism increased the tension in domestic class relations: for a time it intensified, in easily quantifiable terms, the exploitation of the domestic proletariat. What was at stake before 1914, then, was whether the contradictions would be felt most sharply on the periphery, in terms of movements for national self-determination and anti-colonial protest, or at home in the shape of an internationalist, revolutionary movement of the workers as a class. The form of the resolution of the domestic conflicts by the dominant class might be by the granting of reformist concessions or the implanting of an imperial-chauvinist ideology, or both. Again, the dominant class might be torn apart by its own internal crisis. The new dynamic, after all, presented an imaginative and material challenge to members of the dominant class whose own power and status was adversely affected by the very dynamism of the system they sought to
control. The obvious example of this was Ireland. In a sense the liberals correctly estimated that it did not pay to try to control Ireland. But they were forced to see, as the Ulster faction never needed to, that withdrawal from Ireland would be hailed as a victory for anti-imperialism, not for efficient book-keeping.

No dominant class, however, to use Lenin's phrase, falls unless it is dropped. The dominant class in Britain was not "dropped" for reasons examined in Chapter Three. It did not avoid domestic contradictions: it simply tried to produce ideological and political forms to mask their acuteness, and to ensure that it could count on social peace at home while it dealt with the contradictions on the periphery. In Britain, the proportions of big stick and soft talk, compared with the proportions on the periphery, were reversed.

This was a genuine crisis within the dominant system - but there was a sense in which the divisions were unreal: Lloyd George might demand great concessions from the landed aristocracy, and appear to stand for social reform as the polar opposite to Churchill's imperialism. But in fact, Lloyd George's interest in social reform, though humane enough, was superficial. He was prepared to adopt a liberal imperialism just as Churchill would show an occasional and ephemeral interest in social reform. The peers and the army might come near to mutiny in defence of what, after all, was an expendable class interest, but in fact, a more vigorous, developing, discreet and functional section of dominant class and class interests, inducing and accommodated within economic imperialism, was seeking a new formulation and defence of existing property relations and the new dynamic.

In the last resort, a party coalition was the dream of Lloyd George
and Churchill: the constitutional crisis could be resolved by the king, the army mutiny could be resolved by the sacrifice of the innocent in the service of the system. Men like Balfour and Asquith, much as they disliked many of the new accommodations, and distrusted the new forms of class collaboration, were wily and ambitious enough to accept that change was necessary in the service of continuity, and change under the guidance of the old dominant class was a good guarantee of the continuing dominance of that class and its modes. Difficulties arose because the elements of continuity could not altogether conceal the fact that an economic transformation was taking place apparently in flat contradiction to the old dominant ideology. This indeed became clear in the attempt of Chamberlain to expose the essence of the change to national industrial policy — a change from the notion of individually competing enterprises towards national capitalist planning, in the Tariff Reform campaign.

It is argued here that the seemingly contradictory policies of conciliation and coercion of the proletariat are but different and ultimately complementary approaches to the same need. This need, as stated above, was to neutralise the domestic proletariat, if possible to permit the old exploitation and tight class control, but if this proved too optimistic an aim, to secure the neutrality of the workers in the exploitation of their comrades overseas.

From the 1890s, the willingness of firms to spend money on strike-
breaking and union breaking seems to have increased.\(^1\) Ranging from
grandiose suggestions that employers should maintain their own
hermetic reserve army, to increased philanthropy, scientific
management, personnel management, attempts were being made before 1914,
in however fragmentary and desultory ways, to provide inducements
and compulsions to accept the managerial, dominant, title of capitalism.
In political terms, the process may be described in Henderson's words,
as reform

"to preserve vested interests by trimming them of some of their
worst excesses, and by making provision for dealing in hospital
fashion with the broken and wounded lives that litter the field
of their operations"

... - though this describes a process more deliberate than the
tentative and often experimental programme of pre-war government.\(^2\)

The connection between social reform and social peace was, after
all, not a simple cause and effect relationship:

"The Labour Unrest is the grim and scoffing laughter of human
nature at that rhetorical picture of what constitutes adequate
satisfaction for human life"\(^3\)

and any dominant ideology relying on "common sense", in Gramscian

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1 For example, the Employers' Parliamentary Council aroused the alarm
of the Railway Review, 13.1.1899, when it heard of the gift of
£35,000 to the Council from a War Implement firm. The engineering
dispute of the mid-90s seemed the first major attempt by federated
capital to fight the unions on a broad front - and as Collison's
book The Apostle of Free Labour (1913) showed, employers would go
to great expense to recruit a "reserve army" of blacklegs - not
to reduce wages, as the Cork 1908 strike showed, strikebreakers
received 30/- a week instead of the strikers' 22/6 - but to destroy
organisation (the ultimate reduction of wages whether of strikebreakers
or of broken strikers would be, in this process, something of a bonus
for the employers.)


3 ibid. p.150.
terms, ran the risk of a knife-and-fork, bread-and-cheese populist common sense cutting through the pretensions of a delimiting common sense.⁴ Again, there were always those prepared to maintain that changes in the class basis of parties and political systems, and in the modes of the dominant ideology, did not materially alter the condition of those who remained dominated.

"Under Free Trade and under Protection alike huge populations live sordid animal lives in the festering slums of our modern industrial cities, children go cold and hungry; armies of men and women slink through life in furtive criminality. If Free Trade London has its hooligans, Protectionist Paris has its apaches."⁵

Not only was there an element of the higher insanity about the "common sense", the "decency" and the "civilisation" of a state based on the wider consent of the petite bourgeoisie, the bureaucracy, but the disparity between the value-concepts of the political system and the perception of the operation of the system must always prevent the total acceptance of a dominant ideology by a non-dominant class. Even in societies where these disparities and discrepancies are closed by the provision of a special "popular catholicism" as it were, there develops a maquis of heresy, superstition, folk-grotesque, folk-obscenity, in which a "popular view" of politics, hierarchies, governments, flourishes.⁶ As

⁴ of A. Gramsci, The study of philosophy and of historical materialism, in The Modern Prince and other writings, (1957) p.58 et seq. Gramsci's concern was always with the distinctions suggested in this essay, e.g., "Philosophy is criticism, and the overcoming of religion and of common sense, and in this sense coincides with "good sense" which contrasts with common sense." p.60. Henderson's remark (note ⁵) transcends the "common sense" choice between tariff reform and free trade.

⁵ Fred Henderson, Socialism and Tariff Reform sup. cit. p.5.

⁶ of E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, passim, and Danilo Dolci, Poverty in Sicily.
Henderson pointed out,

"If nine hundred and ninety-nine men have their means of work owned by the thousandth man, and are at his mercy for the right to live, that, according to Mr Asquith, is liberty, power of initiative, the free play of intelligence and will, the right to use the faculties of our nature and the earnings of our hands and brain.

But if those thousand men jointly own their own means of work, and co-operate together as an organised community in carrying on their pursuits and activities, that is the most sterilising despotism the world has ever seen!"7

In gauging the government's reaction to the unrest, it is hard to distinguish between a mood of *déjà vu*, a belief that the revolution was at last coming - or was again abortive as so often before -, and the literalness underlying Churchill's statement that "conditions which have undoubtedly occurred in the last week have been without any previous experience in this country."8 Naturally, there is an element of the justification of a policy by drawing attention to novel features in the unrest which may account for some of the wilder charges and fears after 1910.

There are two levels of consciousness here - the old gentlemanly one of Rufus Isaacs, telling Masterman that he proposed to study the working-class, as "he had never given the subject much thought",9 and the quickening awareness that a new closure in the ranks of the dominant class was being effected. Lloyd George and Grey "are in sympathy regarding the

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7 Fred Henderson, Socialism and Liberty, sup. cit. p.15.

8 Parliamentary Debates, 22.8.11, col.2286.

9 Lord Riddell, sup. cit., p.55. This was a far from neutral gentlemanliness. Asquith told Riddell and the Archbishop of Canterbury, 27.2.12, "Undoubtedly the position is very serious and will be more so unless the gentlemen of England bestir themselves." ibid. p.40.
Labour question and the foreign policy".\textsuperscript{10} True, there might be a distinction still to be made between the mere conjunction of guns and butter and the use of butter to lubricate the guns - but the coalescence of these policies was of immediate importance. Such coalescence would aim to stress coincidence, pluralism, whilst effectively aiming to control mere coincidence. Again, it was the Tariff Reform campaign which showed the functional links between bread-and-butter questions, economic and foreign policies.

Agadir was the test of the loyalty of the railwaymen, and of the new political and class alliance: the language of Grey and Lloyd George came closer into resemblance. Grey said of Agadir,

"peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure. National honour is no party question. The security of our great international trade is no party question."\textsuperscript{11}

The following year, Lloyd George confided to Macdonald that "continued Labour troubles might seriously prejudice our international trade."\textsuperscript{12}

The new modes were well put forward by Lord Buckmaster after the war:

"We are all willing, just as we were in time of war, to make sacrifices - not the cheap and easy one of sacrificing somebody else's property, but a united sacrifice in which all join - if we can, consistently with the maintenance of our national industries, give some expression to the demands of the labouring people."\textsuperscript{13}

By the end, this is coming to sound very much like the splendid letter to The Times, quoted by Wallas, of 1916: "Our nine household servants

\textsuperscript{10} ibid. p.54.


\textsuperscript{12} Lord Riddell, op. cit. p.53.

\textsuperscript{13} Lord Buckmaster in "The Industrial Unrest". 7 speeches delivered in the House of Lords, Feb-March 1919, pp.7-8.
have agreed to give up meat of any sort for their breakfast, and the money saved is invested in War Loan."\textsuperscript{14}

There is, of course, an element of old ideology, expressive rather than purposive, in this: but there is too an element of the specific and the irreversible. Such defeats and victories for instance, as De Leon alluded to when he called the worst in a

"long series of Gracchian blunders... the measure of Gaius for the free distribution of corn. By that act he reduced the Roman proletariat to beggars. Beggars can only desert and compromise: they cannot carry out a revolution."\textsuperscript{15}

Social reform, it is suggested, neither caused nor stopped the unrest; instead, it is argued that to the unrest, social reform was irrelevant save as a rationalisation, an ideological "common sense" justification for successful counter-revolutionary preparations and a consolation prize for the workers - now more, now less, satisfactory.

However, to say that the working-class tended to lose the games played is of less significance in this case than to stress that they played them under the rules of the gentlemen of England, within structures and culture likewise imposing the conditions under which amelioration should be sought. As Kirkwood said of the Clydesiders in Parliament, "Alas, that we were able to do so little."\textsuperscript{16} The form of the building up of the new ideology naturally made it harder to achieve a democracy based on the previously dominated groups. True, the attempt to find a new base to the parties' ideology, the vague aspiration to form a united

\textsuperscript{14} FWH in The Times, 19.4.16. quoted by Wallas, Our Social Heritage, sup. cit. p.91.

\textsuperscript{15} Daniel De Leon, Two Pages from Roman History (SLP n.d.) p.47

front against a socialist opposition which did not then exist, increased
the precariousness of the system.

"Mr A is really an old-fashioned Radical of the Manchester school,
who is leading a heterogeneous band of followers in which the
more active groups are bent on breaking up the traditions of the
party"17:

both parties accused the other of being untrue to its traditions and to
the dominant ideology - to Balfour the Liberals were this
"unscrupulous and revolutionary Government",18 while from the "evil"
of Protection to the undoubted illegality of the appeals to the Orange
faction,19 the formation of a new ideology in the Conservative party
showed how difficult the process was so long as the impression had to be
given that the facade fronted the same edifice.

Indeed, the agony of the re-birth of a dominant class in a
parliamentary system recalls the visual of so many of Punch's pre-1914
bathing jokes - the bather changing his clothes and thus, while
fitting himself for a new environment, leaving himself vulnerable.
Little wonder, then, that in the midst of the accusations that the old
parties were revolutionary and unconstitutional, the policy towards
labour should be one at times of eager collaboration, at others of
Bourbon panic. Lloyd George may be said in himself to represent that
element of the petite bourgeoisie or the bourgeoisie moyenne which gave
the Liberal party the advantage that "geographically, the Liberal Party

17 Lord Riddell, op. cit. p.48.

18 Balfour to Lord Newton, 27.7.11, quoted in A. Wilson Fox, The Earl of

19 cf J.J.Horgan, The Grammar of Anarchy. (The Complete Grammar of
Anarchy by Members of the War Cabinet and their Friends (1919)) passim.
of 1906 was a good deal more broadly based than was the Labour Party of 1945. But he consistently proposed that "the land question is the real issue", that "The life of the countryside was wilting away and we were becoming dangerously over-industrialised. Excessive indulgence in alcoholic drinks was undermining the health and efficiency of a considerable section of the population." This would not seem to be a feasible explanation of the unrest especially as the consumption of drink was falling before 1914.

This quiet analysis of the country's wrongs, and an early sympathy with strikers contrasted sharply with the avowed counter-revolutionaries, and those who were simply afraid of disruption.

"It is not only police etc. but also reserves of food, transport etc. which may soon be needed"."if there is a breakdown then want and scarcity may be within sight very soon and when it is begun the progress, bread riots, etc. may be very sudden and grow at an incredibly rapid rate in number and intensity." In this atmosphere, the rudderless intellect of Churchill plus Lloyd George could lead to alarming changes of policy - and also to considerable flexibility and improvisation. Braithwaite remarked of the report of the Commission on the Poor Law, that "I don't think he (Lloyd George) had taken any real interest in the Poor Law Report; it was not until the bill was well on its way that so far as I know he started looking at it, and I gathered that he had not read a word of it before." This excitement to produce new bases from which to manage the development

20 Lord Riddell op. cit. p. 63.
21 David Lloyd George, War Memoirs vol. i. (1935) p. 35.
of capitalism and forestall a notional proletarian revolution must not
obscure the fact that as a matter of routine and often immediate concern,
fear of revolution and precautions against it were a major function and
preoccupation of the Imperial Government, and of the parties which composed
it. These attitudes to revolution and the proletariat were only in part
derived from the historiography of the nursery - the terror of the first
French Revolution - they came also from the fear of the loss of empire by
revolution, the loss of allies - of external and internal security.

Lloyd George himself clearly regarded himself as producing an effect
calculated to change the degree of participation in parliamentary democracy,
and apparently to alter the class basis of that democracy:

"When you find, as I did, that the House of Commons is apathetic
and lifeless, you must stir public opinion by violent means, so
that the public will react upon the legislature."\(^{25}\)

Again, "Asquith's declaration for a minimum wage sounded the death-
knell of the Liberal Party in its old form":\(^{26}\) to say that the discussion
centred on social reform, women's suffrage and so on - the cabinet
"never believed that Labour would assert itself in this way"\(^{27}\) - should
not conceal the fact, which will become plain later, that only the labour
unrest proposed that the exploited class should establish its own
political dominance using new institutional forms, such as the union and
the trades council. Only the labour unrest brought to political notice
men concerned with overthrowing or replacing the old system, not

\(^{25}\) 17.2.12. Lloyd George. Quoted in Riddell, op.cit. p.38. cf too Lloyd
George on the peers, in October 1909, "They are forcing revolution.
But the Lords may decree a revolution which the people will direct." p.60 of Jenkins, op.cit.

\(^{26}\) Lloyd George in Riddell, op.cit. p.42 (2.3.12)

\(^{27}\) ibid. p.42.
attempting to repair it, still less to work within the modes of its dominance. Under this challenge Lloyd George's sympathies "are not entirely Labour": but like Churchill, his resistance to the claims of politically active and conscious organised labour was explicit. This mixture of warning to labour -

"There are millions of persons who would certainly lose by anything like a general overturn, and they are everywhere the strongest and best organised millions\textsuperscript{29}\textsuperscript{28} - and an attempt to resolve social conflict through the already existing channels is seen in Churchill's statement that

"The cause of the Liberal Party is the cause of the left-out millions; and because we believe that there is in all the world no other instrument of equal potency and efficiency available at the present time for the purposes of social amelioration, we are bound in duty and in honour to guard it from all attacks, whether they arise from violence or from reaction.\textsuperscript{30}\textsuperscript{29}\textsuperscript{28}

In fact, the form of dominant ideology proposed by Lloyd George was not practicable in terms of the survival of two bourgeois parties. He proposed a party to embrace class - the bourgeoisie - and mass, the atomised mass of workers without class character or politics. Possibly he reached this position by the same process that made Churchill overestimate the collectivism of the masses, and also the productive capacity of contemporary industry, and its social priorities:

"As we were driving home from Walton Heath, Winston pointed to the teeming population in the streets and said, 'I wonder what they are mostly interested in?' I said, 'Earning their living and football.' I told him about the immense sales of the football editions and the great interest in pigeon racing."

29 Churchill, op. cit. p.77 (Dundee 11.10.06)
30 ibid. p.79.
mentioned that on some Saturdays in the summer £2,000,000 worth of birds were in the air. He said, 'I must tell the Prime Minister about the pigeons.'
"He spoke enthusiastically of the day when the working classes would live in fine blocks of dwellings with central cooking and heating, swimming baths, etc., subsidised by the State or municipality. I responded, 'I think most people prefer a comfortable little house of their own. They don't like being herded together, nor do they like interference and dictation.'" \(^3\)

These terms are most indicative: Riddell perceived that the core of the philanthropy here was a desire to maintain domination over the working class — providing for them all that their own organisations could offer. Capitalism as a productive system might be able to provide this — but in its personal and political aspects it neither could, nor did it need to, sacrifice its immediate interests in the dubious task of supplying the workers with all they needed — golden chains. In fact, the new as well as the old dominant ideology must appear to be plural, be diffuse, and incorporate elements at once diverse and conflicting: if Lloyd George proposed reforms acceptable both to monopoly capitalism and the petite bourgeoisie, there was a sense in which the interests of at least some petits bourgeois were threatened by the spread of centralised capitalist enterprise — not because it was capitalist, but because it was on so large a scale, while it may also be argued that the growth of the social services produced a standardisation, a common level of aspiration, which made both domination and the resistance to domination simpler. \(^3\) From this creation by bureaucracy of mass politics still capable of transmitting frayed ends

\(^3\) Lord Riddell, op. cit. p.22

\(^3\) In the sense that the units on both sides were larger: inversion of the dominant system became no easier.
of class consciousness comes Churchill's uncertain balancing, quoted above, of the "left-out" against the counter-revolutionary millions. To create a mass hungry for reforms might indeed be to create a many-mouthed monster greedy for bourgeois privileges. Tampering with the dominant ideology, even when it had become disfunctional, might be dangerous: as Balfour put it, the Liberals were running "an unscrupulous and revolutionary Government". The Liberal party was the victim of the ideological revision it undertook in its hour of triumph, while the Conservatives, who had avoided such public rethinking and innovation, survived at least nominally. The reorganisation in the parties did have a common ideological origin:

"The influence of Chamberlain was the earliest and most formative in (Lloyd George's) political education, though he was never a Republican, as Chamberlain had been." 55

To find in imperialism and social reform the basis for class collaboration was more of a journey to his origins, in fact, than a departure for Lloyd George. Possibly the unrest was the occasion for Lloyd George to perceive the dangers of an old-style unregulated capitalism relying for its legitimation on an economic insecurity which was no longer useful or tolerable - just as Churchill seems to have drawn from the unrest a conviction that there was an organic connection between the unrest and social reform, that the enemy was socialism which gave impetus to reformism and must be fought at all times.

and by any means.

The confusion among the Liberals, the disaffection of young radical Liberals from the traditions of the party, was widely observed; Hyndman, for instance, said:

"For what is Liberalism? What are its principles? What is its programme? Who are its real leaders? Do you know? I am quite sure I don't. Though Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman is the nominal leader — there are others! Whilst as to principles or programme, the whole party, from Dan (Lord Rosebery) even unto Beersheba (Lloyd George), is barren and desolate."

Characteristically, Hyndman identified the emerging consensus — "at least Protectionist Imperialism is a policy — Free Trade is not" — as an ideology not merely representing "leading" ideas but also incorporating Socialism within it. This was to mistake doctrine for reality.

Lord Robert Cecil spoke for the old ideology when he said of old age pensions that they were "an enormous gift of money to a very large section of the working classes who were possessed of very large electoral power." Asquith, with his complaint that social reform could be seen "as a luxury or as a necessity, but in any case it is expensive" took the middle line: never in full sympathy with the humanitarian arguments for social reform, he does not seem to have accepted that hallowed type of argument used by Sir Frederick Banbury, that the trade boards were socialist devices, "to screw up by

34 H.H.Hyndman etc., Liberalism and Labour. (1903, repr. from Reynolds Newspaper) p.11.

35 Lord Robert Cecil, House of Commons, 15.6.06. In Carlton Hayes, British Social Politics. Materials illustrating contemporary state action for the solution of social problems (Boston, 1913) p.150

36 Asquith, House of Commons, 18.4.07. in ibid. p.135.
artificial methods the position of the workers. Asquith indeed phlegmatically accepted the need for ideological revisionism, without accepting that social reform must necessarily lead to the resolution of social conflict, or to the strengthening of domination - the two polar attitudes of Lloyd George and Churchill. Churchill, for instance said of the labour exchanges that

"by dispensing with the need of wandering in search of work (they) will render it for the first time possible to deal stringently with vagrants."  

Naturally, the degree of perceptiveness and urgency with which party leaders reacted to the unrest varied. Blunt complained of Balfour:

"I find him singularly unaware of current events, as he still refuses to read newspapers, expecting others to supply him with news of what goes on".

But whether or not they consciously saw what was happening, the unrest did mark a test of assumptions about social reform and its relation to the defeat of working-class politics. The lenience of the government to the official claims of labour in 1911 had hardened in 1912: the harshness towards the ochlos when it took matters into its own hands contrasted sharply with the ministerial claims to impartiality, and belief in negotiation. When Asquith refused to name the 5 and 2 in the 1912 bill, it was probably just, whatever other considerations he had, that this demonstrated his "lack of knowledge of, and of sympathy with, the

37 Sir Frederick Benbury quoted in ibid. p.225.
38 Churchill, House of Commons, 19.5.09 quoted in ibid. p.196.
39 W.S.Blunt, op. cit. p.137.
life of the worker." However, if the government's policy was to encourage specific employers to make concessions on the grounds that they did themselves and their class an indirect service, the government was unlikely to coerce the employers, or indeed to curtail those management rights they shared with other employers in other industries. In any case, while employers could fix prices, a government fixing wages by law was simply deferring its decision on the degree and source of planning and direction to be undertaken. Again, though ostensibly the fear of revolution was a fear of socialist revolution, the real and immediate fear was of a popular insurrection - a rising of the purely conscious mass, of whose real thoughts and power all organisation, all theory, all literature seemed to be a mediation. Perhaps this "mass" in whose name social reform was justified was a myth. A reality however seemed to lie in the "Syndicalism" of the unrest. Liberal ministers feared lest traditional categories could not explain a movement which seemed to be made possible by the horizontal and vertical extension of industry, the growth of a world imperialist-dominated market, a latent mass-consuming proletariat policed and administered by the petite bourgeoisie - and yet to remain implacably and increasingly hostile to these developments. It seemed as if, in the absence of a Marxist-socialist bogey, the very mass had "gone critical", gone Syndicalist. It was as if, having subsumed the socialism of the Labour

40 Brockway, op. cit. p. 40

41 That is, it might be possible to neutralise the proletariat by legislating for it as if it were a mass, an ochlos, in the hope that this would indeed politicise organised labour and the working-class - not to de-functionalise the class, but to de-politicise it, incorporate it into the dominant ideology. But "Syndicalism", or its ghost, appearing in the strikes before 1914, made it seem as if, having avoided a socialist revolution, the government would have to face an insurrectionary ochlos, immune, like some Frankenstein's beast, to the allurements of co-partnership and social reform.
Party, the two major parties discovered in mass populism a force more revolutionary than any socialism. The Liberal and Conservative politicians, in the act of refurbishing a dominant ideology - parts of which, like the tariff reform campaign, had been disastrously unpopular - briefly saw that the coercive aspect of such an ideology was either causing, or irrelevant to, the unrest. The more they did, the worse things became. The unrest was, after all, a broad-based protest against domination and neglect - as much a critique of the inefficacy of old or new dominant ideologies as a protest against their enforcement.

The attitudes to labour in the unrest are thus ambiguous: ministers could negotiate with and secure the co-operation of, organised labour - but organised labour had an actual organisation and ideology which, however legitimate and reasonable its activity was, represented an existing challenge to the political system and its political leaders. Again, the mass's interests legitimated the government's existence: but - and this was worse than organised opposition - the mass in full revolt against all non-legitimated authority became an anti-mass - the antithesis of bourgeois parliamentary democracy - violent and anarchic. Nor indeed did the central mystery of the life and hard times of the British worker come to be penetrated before 1914. Churchill proposed that

"no blockade by a foreign enemy could have been anything like so effective in producing terrible pressure on these vast populations as the effective closing of those great ports, coupled with the paralysis of the railway service" 42

42 Churchill, House of Commons Debates, 22.8.11 (col. 2327). This argument could be used to justify the use of force against strikers - but in that case, strikers could either desist or revolt: the government must therefore be committed to developing some method of preserving security, and allowing wages to rise.
leading irresistibly to the argument that the workers must be "protected" from the results of their own economic organisation — and that strikers represented a threat to the community comparable to that of attempted invasion — a point which Le Queux had earlier brought out. Thus, before the Russian revolution Churchill could produce an argument that national defence and the defeat of militant socialism were indistinguishable.

In fact, the analysis of Syndicalism was of prime importance here: "Syndicalism" might appear as a threat of the emergence of an articulated society within the old —

"The railway strike was emphatically a Syndicalist's strike; it was a sympathetic and a general strike. It was not a strike because individual men and workers had any grievance." 43

This implied that the mass of the workers were in the grip of a virulent political disorder even beyond socialism. Lloyd George however preferred to dissociate movement from theory:

"I cannot see men of very great weight in the Labour movement who have committed themselves to it," he said, implying that the task of associating labour leaders with the dominant class had been accomplished, that counter-revolutionary measures might re-unite rank and file with their leaders. 44 Certainly this was how Henderson judged that the shrewder politicians in the old parties were working, though he felt the policy underestimated the determination of labour leaders to share in decision-making, not be bought off with flattery and sinecures:

43 ibid. Lord Robert Cecil, 19.3.12. (col. 1767)
44 ibid. Lloyd George, 19.3.12 (col. 1776)
"The tone of their private references to the Labour Party was somewhat less respectful than that of their platform utterances: and showed, as anyone intimate with the private intercourse of politicians at that stage in the development of affairs will remember, that the capitalist parties believed they had fully taken the measure of the Labour representatives in the House of Commons, whom they regarded as a handful of easily flattered and easily managed futile men, trapped in the Parliamentary machine and overcome by their unaccustomed surroundings and position, pathetically insisting on the non-revolutionary character of their movement and putting on the airs of that staid respectability and practical business capacity which their opponents daily assured them they possessed in so admirable a degree."

The role of the army in Ireland, the violence of some suffragettes, showed that disruption might not come solely from the workers: but the use of troops to counter violence less co-ordinated and less in scope coming from a great deal larger number than the suffrage movement shows the relative size of fear. Attitudes like that of Simons that unrest marked "the fundamental disintegration of the very bases of political order - a disappearance of free exchange and of the state's monopoly of coercion" represented the danger felt to threaten the community.

To resolve this conflict, the growth of systematic industrial negotiation might be one answer: scientific management, "the plan which delivers to them some share of the advantage accruing from its operation will be the permanently successful one" might, given time, divert the attention of the rank and file away from their powerlessness and back to shop floor negotiation.

45 Fred Henderson, the Labour Unrest, sup. cit., p.127.
47 Scientific Management in American Industry (N.Y. 1929) p.445
"unless some satisfactory arrangement be made for representation of the workpeople in shop negotiations a large section of the shop stewards proper will make common cause with the revolutionary group." 48

Again, the attempt to raise the level of aspiration by means acceptable to the dominant class might take the line of Northcliffe — "Who is this Man-in-the-Street? He's tomorrow's £1,000-a-year man." 49

The older parties did not simply have to rely on the state machinery of negotiation and coercion which they operated without co-ordination and without consistency before 1914. Not only were there attempts made in industry to improve management relations, but the unexpectedness of the unrest pointed to the unpreparedness of organised labour for such a movement. There was a reluctance on the part of its leaders to test the strength and morale of the labour movement based in part on the fundamental belief that the labour movement's task was to lessen, not risk an increase in misery, and in part on the belief attributed to J.H. Thomas that the Triple Alliance was "a kind of atom bomb: a useful weapon in reserve for the negotiator but a very dangerous one to handle." 50

Both sides realised that in fact the ostensible issues for which national strikes might be called were out of proportion to the strength of the organisations running the strike — the NUR, for instance, was better organised for a revolutionary stoppage than for a strike for revision of rates.

Policy at the level of negotiation was necessarily more flexible than at the level of legislation: this demonstrates both the difference between short term and intermediate objectives, and the socio-economic

48 Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest (1917-18, vol. vx) Cd 8666
50 G. Blaxland, J.H. Thomas: a life for unity (1964) p.120.
orientation of ministers. There is a clear continuity between
Asquith's refusal to fix specific minimum wage rates for the miners,
and Lloyd George's coal policy:

"The chief villain of the piece was Lloyd George. He promised
to do whatever the Sankey Commission recommended. He was
told by Big Business that he must not nationalise. He did not
keep his promise. All the trouble since 1919 has been trouble
arising out of that broken pledge." 51

The convention that troops did not infringe management rights to maintain
a stoppage arose from explicit social and political attitudes.
Masterman maintained that Churchill had "rather a whiff-of-grapeshot
attitude towards these matters": in 1912, he "was becoming less and less
Radical in his sympathies, and was practically in a 'shoot 'em down'
attitude." 52 The Prime Minister is "not fond of Labour at any time." 53
Men like Balfour did not necessarily take a Churchillian "hard" line,
but were more explicitly counter-revolutionary: "The country has never
in its long and varied history had to face a danger of this nature and
this intensity." 54

The change in attitudes to an awareness of the interests of imperialism
and its class base is particularly marked after the railway strike: the
1912 coal strike was taken as sign of the cumulativeness of the movement:
"If there is a strike, there will be terrible bloodshed in South Wales, I
fear." 55 Riddell himself constantly suggested that the aim of and the

52 Lucy Masterman, op. cit., pp.205 and 234.
53 Ibid. p.234.
54 Balfour, quoted in Le Bon's, The Psychology of Revolution (tr. 1913)
p.321.
55 Asquith, quoted in Riddell, op. cit. 27.2.12, p.40.
cure for the unrest was to divert a share of the profits of industry, that rather than a basically anti-capitalist mood, it was a desire for a redistribution of the benefits of capitalism. This casting about for clues to the origins of the unrest, and the range of choice for policies of resolution is nicely shown in a conversation reported by Lord Riddell:

"I said, 'The working classes are determined to have a greater share of the profits of industry, and will eventually turn to the political machine to accomplish their purpose'. Masterman replied that I overrated their desire for more money, and that their well-being could be secured in other ways, although he did not underrate their determination for more wages."

"Dalziel said that Labour would be the predominating force in ten years, either under the name of the Liberal Party or some other name. He instanced the enormous growth of trade unionism in his own constituency and the improved organisation of trade unionism all over the country. Masterman seemed rather staggered and said, 'We are talking like people must have talked before the French Revolution.'"

In this attempt to re-cast the dominant ideology so as to give a greater or lesser role to organised labour in the counsels of the dominant class, one can see clearly a school of thought believing that the working class must either be opposed by a united and frankly counter-revolutionary dominant class, or that one or both of the older parties must incorporate and restrain the working class within its programme and ideology - preferably as a group of individual citizens rather than as organised pressure groups.

Masterman, for instance said,

"I don't know exactly what I am, but I am sure I am not a Liberal. They have no sympathy with the people."

Lloyd George made a similar attempt to speculate on the sort of programme

56 ibid. p.39.
57 ibid. p.69 (15.6.12)
to appeal to the workers:

"The Labour Party have never made any real progress. They have never made an appeal to the imagination. You can never run a great political campaign on wages. Your 5s and 2s is all very well, but the appeal is too close at hand. It is too sordid. Individually, people are selfish. In the mass they are prepared to look to the future and support measures which will benefit coming generations." 58

In the event, the Labour Party seemed to be the one which would pursue trade union interests with least demand upon trade union autonomy. It was a party, after all, closely linked to a bourgeois party. It was avowedly parliamentary and gradualist, and its leaders vigorously defended their lack of success in Parliament before a disgruntled rank and file. It would be wrong to consider it a party of capital, but at worst its leader merely repeated old petit bourgeois radical slogans, disavowing any claim to be the champion of an advanced class. On the contrary Macdonald made it painfully clear that he wished only that the proletariat catch up with the rest. The Party showed little sign that it wished to, or could, impose a unity and socialist direction to the combined efforts of trade unions.

In detail, there was considerable difference in the cabinet as to the concessions it was necessary and desirable to make to the working class:

"From what Hekenna says there is a great difference of opinion in the Cabinet over Lloyd George's proposed minimum agricultural wage and revision of land rating and taxation. Apparently a section of the Cabinet are not sympathetic towards the working classes." 59

Thus, even the revival of the radical campaign against the landed interest seemed too much of a yielding to pressure: not only on the grounds that

58 ibid. p.76. (2.7.12)

the land campaign threatened vital class interests and class unity, but
that any concession to "unrest" showed the weakness of the dominant
class.

It would be fair to say that although Lloyd George was not insensitive
to the possibilities of a revolution, he believed it could be prevented
by a rise in money wages: Masterman, for instance

"propounded the theory that revolution might be nearer than we
thought. He also drew a comparison between the state of affairs
that preceded the French Revolution and that which obtains today.
I said the people wanted more wages, which they meant to have.
They would not be put off by doles. I ridiculed the imminence
of a revolution. Lloyd George agreed with me, and said he
thought the chances 'more than twenty to one, but you must not
forget the one.' He added, 'It is only fair to Riddell to say
that he has for years pointed out the impending labour troubles
and strongly advocated the living wage.'"60

Indeed, from Lloyd George's point of view, the problem was how to
compel the guardians of the political system, including those in the
House of Lords, to make adjustments to social legislation commensurate
with the increase in the productive capacity of industry, and, if necessary,
to make a political alliance with individuals from the working-class, as
well as representatives of the new and growing sources of wealth.

In 1914, for instance, he pointed to the difficulties of this:

"when I settled the first railway strike I wrote to Campbell-
Bannerman saying that Parliament should exact a minimum wage
for railway workers. He sent my letter on to Asquith, who
replied that it was impossible. I have the letter somewhere.
I don't know where it is,....I remember that Asquith would not
hear of it."61

60 ibid. p.213 (24.5.14)

61 ibid. p.214. (24.5.14) As will be shown below, many of these
differences in policy are resolved by the development of military
forces - nicely paralleling Gramsci's three stages of development
- of economic, political, and finally military forces - (in The
Modern Prince), a development which clearly aligns the dominant
class and its government with a policy wholly subordinate to the
role of armed defence. One can see the process in Lloyd George as
he became circumscribed as a social reformer by his military allies, of whom his Conservative and Lloyd George Liberals were simply appendages: "Sir Henry (Wilson) was inclined to hope that the triple strike would take place, for he felt convinced that the struggle must come and he doubted whether its postponement would in the end prove of advantage to the nation." (Sir C.E. Callwell. Field-Marshall Sir Henry Wilson. His Life and Diaries, vol. 11, 1927, p.266). (October 1920) In March, 1921, Wilson as CIGS said "I told him (Lloyd George) that if he would allow me to bring back 4 battalions from Silesia, possibly the remaining 3 from the Rhine, 3 from Malta, 1 from Egypt, and if possible 2 from Constantinople, we ought to be able to hold both England and Ireland in the event of a triple strike - failing which, i.e. the return of the above battalions, I would only be able to hold England at the cost of losing Ireland, and I had already arranged a plan with Macready to take 10 battalions from him." p.283. On April 7, 1921, "I had to explain that we could not guard Silesia and South Wales at the same time. The Pocks hate this." p.286. Wilson's attitude was that "I became increasingly suspicious of Lloyd George and whether he is not trying to shepherd England into class war. In the last 18 months (since the Armistice) he has not once stood out, right out, against the Unions, and as a consequence the forces of disorder are steadily strengthened, whilst the forces of order are weakening. There are three sorts of wars: i) Wars between nations; ii) Religious wars; iii) Internal, i.e. class wars. And it is into the last that we are drifting under Lloyd George." p.232 (2.4.20) On September 10, 1920, he noted that at last the government had decided to act, to govern: "My case is pretty clear. I am told to get ready for war with the Triple Alliance and Council of Action. I find there is collusion with Kameneff. Propaganda amongst the troops by the Daily Herald. In my plans I propose to withdraw 4 battalions from the Rhine and 10 from Ireland." p.262. Compared with Wilson, the Macready (Gen. the Rt. Hon. Sir Nevil Macready, Annals of an Active Life (n.d. vol. i.) of pre-war strikes was less explicit and more moderate in his contempt for political freedom (Wilson spoke of "this cursed General Election" (p.154), and of Ireland, 29.9.20, proposed that "If these men ought to be murdered, then the Government ought to murder them" (p.265)); but for all his dislike of the Welsh mine-managers and owners, he clearly recognised the political and social implications of his employment.
Although Lloyd George had a sympathy for those in bad working and living conditions, the superficiality of his interest was also noted:

Braithwaite mentioned that

"I don't think he had taken any real interest in the Poor Law Report: it was not until the bill was well on its way that so far as I know he started looking at it, and I gathered that he had not read a word of it before."62

However, this warm opportunism, based on a belief in his own capacity for and the universal applicability of negotiation, show a contact with the real world far from the playfulness of Balfour's Toryism - "By the way, what exactly is a trades union?"63 Lloyd George's sympathy, however, did not extend to identification with the strikers:

"The men are the damnedest fools"..."I have got them everything they want and yet they are now sticking out for Recognition before the strike ends! It is not possible."64

Churchill quite clearly saw strikes as a contest between government and workers, in which he unequivocally took the side of the governing class:

"The men have beaten us"..."We cannot keep the trains running. There is nothing we can do. We are done!"

and on the settlement of the strike remarked

"I'm very sorry to hear it. It would have been better to have gone on and given these men a good thrashing."65

Masterman seems to have accepted the legitimacy of protest in the mass without identifying himself with the political or economic organisations of the workers: his awareness of the social distance between classes was

62 Braithwaite, op. cit. p.72. Quoted on page 355 of this chapter.
63 Lucy Masterman, op. cit. p.61.
64 ibid. p.207.
65 ibid. p.208.
such that he could not conceive of himself bridging it.

"Next to this 'sentimentality', so astonishing to Europe - because so irrational - comes the invincible patience of the English workman. He will endure almost anything - in silence - until it becomes unendurable. When he is vocal, it is pretty certain that things have become unendurable." ⁶⁶

The unrest thus appears spontaneous, in the sense that it arises from unorganised and unorganisable areas of existence under capitalism - or rather, that capitalist organisation and ideology seemed to have failed in these areas, not being replaced by a socialist ideology. Masterman does not seem to have found in the proletarian life style, or in the capitalist system, a foretaste of, or a residue of, socialist ideas: an increase in wages would lead to "a day's excursion, a summer holiday for the children... music, the theatre, books, flowers." ⁶⁷

Masterman was prepared to admit his ignorance -

"We are gradually learning that 'the people of England' are as different from, and as unknown to, the classes that investigate, observe, and record, as the people of China and Peru." ⁶⁸

He is, however, even so something of a rarity among politicians: Churchill had in 1906 perceived a possible basis for collaboration with the Trade Unions: they were

"the most highly organised party of labour; they are the most responsible part; they are from day to day in contact with


⁶⁷ ibid. p.25. The unrest seems to him a matter of striving for more comforts (as the book was published in 1909, it is the "expected unrest", rather than the actual strike movement which figures in the book), rather than the development of a new social and economic system within the old. One may either argue that in fact a further stage of capitalism was in the making, and that "spontaneity" was the only possible form which resistance could take - or that the political forms of the unrest were unrecognisable to liberal democrats, who thus opposed or stood aside from, a class rebellion.

⁶⁸ ibid. p.90.
reality. They are not mere visionaries or dreamers weaving airy Utopias out of tobacco smoke."

That to transplant the unions as business collaborators, extra limbs, of the Liberal party was impossible should not obscure the fact that the aims of trade unionism - as distinct from those of socialists and proletarian militancy - were already considered as compatible with Liberalism.

"Property in Great Britain is secure" Churchill promised in 1909:

"It would be a great mistake to suppose that that security depends upon the House of Lords. If the security of property in a powerful nation like our own were dependent upon the action or inaction of 500 or 600 persons, that security would long ago have been swept away. The security of property depends upon its wide diffusion among great numbers and all classes of the population, and it becomes more secure year by year because it is being more widely distributed. The vital processes of civilisation require, and the combined interests of millions guarantee, the security of property."70

Here than was a full legitimation for counter-revolution: there could, by this schema be no justification for an oppositional political movement seeking to question the basis of the distribution of property. This principle of the community of interests and treatment clearly underlay the principles of the Insurance Act -

"this enormous extension of direct taxation of the workers for the purpose of vouchsafing to them very slender and, in many cases, wholly illusory advantages"71

- and from this arose the analysis that the traditional parties could pursue the legitimate interests of the working-class, that a sufficiency of wages was possible within the traditional framework - an analysis which could be used to attack any unrest. Unrest became either an imported source of contagion, Syndicalism - or it was impatience - derived perhaps from the

69 Churchill, op. cit. Glasgow (11.10.06)
mysteries of working-class life, but in no way a structural feature of monopoly capitalism. Indeed, perhaps the most persistent assumption on the part of the government before 1914 was that, with or without negotiating machinery and government intervention, strikes could cease to be a major feature of industrial relations. This assumption contrasts with the neglect of the Industrial Council after its institution, since the government was not yet interested in the niceties of disputes which had no political aspect. These could be left to the state of nature.

Lloyd George regarded the social basis of parliamentary government as wholly secure. In 1906 he said

"Your are not going to make Socialists in a hurry out of the farmers and traders and professional men of this country, but you may scare them into reaction":72

If Lloyd George proposed stern measures against the strikers, he did so as an alternative to revolution and a counter-revolution led by diehard and vulnerable elements of the traditional dominant class74 - whereas Churchill was more concerned with a simple trial of strength with the government simply representing class domination and not just a section of that class. Churchill's attitude to social reform was always that it must not and could not, represent a permanent alteration in social forces:

"There is a plain need of some averaging machinery to regulate and even-up the general course of the labour market, in the same

72 Askwith disarmingly connects the neglect of the 1911 council with the waning of unrest - even a policy of conciliation being regarded as less desirable than one of passivity. (See on the structural and functional weakness of the Council Askwith's Industrial Problems and Disputes (1920) p.176 et seqq.)

73 D.Lloyd George, Better Times (1910) 11.10.06. p.34.

74 ibid. p.243, 31.12.09, he linked the prosperity of the British with the existing commercial system, We have got a home market, but we
want the market of the world as well. The home market would be a poorer market if we had not the world as well. What is it that enriches the home market? It is the fact that we are doing the business of the world." This speech in fact showed how the possibility of Socialism in Britain depended on the maintenance of a world-wide commerce and empire — and how disastrous to the railwayman's 22/- a week would any disruption of this system be. The speech nicely stresses the conventional aspects of imperialism, world domination, whilst inserting the novel — that imperialism was the dynamic which enclosed all other social relations and social problems. One of the strongest arguments for evolutionary socialism was in fact that which said, like Lloyd George, that under capitalism Britain had the "world market" but even so, a third of the population in the cities lived in poverty — how could state ownership change or improve that? This assumes two static elements — the unchanging nature of the world market and of Britain's relation to it, and the passivity and modestly non-participant character of workers' aspirations. This belief in the entrepreneurial capacity of the bourgeoisie required, and duly received, constant propping. This deference implicitly involves acceptance of the functional role assigned under capitalism to the proletariat — and is maintained under British reformism.
way as the Bank of England, but its bank rate, regulates and corrects the flow of business enterprise. When the extent of the depression is foreseen, the extent of the relief should also be determined."

This is "ambulance work" indeed: here too is a business arrangement whereby national agencies service private industry, maintaining private capitalism, and doing so by means of the ideology of personal effort. "We have not pretended to carry the toiler to dry land; it is beyond our power. What we have done is to strap a lifebelt around him, whose buoyancy, aiding his own strenuous exertions, ought to enable him to reach the shore." He made an exception concerning sweated industries, denying their relevance to capitalism in general:

"I ask the House to regard these industries as sick and diseased industries. I ask Parliament to deal with them exactly in the same mood as we should deal with sick people. It would be cruel to prescribe the same law for the sick as for the sound. It would be absurd to apply to the healthy the restrictions required for the sick."

In a sense, industrial reforms maintained the system as they regulated it: it was legitimate to protest against conditions in chain-making or paper box-making - but not so in the "sound" industries. Above all, urged Churchill, the meaning of economic liberalism has always been to expand markets - foreign and domestic: social reform adds to the potential of commerce: "the whole field of insurance has become much more fruitful than it ever was before...there is a new class of insurance business possible which never was possible before."

Naturally, much of this was immediately calculated to allay

75 Churchill, op. cit., Dundee 10.10.08. (pp.199-200)
78 ibid. 23.5.09, p.515.
hostility to reform: when Churchill said in 1909 "No man, rich or poor, will eat a worse dinner for our taxes" the question of whether this meant redistribution of wealth had taken place, or was to do so, was left vague. Nor, even if the tone of defenders of the liberal reforms shows a determination to justify social welfare in terms of a dominant ideology, is there necessarily any reason why such welfare legislation should not be successful in its own terms, and also allow a more rapid modification of the dominant ideology, and permit a speedier permeation of, or assault on, the dominant class. One can say, however, that the unrest showed that the new resolution of dichotomy between dominant and dominated had not been achieved, and that such resolution was an immediate priority for the government. As Blunt said,

"If the coal strike should go on over Easter it will hang up the Home Rule Bill over the present session, and there are the suffragettes who have threatened to wreck it, or there might be a revolution; otherwise all would be plain sailing now."60

In the process of the formation of a new basis for domination, the government ran the risks of being too radical, too conservative, too unyielding and too accommodating. Stephen McKenna summed up the experience of the government before 1914 as proving that it could be bullied, that the government would allow officers but not privates to mutiny, that a privy councillor might preach armed resistance to the law, and that the word of a minister could not be trusted.81

79 ibid. p.306.
80 Blunt, op. cit., 10.3.12. p.381. There is a literalness here.
81 Stephen McKenna, While I Remember (1921) pp.121-2.
Similarly, the distinction between the maintenance of law and order against rioting, and the use of counter-revolutionary force against an insurrection was always a difficult one to make: many in the cabinet feared lest a counter-revolution was in fact being carried out at local level, authorised by the Home Office - just as the debates in Labour Party conference and TUC show considerable suspicion that this sporadic local action was about to be coordinated on a national scale - something to be avoided by disclaiming any intention to rebel. 82

In fact, one can argue that between 1910 and 1914 there was an abortive, premature, counter-revolution - anxious to take shape as a struggle against the proletariat, and to develop an ideology on the lines of class war - but prevented from so doing partly by the very success of its counter-measures, by the decency and moderation of the strikers - and indeed by both the plurality of opinions within the cabinet and the very strength of the government's forces. 85 One may add

82 see note 23.

85 Although it was never wholly impossible that unrest would spread and cause a prolonged crisis, with the possibility of civil war, the development of the infrastructure made this unlikely. There was a relative separation of control as between finance and industrial capital, industrial units were, compared with Germany, the United States and Russia, relatively small: the rate of technical development was slow, cushioned by union rules and customs. The most rapid economic development was taking place overseas: some sections of the proletariat were prospering in the growth of tertiary industry ("prospering" in that these were growth industries), while trade union organisation itself was a psychological guarantee that bad times would be resisted and good times put to the credit of the union. Whatever their long term effect, in the short term unions made of immediate problems and pressures subjects for negotiation and debate. This is not to say that unions prevented the coming of Socialism, or that without unions there would have been revolution - but simply that the existence of so many lines of defence and such a diffuse growth of capitalism made of the class war a series of guerilla and propaganda campaigns.
that the "counter-revolution", deprived of its outlet was diverted to talk of "reaction" and revolution - at the Curragh, in the House of Lords and so on, and to the development of an elaborate defence of exploitation in the empire. One might also say that the productive forces of capitalism saved the social relations of capitalism.

It is interesting that the European context of their political struggle should have struck English labour leaders so much more than the colonial and anti-imperialist similarities. The analogy for repressive measures was always with Russia, not Britain herself: Hardie wrote on the military measures taken at Leith, where six gunboats were sent, the employment of detectives at the Sheffield moulders' strike, and the shootings on the Rand

"The powers that be fear and growing cohesion and determination of the working class, and so are seeking to introduce Russian methods for the suppression of the dearly bought rights and liberties of the common people,"^84

In fact, the "imperialism" of the years before 1914 was oriented away from the areas of white settlement, and was intended for home consumption to parallel any appeal which socialism might make to the working class. As Ward put it in the House of Commons, "The strikers are considered 'hooligans' when they strike, but 'great citizens of a glorious Empire' when you want their votes."^85 The central weakness in economic imperialism with its accompanying domestic reforms - apart from the strengthening of the capitalist modes of domination - was the discrepancy and disparity of distribution: as Henderson said, "and from all your


^85 J. Ward, House of Commons Debates, 22.8.11, col. 2377-8.
other social reforms put together, I have promptly lost in the increased prices of the necessaries of life". 86

Control over the cost of living was one of the major unspoken aims of the unrest -

"with a dramatic completeness and an explosive vigour even more astonishing than that which characterized the first appearance of the Labour Party itself, this Labour Unrest everywhere" 87 marking an immediate protest against the supposed benefits of economic imperialism and its justifications - even more than against the powerlessness of the worker under private capitalism and parliamentary democracy, since this powerlessness simply served to show how flimsy were the defences against the new form of exploitation. That the new imperialism should not alter the "broad general distribution of the wealth of the country between narrow subsistence for labour on the one hand and all the surplus over and above that narrow subsistence for ownership on the other hand" 88 disqualified the new doctrines in every weekly budget.

In fact, the economic base to the system was being laid before 1910 - windfalls were being gathered after 1900, and there was sufficient "play" in the economy to allow wage advances to be made after 1910. But the political question of changes in control of industry - that is, of the status of the possessing and dominant class - these were possibilities which economic imperialism could frustrate. Yet, these frustrations were the very ones welcomed by the evolutionary socialists!

It may be argued that the concepts of economic imperialism and of a revision of the dominant ideology ignore the ranges of actual government choice, and the detail of the process whereby the pressure of the

86 Fred Henderson, The Labour Unrest, sup.cit. p.130.
87 ibid. p.131.
88 ibid. p.144.
aggrieved was converted into administrative energy by the more active of the Radicals, who thus, whatever their own class origin or bias, or their perception of the centre or centres of gravity within party and cabinet, assumed an immediate and a moral responsibility for the scope and methods of government intervention. Lloyd George, it may be argued, was one of those mainly responsible for turning the attention of his party towards activity - rather than the negative repealing programme proposed in 1905. But in fact, the more successful these methods - and the more comprehensively and rigourously such an approach be applied - the less "practical" do the demands of organised and unorganised workers appear. And yet, as Lenin said of the Russian bourgeoisie:

"The point of view of the bourgeoisie is clear. 'We' want an imperialist policy, the conquest of foreign territory. 'We' are handicapped by strikes. 'We' lose surplus value because of the 'lost' working days. 'We' want to exploit the workers as 'normally' as they do it in Europe."  

The Socialists who connected trusts, imperialism, and the priorities of distribution tended to be those least involved in the political realism which offered the reforms which would continue to maintain a profit system: "'Imperialism' is a means of diverting to foreign shores this threatening deluge of domestic 'savings'," wrote Wilshire, adding that capitalism for its salvation required "a rattling good war between the great powers followed up by a prolonged civil war with great destruction of life and property."  

89  Lenin, 'The Bourgeoisie and Reformism' Pravda, no. 23, 29.1.15. (Collected Works, vol. 18, p.535)  
90  G. Wilshire, Trusts and Imperialism (Chicago, 1901) pp.18 and 21.
What is interesting here is the connection established between the "American" features of industrial development and the domestic impact of imperialism, combined with the belief that the system thus reinforced had increased its destructiveness and its anarchic features. Clearly, this connection was another which might serve to divide the "syndicalists" and "parliamentary socialists", in terms of the analysis, not of "war" and "reaction", in general, or the principle of social reform, but of the coming war, the European tide of reaction, whether aristocratic or bourgeois. It was perhaps inevitable that the maintenance of such oppositional attitudes involved the rejection of "practical" politics, barring a breakdown of the process of legitimation of government by general election. The maintenance of opposition was made even harder by the fact that the socialist movement was divided in terms of organisation, region, programme and ideology. With the possible exception of an upsurge of "syndicalism" there was little to indicate that the methods of passive resistance in the workshop could be used aggressively or in an organised manner. As Veblen said, there was little evidence that technical change, especially mechanisation, was changing the attitudes and political aspirations of the workers in proportion: "such positive habitual attitude of workmanlike initiative towards the conventions of industrial management as to result in a constructive deviation from the received principles" could be maintained, it appeared, only by distorting and organising the "spontaneous" elements in the movement, or by failure, making the fundamental materialism
appear woolly idealism through the re-imposition of bourgeois ideology.91

For the "impossibilism" of workers' control before 1914 was certainly no more visionary – though less attainable – than the resolution of incompatibles in, say, Churchill's

"optimistic Liberal Imperialism where the British Empire was to be maintained, in part by concession, in part by force, and the constant invention of new scientific forces to deal with the growing difficulties of Imperialist rule. He admitted, however, that India does not pay its expense to us in men or money; and it seems to me that he would be pretty easily persuaded to let it go, were the pressure severe enough. Like most of them, it is the vanity of Empire that affects him more than supposed profits or the necessities of trade, which he repudiates; also doubtless, his military training counts for much in his Imperialism."92

Here, the dominant ideology and its transformation are seen to be far from co-extensive with the developing productive forces – but in social and political terms, arguments from production are used to justify arguments from domination – sometimes in such a form that the structural connections may be seen therein. Walton Hewbold was one of those who attempted – rather in the manner of Hutt – to produce cross-sections of the productive forces, linked to the political system and to various aspects of the dominant ideology. He cited, for instance, the armaments trust with a capital of £29,000,000, and shareholders including seven ministers, three ex-ministers, six bishops, forty-seven peers and eighteen members of parliament.93 It may be naive to suggest that "the Liberal Party is compelled to serve the interests of Capital because

91 T. Veblen, The Instinct of Workmanship and the state of the industrial arts (N.Y. 1914) p.343. "Idealism" here as distinct from "ideologism", an unwarranted faith in the power of ideology. Idealism, meaning fantasy, thus comes to appear synonymous with the workers' materialism: it is widely accepted that a workers' commune cannot and must not run Liverpool: – but a cruiser is sent, presumably to bomba the city, if necessary – on the issue of a few shillings a week increase in wages, and to prevent the realisation of fantasy, working-class control.

92 Blunt, op. cit. 2.10.09. p.277.

it is financed by Capitalists. The Labour Party is maintained by
the pennies of working men, and is directly under the control of
working men’s organisations" - but in terms of forming a social
image, combining perceptions in, in Runciman’s categories, class,
status and power hierarchies, it goes some way to explaining the
significance for the working class of the Labour Party, and the
consequent reluctance to transfer allegiance, or to see industrial
or political powerlessness as being scarcely diminished under Labour
government.94 Thus the dominant ideology is clearly a false
consciousness, and the "practicality" and "common sense" of the
radicals does not transcendent the dominant ideology, but forms a low-
level empiricism in its interstices. It is the successful
combination of incompatibles in ideological forms which characterises
the more powerful dominant ideologies - not its common sense.

The formation of this new ideology, still in a fluid state before
1914, can be clearly seen in the biographies of men like Croft and
Amery - rejecting the old party divisions, the traditional parameters
of party activity and concern. They were not concerned to sponsor a
series of local contests producing ad hoc national parties - but a
consensus ideology, viable at national level, and a one-party system based

94 ibid. p.88. The categories are those used by Runciman, in his
Relative Deprivation and Social Justice (1966). The figures
and comments in Guttmann’s The British Political Elite (1965)
would seem to confirm that Lloyd George was unable to build up
a body of petit bourgeois representation in the House (p.93) -
though this classification must be largely notional - and that
from 1918-1960 there were never less than 100 and never more than
200 working-class MPs. (p.95). Guttmann’s work notes that the
elite of the twentieth century has been the upper-middle class,
with a leavening of "intellectuals" - that is, men with
professional attitudes. p.171.
on a united dominant class. Croft, for example, was deeply influenced by Chamberlain's talk of the economic war in existence between Britain and Germany, cast about for a non-party, non-imperialist movement - then attempted to oppose a tax on land in favour of tariffs on foreign goods, and finally came out for Empire Union. The elements of old and new ideologies are all present, and dislocated. Just as Asquith could produce arguments for Empire which stressed the incompatible features (an Empire, it seemed, of free sovereign states!) - "the greatest and most fruitful experiment that the world has yet seen in the corporate union of free and self-governing communities" - So Amery perceived the links between imperialism, army reform, and imperial preference, without being quite able to refer the "beliefs" to a self-consistent programme - save "directing our energies into national and Imperial channels" - or to material developments. This was because the economic basis was already in existence: economic imperialism could be justified in economic political and social terms - but it was not necessarily politically acceptable to the necessary class allies of the haute bourgeoisie, actuarially profitable, or justifiable by contractual or majoritarian theories of government. As Hegel said, everything has an argument. What mattered then, was for material conditions to be fitted into, or explained away by, a dominant

cf., for example, the dining and discussion clubs across party lines: these may be seen both as an attempt to introduce a professionalism and a more scientific attitude into politics, and as a striving for a common ideology to bridge occupational and intra-class divisions, as well as party difference, for the sake of preserving dominance. See e.g. My Life of Strife by Brigadier-General the Lord Croft (n.d.) and L.S. Amery, My Political Life. England before the Storm 1896-1914 (1953).

Croft, op. cit. pp. 49-65.

J.P. Alderson, Mr Asquith (1905) p. 195 (on 19.7.01)

L.S. Amery, op. cit. p. 255. See especially p. 197 et seq.
The clearest example of dichotomous social relations—and the clearest expression of what forces the proletariat would have to face if it wished to establish a socialist democracy by force—lay in the use of troops before 1914. It showed the extent of counter-revolutionary preparations before the war, and provided the occasion on which the alignment of various sections of the bourgeoisie towards a government using force against organised labour would be determined. If the protection of property was the legitimating purpose of the use of troops, then since strikes involved a challenge to the distribution of property, if not to its basis, then the government both tactically and strategically appeared as defender of the propertied. This led to men like Tillett comparing the British government with the coalescing European counter-revolution: "the police brutalities have made them the British cossacks." Just as employers were prepared to spend money on federation, albeit often for inexplicit political and social purposes, so there was talk at the TUC of the need to spend union funds on defensive military preparations. Before 1914 there had been adumbrated many of the schemes to be used after the war for providing a paramilitary and parapolice force to break strikes and take over the running of services from the strikers. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool proposed the institutionalising of strike conditions—thus limiting the effectiveness of strikes and, arguably, increasing their likelihood—by proposing to keep his specials for a year, and to form a Civic

99 Daily Herald, 6.6.13.
Service League to run local transport and power stations in the event of a renewed strike. 100

In general, the attitude of union and parliamentary labour leaders was to see in the use of troops a regrettable infringement of the "neutrality" of the state in labour disputes: "Talk about revolution! The law of England has been broken in the interests of the railway companies of this country." 101 Thorne asked of the unofficial police forces being set up

"how many men have enrolled in the Volunteer Police Force; if he is aware that over 90 per cent of the men are non-union men; and if it is the intention of the employers to use the men not only to protect their property, but to work in the places of the men who may be out on strike?" 102

The government's policy was influenced by a number of considerations:

most could remember the uproar which followed the 1895 Featherstone shooting - although the Liberals could possibly survive the loss of Labour and Labour Party support, they could regard such a loss as a crucial one. The Liberals were as bound by their alliance with labour inside and outside Parliament as the Labour Party by their electoral arrangement with the governing party. The government, again, could not with consistency follow a policy of negotiation and mediation - and at the same time incur the expense and odium of using troops against men striking for causes which ministers sympathised with. In one sense, the government simply reacted as fully as its defence forces

100 1911 Employment of Military during Railway Strike (323, xlvii)
29.8.11, to the Home Secretary, See too David Evans Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield 1910-11 (Cardiff 1911) and George Glasgow, General Strikes and Road Transport (n.d.)

101 House of Commons Debates, Hardie, 22.8.11 (col. 2335)

102 ibid. W. Thorne, 29.11.11. (col. 554)
and foreign commitments permitted, to local requests — throwing the responsibility on to local officials for using force against the strikers in the mass. One could well argue that in fact, with strike committees in general only too anxious to restrain their union members from illegal acts, with unorganised and unarmed crowds to control, that the government's task was made difficult by only two factors — a shortage of police reserves and the unpopularity of the use of over-armed and undertrained troops for crowd control. The excited mood in August 1911, when, after sections of the press had presented the government's preparations as counter-revolutionary, it became clear that the police and troops had behaved with some brutality against men who were perhaps rioting, perhaps simply spectators, but in any event not insurrectionaries, and not red revolutionaries in the accepted sense, cooled rapidly.

In fact, however, the anti-strike preparations could not simply be seen as police action: politicians in both parties were anxious to connect the strikes with a European counter-revolutionary and revolutionary movement. Fear of revolution came nearer to producing a revolution than "Syndicalism" did. And when it was clear that no revolution had been planned, only the experience of preparing a defence of the existing order against a notional mass assault remained — to be drawn out after 1918. Again, the preparations for such resistance pointed to the class alignment of "the government"; as Ben Turner said,

"If in times of trade disputes the supporters of the employers receive the badge of authority from the civil power enabling them to create disturbances with immunity and to attack workmen in the course of these disputes, the workmen will be bound to retaliate, and instead of riot and disorder being unusual and regrettable,
they will become a common and necessary feature of our industrial life." 103

The main task as defined by the government was to suppress violence swiftly, on grounds of community interest, making clear that the historic class basis of the state had been replaced by one of pure neutrality. It might then be possible to argue that though "Churchill allowed the troops to be used for other purposes than the protection of property," 104 this was Churchill alone. But in another sense, for the government to prepare an armory of precedents, justifications, and, during and after the war, constitutional provisions, for defeating insurrectionary, or even disorderly strikes, showed both that there was a dichotomy between the purposes of the government and those of the strikers, arising not out of a challenge by strikers to the government, but out of the course of trade disputes and a struggle against the countermeasures of employers. There was thus a prima facie case for seeing a connection between the policy of government and employers, reinforced by a study of the membership of the Liberal Party in parliament, and by the discrepancy between the actions of the government as a (willy-nilly) strikebreaker, and its professions of sympathy with trade union action.

It was, in fact, impossible for a railway union to strike without involving the government: the use of the Agadir crisis to urge the union leaders to call off the strike, dangerous though Asquith said it was, implicitly and explicitly recognised the involvement in national policy

103 Labour Party Conference, 1912. See too the commission inquiring into police action in 1913 in Arnold Wright, Disturbed Dublin. The story of the great strike of 1913-14 (1914).

104 J. T. Brownlie (ASE) Some Dangers which Threaten Trade Unionism (n.d.) p. 6.
of national trade unions. It recognised also that the government posed to the unions a political challenge as pointed as that which it received from organised labour. Even if it is argued that the escalation from a demand for a rise in wages to the projected use of artillery against railwaymen was wholly conjunctural, there can yet be no doubt that the British government was putting itself into a counter-insurrectionary position. It then faced the possibility, under certain circumstances the necessity that it would find itself massacring trade unionists, striking at least in part because their employers would not recognise their union's right to negotiate on their behalf. A nice balance had thus to be struck between the use of liberal-radical slogans in a counter-revolutionary context and the use of counter-revolutionary slogans and policies in counter-revolution.

As the engineers said in 1922,

"If this is not an attempt to 'smash Trade Unionism', it is in all events, near enough for Trade Unionists and the Public to find great difficulty in appreciating the difference." 105

As usual, trade union leaders were more ready to appreciate the difficulties of the government than were ministers in appreciating the conflict of interests and policy within the trade union movement: in 1926, it was still probably true to remark that "The strike which the General Council had in mind could only have succeeded if the Government had lost its nerve." 106 There was an element of bluff in the government's pursuance of a policy of negotiation and intimidation: in the last resort, on trade matters, the government might indeed decide to cut its losses, and force employers to offset theirs, by enacting legislation.

105 Why we are locked out (ALU March 1922) p.13.

But there was little enough evidence that the threat of force against insurrection, or revolution, would lead to negotiation with the "political" aims of a section of the working-class movement. As Williams wrote in 1922, "Kensington Gardens and Regent's Park were like the base behind the front line in France or Flanders during the war." The militarisation of policy limited the political options.

By this time too, there was in addition to the procedures of the Defence of the Realm Act, the Emergency Powers Act,

"becoming law on October 29th, 1920, (which) altered the British constitution in a way that has received relatively small comment from political theorists." Indeed, part of the government's problem was not their unpreparedness - though troops were not a satisfactory means of restoring or keeping order - but in the possibility of exacerbating situations where no trouble was likely to arise: "McKenna told me that Chief Constables are continually demanding military assistance." But there was no question of the vigour with which Churchill prosecuted his campaign against his fellow-citizens, or of the rapid alterations made to the legal basis of the state under pressure: Masterman said of Churchill "in the main he did right, but that he did it in an amazingly wrong way, issuing wild bulletins and longing for 'blood'!" But several towns to which he sent troops did not want them!

107 R.Williams, Labour Monthly, July 1922. Evans (op. cit.) noted that even in 1911 "the lessons of Tonypandy had not been taught in vain, for during the seamen's and railway strikes and the South Wales anti-Jewish riots of July and August, 1911, the military were employed practically without any regard to the policy of first exhausting the police forces." pp.212-3.


109 Riddell, op. cit. 29.9.13. The issue arose after Haldane had sent troops to Chirk: McKenna threatened to resign unless the cabinet accepted the principle that internal security forces be under Home Office control. p.175.

110 Lucy Masterman, op. cit., p.205.
Conspicuously Manchester. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool telegraphed wildly that supplies were running short and that he was afraid riots would take place. Isaacs telegraphed back authorising him, if necessary, to commandeer all food supplies in the town, to unload the ships in the harbour which contained food (which he was also to commandeer) with a body of men under his own control, not under that of the shipowners, and promised him a Bill of Indemnity for any illegal action he might take in the course of it. 111

After this, it is curious to reflect how Macdonald’s supra-class state, with its sympathy for labour, its intermediate position on the road to socialism, could easily find itself shooting down unarmed unionists. The ineffectiveness of a parliamentary system which did not allow the Labour Party to raise as a matter of urgency the use of troops was hardly necessary as a demonstration that parliament acted as a front for exploitation and coercion. Possibly this was wisdom so widely and conventionally received, that the impact of the use of force was lessened: the dominant class could quietly repair its defences without ever-increasing resentment because the parliamentary system worked in such a way as to deprive the workers of a quick and decisive political and economic victory over their exploiters. Just as Reynolds quoted the opinion that the police divided society into two classes— one of which they dominated, the other of which they served, so there could be no great surprise if the reorganisation of the police in 1919

"was the beginning of the process which has culminated in the Trenchard measures of 1935 for the transformation of the police into a 'class' proof militarised arm of the state." 112

Clearly here there are times when the state will mediate between capitalism

111 ibid. p.207. The Lord Mayor of Manchester could, of course, use the Salford police and troops if necessary.

112 Murphy, Preparing For Power, sup. cit. p.183.
and the exploited - but so long as its interests and those of the supposed exploiters are connected - through individuals, money, position, social class, educational level, indeed as living proofs of the admirable qualities of the existing system, men controlling the media of communication to the less fortunate, or more dominated - there must be times at which the government becomes the main defence of the exploiters, their class interests, their persons, or their property.  

During the war, this dual aspect of government policy - attempts to induce collaboration with labour, and the devising of new methods of dealing with "unacceptable" forms of protest - could build on pre-war experience. This was a further mediation between official union policy and the working experience of those who saw wartime exigencies as eroding civilian standards: the 1915 Munitions Act

"sweeps away Trade Union rules and safeguards, and puts him (the Union member) at the mercy of every device for speeding-up which the rapid Americanisation of our methods of production can invent. And, worst of all, it imposes a system of fines and penalties which the employer is to be empowered to deduct from wages."114

This sharpening of the class war in wartime, and the use of threats of war to produce a closing of social fissures had both been foreshadowed in 1911,

113 Asquith's defence of the 1893 Featherstone shootings, for instance, brooks no contradiction: (Speeches, 20.9.23. 1927) "A very grave state of things existed in the West Riding of Yorkshire three weeks ago. I am not prepared, from the information I have received, to assent to the idea that the riotous and marauding proceedings that went on, the wrecking of collieries, the burning down of buildings, the levying of toll on innocent passers-by - that these actions act with any sympathy whatever from the general body of miners on strike. I believe these outrages were the work of a comparatively small number of rowdies and unoccupied men, and that, so far as the general opinion of the mining population was concerned, they would disown the many any such proceedings." p.25.

"Echardstein reported on August 12 that the railroad strike in Britain had been settled by governmental appeal to the patriotism of the workers. 'The strike is finished, Europe has beaten us...,' he reported a representative of the workers as saying. According to his information the government had told the negotiators that 'by reason of a secret written treaty concluded within the last fourteen days with France, England at any moment could be called up with her collective war power... to take part in an eventual war between France and Germany...,' and in the light of the international situation, appealed to the workers and the companies to settle the strike. Churchill told Metternich that Asquith had said nothing 'beyond a general appeal to the railway companies to come to terms with their men, considering the uncertainty of the international situation...' This conversation revealed to Metternich Churchill's fear that Germany was to press to war."

These economic pressures continued from before the war, coupled with a closer functioning of government agencies with the owners of industry, were one decisive factor in convincing militants that their "economic" battle was, after all, political.

"The Russian Revolution, in February 1917, came to us as the culmination of a tremendous movement of mass discontent with the war. To me it was the opening of the direct revolutionary struggle with the forces of imperialism."116

It has been argued throughout that social reform, that a community unity enforced from above was in its origins, motives, methods and results opposed to the mass movement for control of the immediate working

115 I.C. Barlow, The Agadir Crisis (North Carolina, 1940) p.320
environment. So long as the class war continued, or intensified, the promise of eventual victory against Germany had to compete with the perception of continued economic deprivation. The argument that "La Patrie" was

"not only a sacred tradition it is the natural, immediate field of action where their propaganda for justice must be realized"

was arguable in a perpetual time of peace - but La Patrie and La Guerre were not the same concept, nor indeed did they appear the same to workers and soldiers. If "la guerre a dévasté le socialisme comme elle a dévasté le monde", the social strata from which socialists had been drawn before 1914, had suffered from an intensification of labour, a lengthening of hours, a dilution, and suspension of union rules which might well not be compensated by for higher wages and the exhortations to patriotism from "socialist" leaders. If "To the German masses, however, the workers' councils stood for the démocratisation of the industrial system and the attainment, in the economic sphere, of the same rights of self-government and self-determination as they thought they had achieved by the Revolution of 1918 in the political sphere" - they were no more misled than those who expected a quid pro quo for their support of the dominant class in the war, finding instead that after the post-war boom, the government machinery set up in wartime for the distribution of increasingly scarce resources were not to be revived in peacetime when the plight of the working population was even worse!

Although the "head" of the socialist movement had been cut off during the war, the mass movement had continued to ferment - in a sense

117 Weinstein, op. cit. p.64. Until the peace, there were few occasions for joint action between the trade union movement and the army, for instance.

118 Ludovic-Oscar Pressard in Drachkovitch, De Karl Marx à Léon Blum, op. cit. p.35.

119 Guillebaud, op. cit. p.212.
its activities distilled, not distorted, in the war. For as Connolly pointed out, the war had not been prevented because

"the executive committee of the socialist movement was not in control of the labour-force of the men who voted for the socialist representatives in the legislative chambers of Europe, nor were the men in control of the socialist representatives."

Just as parliamentary socialism and reformism, and the roots of the post-war split in the socialist movement in Britain, ante-dated the war, so too one might argue that the war was just a stage, important but not decisive, in the development of the British socialist movement. Thus MacDonald was "neither for the war nor against it." He could not advance beyond neutrality.

In a real sense, the Russian Revolution could not change the character of a national socialism until there was a mass Communist party. Defection to non-democratic modes was common enough before 1914: if one could say in 1916 that "No sane person would have believed that a time would come when Socialists would support war", much the same could be said of socialist support for Parliament, or collaboration with the bourgeois parties.

If

"Discontent is rife in the workshops, but owing to restrictions and regulations of all kinds it cannot be expressed through the ordinary methods of Trade Union activity", then the same could be said of pre-unrest conditions. This was itself the precondition for a further outbreak of unrest, with the production of proletarian leaders from mass action, men educated in the mass-line,

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120 In Labour and Easter Week, op. cit. p.59 (in ISR, March 1915)
121 Shinwell, op. cit. p.115
122 The Call, 20.4.16.
123 Charles Dukes in ibid.
shop-floor workers, men intimate either with the mainstream of socialist propaganda or orthodox political activity, or men in the industries of rapid technical and manpower change, grass-roots leaders from unions with a tradition of internal dissension and nobility inside the union hierarchy as a result of grass roots activity, and from parts of the economy affected by concentration of capital.

Again, one could say in 1916

"Our labour leaders are having the time of their lives. Together with the shippers, the coal-owners, the armament makers, and the immense tribe of army contractors, they are the chief profit-makers in the greatest calamity that has befallen mankind"124

- but then such a claim was always justified, mutatis mutandis, so long as the leaders of the working-class had been co-opted into the dominant class and the bulk of the workers left outside. For despite the practical difficulties of ministers, the functional and historical checks to activity and swift legislative action, it remains true that to use troops against strikers, whether to preserve order or property, was in the interests of the employers; that to compel negotiations and compromise over wage rises was to deprive union members of the chance of victory - and also to deny them the full amount demanded, while the employers maintained their positions, the shareholders enjoyed their dividends, and devised new means of ostentation to make good their title to dominance.

Masterman saw both the deficiencies in the conscience of the rich, and the convulsion in social attitudes involved in revision of dominant ideology. He talked of "a kind of internal collapse and decay, in the

124 ibid. A.A.Watts, 31.8.16.
deflection of vigour and intellectual energy to irrelevant standards and pleasures", \(1^{25}\) signs of the pure enjoyment of domination, echoed in the calls to martial virtues or imperial service, or at home - with Lloyd George - in campaigns to revive the countryside, involving a disgust with contemporary existence itself a sign of false consciousness:

"England's wealth consists for the most part of railways, factories, villa residences, cottages, mills of various descriptions, breweries, public-houses, work-houses, slums and lunatic asylums.\(1^{26}\)

For the conscience of the rich lay in their awareness of the poor: while they could accept that philanthropy which did not disturb their dominance, they were prepared to make concessions which were only palliatives so long as they denied the unity of the hierarchies of status, class, and power, in a dominant class and ideology. The characteristic mode here was of Masterman's householder, terrified of the proletariat,

"behind the red flag, surging up his little pleasant pathways, tearing down the railways, trampling the little garden, the 'letting in of the people' upon the patch of fertile ground which has been redeemed from the wilderness.\(1^{27}\)

If it was the war rather than "Socialism (which) compels this fusion of frightened property interests into one grim phalanx bent upon its own safety", \(1^{28}\) then the war in a sense was anti-socialism in its highest form.

The masses, instead of marching forward to the co-operative commonwealth, slaughtered each other, the anti-war and anti-patriotic

127 Masterman, op. cit. p. 69.
128 J. Graham Brooks, American Syndicalism. The IWW (N.Y. 1913) p. 5.
pledges were cancelled out a thousand times, the intensification of labour proceeded with the connivance and agreement of trade unions, while those most active in the service of the rank and file were officially victimised and deported. Though Grey might be induced before the war to say

"One cannot help feeling that the men employed in big business have as great an interest in it as the proprietors, or shareholders, as the case may be,"

and if Whitleyism was indeed an attempt to recognise this right, then it is still hard to see that the division of the bourgeoisie brought Grey close to Connolly, or Murphy, or Mann, or Henderson. After all, before the war, Churchill had praised the principle of cabinet government—

"He got more and more passionate in favour of it, praising government by aristocracy and revealing the aboriginal and unchangeable Tory in him." as a direct answer to popular democracy. Liberals were often exasperated by the obstinacy of employers: but if Lloyd George said of the 1911 railway strike,

"If they do bring the men out again... and it is the directors' fault, I won't lift a finger to settle it - not a finger. They have got to be smashed before the whole public, these people" such a statement reflected his confidence in the strength of the political system to survive such conflicts without having to yield its general position of the maintenance of existing property relations.

Indeed, the strengthening of government machinery proposed by Churchill and Lloyd George did not suggest an attack on the interests of the propertied, only on the dogmatic and countervailing interpretation of

129 Grey, 3.5.12. in Lord Riddell, op. cit. p.56.
130 Lucy Masterman, op. cit. p.165.
131 ibid. p.214.
those interests. For did Grey’s acceptance of the principle of co-management require that he support the Shop Stewards’ Committees. For in including middle class ideology in the dominant ideology, in letting petit bourgeois modes strengthen the anti-Socialist majority in Parliament, the parties, especially the Liberal party, were adopting a known quantity.

"The rich despise the working people; the Middle Classes fear them...In feverish hordes, the suburbs swarm to the polling booth to vote against a truculent Proletariat. The Middle Class elector is becoming irritated and indignant against working-class legislation. He is growing tired of the plaint of the unemployed and the insistent crying of the poor. The spectacle of a Labour Party triumphant in the House of Commons, with a majority of Members of Parliament apparently obedient to the demands of its leaders, and even a House of Lords afraid of it, fills him with a profound disgust."152

For the great fear was not of popular democracy or industrial conciliation, but of a political proletarian victory — at the factory or the ballot-box, one which celebrated universal suffrage by achieving a class majoritarianism — a sundering of traditional institutions and modes by the strategic use of weight of numbers. And that was why the suburban

"is turning in desperation to any kind of protection held out to him. His ideals are all towards the top of the scale. He is proud when he is identifying his interests with those of Kensington, and indignant when his interests are identified with those of Poplar."153

And always the language of domination was ambiguous: it offered good terms for collaboration — or power monopoly — and savage ones to conscientious and political objectors. Churchill’s remark in 1925, that

152 Masterman, Condition of England, sup. cit. p.56.
153 ibid. p.60.
"We decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it, or, if not averting it, of coping effectually with it when the time came."

can apply to coal, miners, or even owners: in practice, the effectiveness involved was that of defeating a strike based on the most rudimentary, and fundamental, elements in populist socialism - the brotherhood of labour, the right to work, the living wage.

Of course, in defeating the strike, a system of dominance was being preserved, and strengthened. The British proletariat was not being permanently deprived of these points - but it was not to have them at a certain time and by certain methods, by direct challenge to capitalism. The pre-emptive revolution urged by Connolly had little hope of being carried out in a country where the alternative offered by Socialists was either preserved from the masses as being beyond them - as by Hyndman - or certain to be defeated. When Maclean wrote that

"the NUM strike for the first time in British history brought a section of the workers right up against the capitalist class as a whole through its Coalition Cabinet; and this shows that the main Government functions are now economic, and that the primary motive of the Government's action was the breaking of Labour's power so as to have a straight, unhampered fight with American capitalism",

his analysis gave little clue as to the outcome of capitalist tactics within Britain. It had certainly been shown, however, that divisions within the bourgeoisie-by-itself could not lead to the emancipation of the proletariat-for-itself. "Perhaps Carson, who was after all a lawyer and a Parliamentarian like Asquith could not really


135 John Maclean, The Coming War with America (BSP) pp.12-13. It was clearly more in the interests of the government to have a satisfied than a beaten proletariat."
envisage himself breaking the constitution." As Campbell-Bannerman had pointed out "This is the first middle-class Cabinet and I am far from sure that it is going to satisfy the public that the traditions of our Constitution will be preserved" — for in fact the revision of policy on a revised class basis did involve attacks on, defence, and reinterpretations of, this constitution. Fresh dichotomies might appear:

"The Insurance Act has cut a furrow right across society. On one side are all those who pay income-tax; on the other those who pay insurance tax." The organisation of the working-class was matched by a re-grouping of the middle-class: before marriage Asquith

"had no pretension than to being what he was, a Nonconformist of the middle-class; now he had adopted all the failing of the aristocracy." The new form of the ideology for democracy may be characterised in terms of Beatrice Webb's "Gambetta-like faith in universal suffrage and her Cromwellian distrust of democracy". For this distrust of democracy which, in Beatrice Webb's case was derived from the spontaneous ignorance of the ochlos, came for Lloyd George from the organised proletariat — but organised on a syndicalist, rather than a constitutional basis, or a party


137 Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice Haldane, 1856-1915. The life of Viscount Haldane of Cloan, KT, CH (1937) p.167. Haldane assured his mother in 1914 "you can be assured that there never has been any plan for using military force to coerce Ulster." p.344. There were, then, limits to the uses of force to maintain policy and preserve legality, maintaining a monopoly of the means of coercion!


139 Blunt, op. cit. 27.4.10 (p.300).

Failing strong Socialist and party leadership, the working-class had to remain a merely fermenting mass - in terms not unlike Rudé's evaluation of the crowd's failures and successes: its latency, its stored energy and grievance must be unused, or connected to the inputs of whatever black box the dominant ideology devised.\textsuperscript{141}

In this discussion of the genesis and direction of government policy we have argued that the apparent inconsistencies of government action are reducible to consideration of three government functions during this period. First, the government had to referee as between the claims of groups of employers and the general interests of the propertied and dominant. Secondly, the government had to develop and promulgate a dominant ideology which would be acceptable in the interests of the maintenance of the existing system of property relations, and permit the development of imperialism without hindrance at home. Finally, it had to judge when to use soft talk, and when to use the big stick. It is argued that the selection of the big stick, however, defined the overriding aims of policy. The bourgeoisie could not dispense with the domestic proletariat, but it required the workers to function as a productive class and to vote and protest as small property-owners, a "common-sense" mass.

Syndicalism was terrifying because it made it appear that populist democracy was more anti-capitalist than socialism, that the workers

\textsuperscript{141}"Outside revolutions, urban riots were no more strikingly successful than the rural. In the Gordon Riots, London's 'No Popery' crowds held the streets for a week on end; but the Catholic Relief Act, which had prompted them, remained. After the riots of 1791, Priestley felt compelled to leave Birmingham and take refuge in the United States..." p.260 of G. Rudé, The Crowd in History (N.Y. 1964)
themselves were further from Liberalism than were the Labour Party's MPs. This pure consciousness, aroused by the intensification of exploitation in the interests of imperialism, had to be rapidly overlaid by a new false consciousness. Meanwhile, however, the crisis in the dominant class itself had to be resolved. The government, then, was seeking to turn gold into lead - but at the level of idealism, useless consciousness.
Chapter Five

"Kautsky and Axelrod are giving the workers old, shop­
worn, counter-revolutionary advice."

In this chapter we trace the implications of the opposition of
Fabians, especially of Beatrice Webb, to Syndicalism. It is argued
that the counter-proposals, to radicalise and bureaucratise the
proletariat, led her to condemn not only militancy and revolutionary
Socialism but to confront with hostility attempts by the proletariat
to emancipate itself from bourgeois democracy.

An intellectual pedigree is traced from such categorisation of workers
into consumers and producers, emphasis on the possibility of achieving
Socialism through the bourgeois State, and ideas of economic federalism,
to a denial of the class struggle, the assertion of the pluralism of the
state, and belief in the erosion of monopoly capitalism by reformism.

Finally, it is argued that Syndicalist forms, without their
proletarian and socialist content, supplemented residual bourgeois
ideologies to articulate fascistic and authoritarian justifications of
monopoly capitalism.

Without dissenting from the view that the Fabian Society was not,
in terms of historical conjuncture, a formative influence on the Labour
Party, one may still argue that "Fabianism" was a reflection of, and
a growing influence upon and within, the intellectual climate of the
Party. In particular, it is argued that the attack by Sidney and Beatrice
Webb on "Syndicalism", and their counter-creation of "the consumer" as

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1 See, e.g., E.J.Hobsbawm, "The Fabians Reconsidered" in Labouring
Men, (1964) p.250 et seqq., and A.M.McBriar, Fabian Socialism and
against "the producer", and the theories of the state proposed by Cole ran parallel to and cross-fertilized reformist and opportunist ideas pre-existing in the labour movement. The attack on working-class spontaneity - the activity of a class, or a group within a class "for itself" - was implicitly an attack on the whole concept of the class "for itself".

"Pure spontaneity" is morally and politically neutral: to encourage violence, enthusiasm, for its own sake, may simply arise from a Baudelairean "ennui" - "smoking his hookah, he dreams of scaffolds" - or "decadence." It may represent a desire for the status quo to be

2 And, indeed, the creation of "the producer" as a partial and de-humanised function of the worker. Using this method of categorising functions in the person of the worker, rather than considering the worker as the material of capitalist function, could lead both to valuable sociological insights especially about alienation, and also to the paradoxical and absurd statements of men like Chiozza Money that producers were becoming so rare that a "later Peruvian Socialism" was on the way (in Socialism and the Great State (New York, 1912, p.101)). Maurice Dobb pointed out the recurrence of the threat mentioned by Engels, that when monopoly ends, the proletariat "will find itself generally on a level with its fellow-workers abroad" (p.247, Political Economy and Capitalism, 1937), and it is clearly possible to see in the growth of secondary and tertiary industries not only development of a world monopoly position, but a parallel academic and vulgar insistence that a permanent transformation of the proletariat has been, and can everywhere be, effected.

3 R.Humphrey has made, in his book on Sorel, a distinction between "force, which uses the authority of the state to demand automatic obedience, and violence, which seeks above all to shatter that authority" - and although this carried more a note of tabu than real distinction, it does draw attention to the role of an ideology of violent revolution to legitimate protest. One may distinguish between this common enough similarity between men like Pareto, who "burnt what he had adored, and adored what he had burnt" (Werner Stark, in British Journal of Sociology, 1963, p.105), the critics of Syndicalism who saw in it only an apology for violence - "the object and working power of Syndicalism consisted in organised violence..." (J.A.Hobson, in The Sociological Review, 1912, p.254) - and those revolutionaries, like Lenin in the State and Revolution, who did not either revel in violence or regard it as "creative", but as part of the "destructiveness" of dialectical development.
forever maintained - and with it the nobility and the misery of which it is compounded. Reynolds well brought out this unconscious cruelty, when he wrote of the workers

"Their good qualities have so largely developed from generations of discomfort. Thriftlessness is at the bottom of their talent for happiness and their magnificent courage in facing the uncertainties of life."^4

Such rootless detachment, however, was unlikely to lead to schemes of amelioration or effective revolutionary direction, if pursued to its logical conclusion. If this dilettantism is one extension of literary and intellectual attitudes to working-class militancy, the Webbs' was no less extreme and greatly more pervasive.

There is no suggestion here of the need for a cult of violence in the labour movement: stultifying, self-defeating and countervailing, terrorism is the classical expression of powerlessness. However, in the sense in which Frantz Fanon, in Les Damnés de la Terre, discusses the question, violence may be the symptom of a revolution within the revolution.\(^5\) To secede from a system of bourgeois dominance may necessarily, as a legitimating device and a means of reintegration with the values and identity of the alienated and self-conscious group, involve the physical breaking of social ties. This may involve not so much physical violence against people, but sabotage, the breaking of contracts, sudden strikes in breach of agreement and so on. It may also involve a repudiation of middle-class values - modes of thought and expression,

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5 cf Desmond Ryan, in James Connolly (Dublin, 1924), notes the need for a leap in the dark like the Citizen Army, "barely 120 strong, armed for the most part with shot-guns." (p.5.)
educational and social values - even to the rejection of all co-operation, as by general strike. This may well be the necessary stage of alienation through which not only colonial, but socialist revolutions have to pass - a rejection of both the social forms taken by dominance by settlers or capitalists, and of their (neutral) institutional shape and intellectual justification. The workshop thus becomes the negation of "the industry", the industrial union of the political state, the threat of violence of methods of conciliation, discussion, and the flow of communication between classes. This attempt to perceive contradictions in their starkest form is itself a transitional and fleeting mood. When the governing class justifies its exploitation and use of force against the workers, it requires a confidence and a determination for the oppressed to resolve at once to advocate the same methods for use by themselves against their oppressors and also to transcend oppression by abolishing the use of such methods when successful.°

The oppressors, in this situation, can make no such claim to destroy the machinery of their oppression, since they have justified oppression in terms consonant with the prevailing value-system, and their success would inevitably reinforce this connection between injustice defended and the "absolute" moral and social values held to legitimate it.

6 This is, of course, an unnecessarily schematic and dry discussion: but it is interesting to note that in his burial of the dialectic, Merleau-Ponty also "buried" the Marxist left, that when he spoke of Weber's approach - "Le goût de la violence, dit-il, est une faiblesse secrète, l'ostentation des beaux sentiments est une violence secrète, ce sont là deux sortes d'histrionisme ou de névrose, et il y a une force, celle du vrai politique, qui est par-delà ces vertiges" - he was seeking to justify his own apostasy, his adherence to Mendès-France. (Les Aventures de la Dialectique, Paris 1955, p.40). The argument here is that the attitude of intellectuals to the use of force may well indicate their attitude to the justice, the legitimacy, of a rank-and-file revolutionary movement, - not just an attitude to humanitarianism, or comments on the expediency of the use of force.
Naturally, though, once the revolutionaries have achieved this spread of awareness of the connection between the stick and the carrot, they look forward to a time when no one rides donkeys anyway. "Permanent revolution" must then become a contradiction in terms - that would only describe a permanent failure to revolt successfully. The rejection involved in a "spontaneous" uprising derives partly from the nature of "spontaneity" - a symptom of separateness, induced by the breakdown of institutions or their customary legitimacy, which compels "repairing" (renewing, replacing) action. Partly, too, it arises from the need to maintain the unity and defensive power of the "spontaneous uprising" when its opponents appear.

When Sidney and Beatrice Webb attacked the syndicalists for their separatism, their anarchism, their violence and their anti-intellectualism, they were opposing what we have argued was necessarily a transitional phase, but which was the proof that the working-class was reacting against an alien system. That is, the movement could not be anti-capitalist without being necessarily and briefly anti-bourgeois, contemptuous for instance, of the juristic principles of legal agreements as it was of the legalised trickery of their exploiters. True, the Webbs were not uninfluenced by the "unrest", nor did Cole's formal and delusive economic federalism wholly convince him that in rejecting the formal programme of syndicalism and its institutional simplisme he had produced something as vital and emancipatory as the "unrest" had to suggest. But Cole's opposition to Syndicalism, and the Webbs contempt for it were signs of a deep intellectual and emotional estrangement from a working-class struggling to establish its identity and justification as something fundamentally different from, and opposed to, all other class rule, modes
of thought, modes of self-justification. This is attuned to the Marxism of the "Manifesto", but is in other senses far from making Marxist analyses such as were produced by Marx in the periods outside the two "revolutionary" phases of the 1840s and the overthrow of the Second Empire. This problem of detaching intellectuals from the dominant culture which is also used as a source of ideologies to justify class domination requires a major imaginative effort - into what Fanon calls the "primitive Manichaeism" of colonial society - "that is to say that the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown."..."there is no truthful behaviour: and the good is quite simply that which is evil for 'them'." For the British workers, as for the Algerian people, "this obstinate point of view of the masses, which may seem shrunken and limited, is in the end the most worthwhile and the most efficient mode of procedure." By temperament and training, however, intellectuals are unlikely to wish to take responsibility for just those movements they have been trying to start.

Fabian opposition to the "unrest", however, goes beyond, in its vehemence and its appeals for allies, a temperamental uncertainty. It becomes implicit opposition to the mass movement, a desire to extinguish or re-direct class "spontaneity" - in essence, to return to the pre-unrest days. And yet,

"Must we shrink from reason, from justice, from virtue and happiness? Suppose that the inevitable consequence of communicating truth were the temporary introduction of such a scene as has just been described (- "the most hateful scene" of massacre), must we on that account refuse to communicate it? The crimes that were perpetrated

7 cf H.P. Adams, Karl Marx in his Earlier Writings (1965 edn.)
8 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (Penguin books edn., 1967, p.39)
would in no just estimate appear to be the result of truth, but of the error which had previously been infused"...."And by what means suppress truth, and keep alive the salutary intoxication, the tranquillizing insanity of mind which some men desire? Such has been too generally the policy of government through every age of the world. Have we slaves? We must assiduously retain them in ignorance. Have we colonies and dependencies? The great effort of our care is to keep them from being too populous and prosperous. Have we subjects? It is by impotence and misery that we endeavour to render them supple: plenty is fit for nothing but to make them unmanageable, disobedient and mutinous."^9

Beatrice Webb, in promising to revise the second part of this equation was put into a position where she had to deny the first part: not, after Godwin, because the abhorrence of violence agonizingly forced her to do so, but because she recognised the importance and possibly the irreversibility of the choice facing the labour movement - estrangement and independence or amelioration, integration and acquiescence in the policies of the possessing class, and in the values of its intellectuals.10

The Webbs were abroad for much of the unrest of 1911-12. Sharp wrote to Beatrice on the coal strike, bringing out the incompatibility of such strikes with ordered social life - the "appalling consequences of a few weeks without coal" which the press stressed. The public maintained that "The whole thing has been organised by grasping Socialist agitators, but it is true unions have had a hard time and any way since they are all acting together they've got us in the hollow of their hand

10 R.G.Ridker (in Economic Development and Cultural Change, Oct.1962, sup.cit.) has argued that in fact the coercive power of the government (and presumably, the will to use it) alone sets the limit to the structuring of aspirations and hence of work-involvement in its subjects. This "encouragement of spontaneity" involves its containment within a determined plan: thus the "choice" open to the mass of the workers is shown even here to depend absolutely on those with the power to dispose of the social product. It is, however, more reasonable to assume that the plan, or the deception, can never be perfect, that conflicts of interest will not be wholly reducible to a harmony of aspiration - that consequently such concepts as state sovereignty - or political monism - are only apprehended specifically, and that those who are non-revolutionary must be implicitly anti-revolutionary.
and the only sane thing to do is to give them all they ask as soon as possible - even if it means the State taking over the mines."

Sectional action thus leads to the State having to intervene to take over administration of industry from and for the owners. But necessarily, such action coerces the State: "The 'State within the State' has suddenly come to its full power - it will surely never forget that it has had 'the strongest Government of modern times' practically on its knees suing for peace." That is, the workers seemed to be confronting in their occupational capacity their electoral function with hostility. The affair, Sharp continued "marks the beginning of a new phase in the class war - possibly a very dangerous phase." Indeed, where a Marxist tactician might advocate holding up the government by the votes of the workers in order the more easily to vitiate its strike-breaking activities, the Webbs seem to have seen only a paradox of civic function, and an irreducible problem of sovereignty.

"Perhaps the Socialists will yet have a chance of appearing in the role of the saviours of Society - saviours from the unthinkable disasters of Syndicalism."\[11\]

The choice presented was between a support for the idea of State sovereignty, involving of course support or neutrality towards the specific methods of the pre-, if not counter-revolutionary government, and chaos.

The "great fillip to extraparliamentary action", which "can hardly be called Syndicalism, but...does betoken, I think, a great revulsion of feeling towards the revolutionary method of the strike and a corresponding indifference to parliamentary action"

was seen as no more than at best a complementary movement to the established institutions of the labour movement. Rather than the movement

\[11\] Clifford Dyce Sharp to Beatrice Webb, 6.3.12 (Passfield Papers). It is not always possible to differentiate in this section between Beatrice's, Sidney's, and 'the Webbs' opinions.
taking a new direction, the unrest was a sign that workers were catching up:

"the general level of intelligence and education is so much higher, and there ought to be no such fall back now as there was in the years after the '89 Dock Strike and in previous periods."12

Thus from the start, the Webbs were being advised that the movement was economic and sectional: in any case, municipal socialism for them represented not federalism, still less proletarianisation, but a measure of the evolution towards collectivism. The Webbs' attack on Syndicalism was comparable to Shaw's in the 1890s on anarchism as "unsocialism": in 1901 Shaw had written to Sidney that

"Rosebery missed his chance when he was Prime Minister not only because, as he alleges, the time was not ripe for his Imperialism, but also because he himself was not ripe for the Collectivism which was the true economic substance of that Imperialism."13

The Webbs were deeply involved not only in the political life of the established parties, but in the theories of development towards Imperialism

12 The term "Syndicalism" is used throughout this chapter in distinction to the word "unrest" not to imply a body of doctrine, but the "theoretisation" of the unrest - as Lansbury put it, "in effect Trade Unions as we have known them will disappear and Syndicalism take its place" (to B.Webb, 1.11.11.) - that is, Syndicalism here stands both for the institutions, the tactics, and the theory. Lloyd, quoted here (to B.Webb, 6.11.11.) regarded the "unrest" as a repository of action - "conserve the best things in the outside unrest - the growing feeling of solidarity, the demand for better conditions, the eagerness for organisation, and so on - and at the same time to combine it with a better and clearer and more constructive action in Parliament" - that is, neither as a specific nor a passing protest.

13 G.B.Shaw to S.Webb, 26.7.01. (Passfield Papers). See too Bernard Semmel Imperialism and Social Reform, English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914 (1960) on the connection between the Webbs, the Co-Efficients, and social-imperialism. Also useful in this context is A.M.Gollin's Proconsul in Politics: a study of Lord Milner in Opposition and in Power (1964), for a biography of one whose political style and fears ran close to many of the Webbs' associates.
and Collectivism which influenced the contacts they had among the young men in both parties — and which thus, bar a revolution, seemed certain to dominate political life for a generation. They were themselves influenced by, and had influenced German revisionism, accepting Beer's suggestion that the SPD "have learned from Clausewitz and Moltke: to strike only with superior numbers. Erst wagen, dann Wagen." The alliance between imperialism, collectivism — and a mass socialist party, was further reinforced by the acceptance of the SPD's existence — and moderation — by Liberal politicians. Churchill in 1905 suggested a letter should be written to Bernstein, asking his opinion on SPD attitudes to tariffs.

Behind conventional party divisions, then, and the formal proceedings in parliament, the Webbs perceived the ideas which united their potential allies of right and left — especially the connection between imperialism and reformism. Seeing this connection, it became hard for them to conceive of one policy without the other. Again, not only were they struck by the reality of inter-party and inter-class collaboration through a parliament acting as a national clearing-house for legislation, but they had never been impressed with the possibility of independent working class organisation. At national level this appeared to them unhistorical, ill-
informed, selfish and unaware of the new bases of unification -
imperialism, social reform, - which were eroding class divisions. With
surprise, Sidney Webb wrote to Beatrice in 1908, quoting R.C.Phillimore's
opinion that

"in his experience the casual, unskilled labourer is quite often
a man of as much native ability as the skilled artizan; and that
accident and heredity and opportunity so largely determine which
boys learn trades, that much could be done in the way of training
the laborers",

In fact, though the potential of the unskilled is recognised - albeit
from a considerable social distance - it is only as a potential to cease
being unskilled.16

Further, the programme of social reform from above advocated by
Sidney and Beatrice could help only those unable to help themselves.

"It is only 3 to 1 against any person becoming an aged pensioner
now - with all the discouragement to thrift (and rate in aid of
wages) that such a system affords. Why demoralise subjectively
these 400,000 who could not have saved the pension anyhow."17

That section of the working-class to benefit from the Webbs's reforms was
poor, impotent, and unskilled. Other Fabians too saw the workers in terms
of traditional polarities - Shaw wrote to Burns that

"As Jimmy Macdonald shrewdly says, the majority of them are
instinctively on the side of Chamberlain, which really means
that they are on the side of Carlyle and Ruskin, who never
bowed the knee to Manchester."18

But this smacks of a "faute de mieux" instinct - and one which does not
seem to have attracted the working class to Chamberlain's followers after

16 S.Webb to B.Webb, 19.4.08.(Passfield Papers).
It is interesting that in 1891, (12.12.91) Sidney Webb was speaking of
the Society as a "revolutionary movement", complaining that he had "lost
the confidence of a certain section of the younger members by entering
upon public life as a candidate."

17 S.Webb to B.Webb, 14.5.90. (Passfield Papers).

18 G.B.Shaw to John Burns, 11.9.03. (ibid.)
1903. To see the workers as almost pre-political appendages of the parties was to concentrate upon the two party system as a constant in political life. The Fabian emphasis on Administrative Socialism - "undoubtedly our speciality: the rest was common ground for all the societies"¹⁹ - thus excluded distinctive class action.

The revolutionary movement, Beatrice implied, was itself no match for the wiles of the governing class: "Imagine a German Social Democrat leader playing golf with a German Prime Minister!"²⁰ One may continue in this vein by stressing that there is in the Webb local government collection evidence of increasing immiseration, which makes a curious contrast with the hopes placed on the new collectivism: in January 1913, there were 670,000 on poor relief in England and Wales: local figures collected for 1905 showed substantial increases in paupers in large industrial centres.²¹ The evidence of an increasing percentage of paupers

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¹⁹ G.B.Shaw to S.Webb, 21.10.07. - on Wells (ibid.)
²⁰ B.Webb to Lady Betty Balfour, 22.8.1$. (Passfield Papers)
²¹ Figures in the Map of Poor Law Unions compiled from local surveys, and the IGB Intelligence Dept. report, 14.9.15 (Coll. Misc. 314.v.a.(LSE))

The no 11 District report shows figures for pauperism in the years 1885, 1895 and 1905 increasing for Liverpool from 3.8 to 4.8 to 5.2%: Manchester from 2.9 to 4.2%, Salford from 2.1 down to 1.8 and up to 2.6%, and Oldham moving overall from 1.2 to 1.6%. The point is not to demonstrate that this is necessarily clear evidence of increasing immiseration - but that the Webbs might so use it, might expect that the incidence of poverty and the communication of statistics on poverty might excite a protest in the country - and might even feel that the methods they advocated for its removal might legitimately be questioned. In fact, however, it was not only their own position within the constitutional movement, but their belief that in an efficient system there would have to be some coercion for the "degenerates" which removed them from an understanding of the insecure and of the system which created, profited from, this insecurity.
may not affect the working population in direct proportion as it increases - but one feels that a revolt against insecurity and poverty, supported by evidence which the Webbs' research teams had been collecting for years, might deserve more consideration than it was in the event accorded. In 1907, Peter Fyfe had written in "The Problem of the Outworker" of the "selfish interest, on the party of individual manufacturers, (which) plays the villain's part in the making of some of these figures" - such as rates of 3d an hour for shirt finishing, 1d for twelve shirts - weekly wages of 1/10 for 60 hours work and so forth. These domestic outworkers growing into the expert, the average and the unfit plunged less spectacularly into chronic insecurity than the carter who "fell off a lorry when removing a flitting and injured his leg" - but it is more than ego-involvement in a certain method and measure of reform which turned the Webbs against violent and direct remedial action.

It is possible that beneath the figures - like the 230,000 children on poor relief in October 1914 - the Webbs perceived the irreversible consequences of neglect and deprivation - hoping by their working dinners to avoid the recurrence of malnutrition among the poor and their children. They knew of the "alarming measure of mental defect", the "industrial inefficiency" resulting from

"the lack of appropriate training of boys and girls and from the ill effects of casual occupation on after life"

- even

"the increasing presence in our large industrial centres of a

22 Peter Fyfe, chief sanitary inspector: The problem of the outworker (paper read to the Anderston Health Society, 7.3.07)(Passfield Papers.)
23 Glasgow Asst.Inspector's reports of Cases for Relief Appeal Committee (Local Govt. Papers, Passfield Papers, LSE)(27.2.07)
24 LGB Circular, 8.10.14 (Passfield Papers).
class that manifests to a serious extent defects of discipline and a lack of family and social responsibility."\textsuperscript{25}

The stress on efficiency, rationality, and the reliance on the conversion of young career politicians seems somehow to exclude the inefficient, the less-than-rational: the shattered lives of men like James Scott, 62, a hammerman whose health broke down after three weeks as a labourer - he had chronic bronchitis - the paternalism and moral condescension towards a woman refused relief "as the above locality is a bad one, (and) I cannot in view of her unsatisfactory history, recommend out-door relief"\textsuperscript{26} - these were victims the Webbs could not save. It is as if, moreover, the victims themselves were holding up the Webbs' schemes: they epitomised, after all, the worst features of the system the Webbs wished to improve. The "shopkeeper type nearly all with broad accent and lacking in any literary culture" might run local government, men like the old Liberals, "public spirited, experienced, successful but dull, inarticulate men" were unexciting enough - how much more so must the workers appear?\textsuperscript{27}

It is harsh, perhaps, to blame the Webbs for a lack of emotional commitment to the existing workers and a distance from the experiential influences on working-class organisations and ideas. Reform of a local government carried out "in the barparlor of the Salford Arms and that of the

\textsuperscript{25} Typescript - Chairman of the National Poor Law Reform Association, 4.5.10. (ibid.)

\textsuperscript{26} Glasgow Asst. Inspector's reports, 25.4.07 (sup.cit.) In view of the massive support given to work with which the Society was associated by Trade Unions and other socialist and labour organisations - James Macdonald said (5.10.05) that the Central Workers' Committee was backed by 96 Trade Unions, 14 Trades Councils, 3 unemployed workers' committees, 2 LRC's, the SDP and ILP - and in view of the obstinacy of the LGB (its Intelligence Department said (after Ramsay Macdonald) that the Minority Report "is but a Socialist document - our old proposals paraphrased, brought up to date as to facts and experience and issued at the public expense"), insistence on permeation seems the more curious.

\textsuperscript{27} Webbs Local Govt. Coll., vol. 158, (Lancs.) (LSE).
old King's Head, Chapel Street" from 1854 to 1881 in Salford,\textsuperscript{28} or of D Division in Manchester where in 1897

"it has been shown that the drink influence on the Watch Committees had been so strong as to keep in office a Superintendent who had been in league with the owners of brothels and public houses"\textsuperscript{29} was justified prima facie. In the absence of specifically working-class ideas capable of compelling reform or securing revolution, the policy of conversion, permeation, reform candidates and so on, is clearly of service. Beatrice Webb may again, arguably, have correctly diagnosed the nature of capitalism, the role of the working-class and the feasibility of reform. But such evidence is not incontrovertible.

However, her recognition of distance, and hence of difference in objective, from those whose condition she proposed to change, makes Beatrice Webb's reaction to the unrest crucial and revealing. Ultimately it involved the choice between supporting a movement to perfect and legitimate the social philanthropy and administrative efficiency of a self-transforming capitalism, and one to effect a massive re-distribution of authority, property rights and social relationships by the workers themselves. C.D.Sharp proposed that there was no hope for the middle class influencing the workers "from underneath": Phillimore's proposal that the Fabians should identify themselves with the strike movement was

"an example of how the recent labour unrest has affected some sentimentalists - middle class people and middle-class notions are no longer worth thinking about, it's the dear working men themselves who matter and with whom we must get in touch! And the queer thing is that they think..that they can throw off middle-class ideals like a coat - never realising that their latest good intentions are in themselves superlatively middle-class".\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} ibid. vol. 160 (Salford, quoted in Manchester Examiner, 26.9.93)
\item \textsuperscript{29} ibid. vol. 158.
\item \textsuperscript{30} C.D.Sharp to Beatrice Webb, 9.8.12 (Passfield Papers).
\end{itemize}
As long as such identification remained merely one based on "good intentions", that might be true. But Fabianism itself begins to resemble an attempt to abolish not the class system, nor the wage system - but the working class, here seen as class enemies, or class competitors, a stereotype of ignorance and dullness.

Beatrice Webb herself produced as her reason for opposing Scientific Management in Britain one derived from her belief that

"It may be possible to introduce (the system) among the degraded declassed foreign populations of the United States," - but in Britain, it would be resisted. And yet the essentials were being introduced in Britain as she wrote, and no less degrading forms of labour were commonplace. So long as the working class stood for a residual conservatism, their changing position in relation to large companies, and the growth of monopoly conditions could be ignored. Sidney Webb's road to power was indeed to be by way of familiarity and gradual acceptance:

"People are getting less hostile, more people are getting aware of the movement, it is more and more getting taken for granted, and when the statesmen are forced to deal with it, they will find the pressure considerable"

- the problem was, he continued "how to get into the mind of the governing class and the governing clique? That I feel less hopeful about at the moment"...and four days later "But it is a little disheartening to realise how utterly out of connection all these teeming millions (are) with the governing cliques."

32 S.Webb to B.Webb, 8.10.10. (Passfield Papers)
33 S.Webb to B.Webb, 10.10.10. (ibid.)
34 S.Webb to B.Webb, 14.10.10. (ibid.)
frightening the politicians - and this meant retaining a faith in the "good sense", moderation and conservatism of the mass of the workers, involving inevitably opposition to militant working-class socialism.

The policy of influencing the dominant class was urged despite the problems facing pressure groups like the Fabians, and small parties. He described the social distance between himself and the workers, and the workers' parties and even access to local office on a visit to Brechin:

"This morning I had to go over the mill (coarse linen) the women earning 10/- or 12/- a week, a few men 18/- to 20/- at tenting, finishing, packing etc. The ILP and SDP are very strong here, but of course they know nothing and can effect nothing practically. Each of these little places has separate Town Council, School Board and Parish Council, with separate clerks and offices and establishment on a minute scale." 39

Outside times of crisis, the Fabians seemed merely another group on the periphery of the labour and socialist movement, providing evidence, maintaining a steady reformist pressure. In crisis, however, the consequences of chosen methods and analyses became clearer: where, for instance Mrs Webb proposed state authority to consider "neglected infamy, neglected childhood and adolescence, old age, feeble mindedness and unemployment." 36

Moral and physical degeneracy - the fear of which might attract men like the Bishop of Exeter to racialism - "The place for the white working man will get smaller and smaller," the "yellow peril" will not "harm..the better

35 S. Webb to B Webb, 21.10.10. (ibid.) The method of approach was to appear as spokesman for the workers' interest, without actually representing the workers: "I am in communication with the Trades Unions. Their representatives whom I interviewed have been quite friendly. However, as I agree with you that it is a matter of prime importance that their support should be ensured to any scheme, I will make a point of keeping in close touch with them" wrote Lloyd George in March, 1911 (1.3.11.) That Sidney Webb's exhortations to remember the unions did not necessarily reveal a close identification with the immediate claims of the members is given some weight by the evidence quoted by V.L. Allen, in "Militant Trade Unionism" (1966) from Sidney Webb in the second Labour government. (p. 49).

36 Beatrice Webb to Georgina Meinertzhagen (n.d.) (Passfield Papers)
class except the great harm of degrading their moral ideals" — will be removed or tended under Fabian collectivism. But it will not be removed by the workers themselves — save as an aggregate of voters: thus the emancipation of the working class will be not the work of the proletariat itself, but of the politicians of the old system, morally and intellectually convinced of the inefficiency and waste in capitalism. The workers themselves are, by definition and of necessity, to be kept from a major role in the political process of emancipation. The "man in the street" may be "pro-strikers" — but it is he who "wants the strike ended and blames the Government for not ending it" — and thus his opinion, not the strategy of organised labour, emerges as the dynamic factor in the situation: the government's choice is between the selfishness or justice of the workers' and the owners' claims — but what decides them is the pressure of community opinion, not the nature of capitalism, the interests of members of the government, but this opinion's fleeting derivatives perceived largely intuitively by politicians and Fabians.

Yet the Fabian assumption that a simple reordering of priorities was possible itself was doubtful: "Joe's war had stopped Joe's pensions" said Balfour — and in trying to reverse such a ranking without breaking the admitted functional connection between the two, there was little reason to hope this was less than utopian. In 1914 Sidney Webb wrote a short political testament to Gustav Steffan the Swedish economist on the war:

"Do not believe any statement that the whole United Kingdom — nay the whole British Empire from Canada to India — is not wholeheartedly in favour of fighting out this war to the bitter

37 Letter from the Bishop of Exeter, Lord William Gascoyne, 20.3.12. How close this could come to an identification of immigrants with radical political opinions could be seen in a wide range of popular literature (cf William le Queux, The Invasion of 1910 (1906)) and "serious" politico-economic racialism, like W.H.Wilkins's The Alien Invasion (1892)

38 C.D.Sharp to Sidney Webb, 22.3.12. (Passfield Papers)

end. I have never in all my life seen England so united in feeling.\textsuperscript{40}

True enough, this unity diminished somewhat from "the most glorious victory which the proletariat of the two worlds has to its credit", the "greatest economic battle which the organised proletariat has waged since the world began."\textsuperscript{41} It can also be argued that the concessions made by politicians to the reformers, by men "prepared to do anything in reason that may tend to prevent the coming nightmare of Syndicalism\textsuperscript{42} were slender enough, yielding little enough to revolutionary socialism, and, by Webb's description, achieving in subsequent crisis unparalleled patriotic unity - a unity which was in any case foreshadowed in the 1911 Agadir crisis.

Again, the logic whereby efficient and "correct" government action might be preferred to "spontanists" is evident: Gillespie said the South African government's deportations of labour leaders might "teach the wild people that Revolutions could not be made on the assumption of peace and law and order."\textsuperscript{43} In fact, it looked as if the suspicion with which Fabians regarded the workers was only matched by the indifference with which trade unionists greeted the "concessions": Lloyd quoted two examples of this - reluctance to take part in the Insurance Sections of trade unions, and the determination of workers to insist upon changing social relationships at workplace, rather than national, level: a Sussex crossing-keeper, for instance "says he doesn't believe in strikes, but at the same time the present state of things is intolerable. It doesn't matter whether

\textsuperscript{40} Sidney Webb to Gustav Steffan, 11.9.14. (Passfield Papers)

\textsuperscript{41} Cipriani and Vandervelde quoted in C.D.Sharp to B.Webb, 10.4.12. (Passfield Papers).

\textsuperscript{42} ibid.

\textsuperscript{43} Sidney Webb to Beatrice Webb, 28.1.14. (Passfield Papers)
you are a trade Unionist or not, the Company treats you like dogs."44

Clearly, disillusion with conciliation and with the State cum private insurance schemes stemmed from similar estrangement from the concepts of equity and social service as administered by private industry and Liberal government.

The failure of the Labour Party to oppose the Insurance Bill, thus "throwing away the best opportunity they would ever have of rousing the working classes generally about anything"45 was itself an implicit recognition that the centre of gravity had moved away from debates in the Commons, that extra-parliamentary action, whether by government, owners or strikers was evolving new methods and using new political techniques. Whether the danger came from the use of force by strikers – leading to retaliation – or

"the panic-stricken state of the public. The 'Shoot-'em-down' school is very much in evidence....If only the authorities will keep clear the distinction between the strikers and the hooligans it will be all right;"

- the government justified its action in terms of a defence of law and order, but with a promptness and eagerness and scale more appropriate to counter-revolution.

44 C.M.Lloyd to B.Webb, 16.4.12. (Passfield Papers). Again, it is probably unnecessary to abstain from arguing that this indifference to "reform" is prima facie evidence to support the view that reform at best was a palliative, and to be effective even on those terms, would need to be a great deal more generous than the Liberal reforms. It is argued throughout the chapter, that the Webbs' belief that reluctance to push for a reformist programme implied an anomie and uninterest on the part of the working-class was as likely to be based on a refusal or inability to perceive the defects of reformism – and its unpopularity: that the complained-of slowness of the movement was both expressive of dissatisfaction with traditional policies and a search for new ones.

45 C.D.Sharp to Beatrice Webb, 30.7.11. (Passfield Papers)(quoting the opinions of Snowden and Lansbury). On the tactical failure of the Labour Party to pursue a reformist policy – which marked, of course, an intellectual failure to appreciate the parameters of such a policy – see the ILP conference reports, 1910-14!
"A great many people seem to think that the Social Revolution has come at last. I gather from Lady Betty (Balfour) that her people rather think so." 46

In fact, threats of violence by strikers were of largely symbolic importance - exhortations, a withdrawal of legitimacy from the existing order, and a warning to those wishing to provoke violence themselves. Indeed, one feels here that the middle class were appalled by the potential ferocity, bestiality of the class whose monstrosity was now being checked only by the police and the soldiers. Lady Betty quoted a report that

"The women madder than the men - Naked to the waist - yelling at tops of their voices and hurling ginger beer bottles at the carts carrying provisions - and at the tram car conductors - having broken the necks to make them jagged!" 47

Here at last was an uprising of the wretched of the earth who would not wait for schemes of improvement forced upon a reluctant government by alarmed and exasperated bourgeois reformers - and the reformers themselves were alarmed by the violence of reaction as "the men" came face to face with their governors en masse - and with the army and navy of their governors. The "men were furious and said they would be d--d if they accepted any suggestion from him" 48 - said Lady Betty of Asquith's handling of negotiations in the railway strike.

In this context, the war which the Liberals were expecting - Churchill in 1911 told Balfour

"that he was now all for a big naval programme and convinced that Germany meant to pick a quarrel with us within the next two or three years. Arthur met Sir Edward Grey at Balmoral and reported

46 W.A.Colegate to Sidney Webb, 18.8.11. (Passfield Papers). Edwardian tranquillity naturally had a positive aspect which demanded that disturbance should be punished and swiftly suppressed: this was the tranquillity of "those who would be tranquil."

47 Lady Betty Balfour to Beatrice Webb, 2.10.11. (Passfield Papers)

48 ibid.
that he took the same grave tone"

- became one in which they depended absolutely on the loyalty of the workers. Books like Le Queux's "The Invasion of 1910" had shown the dangers of a fifth column of discontented foreign-influenced militants behind the lines. Concessions by owners, especially when of a kind conceded by their fellows, were a small price to pay for the unity required to secure the maintenance of the system of existing property relations. As Pat Rafferty sang "What do you think of the Irish now?" - referring to the notional transfer of Irish militancy to the British side in South Africa: legislation for a minimum and unspecified wage for miners would be little enough to pay for the loyalty of the suppliers of coal to the imperial navy, and if this was seen as gained under duress, as the crises receded here was simply a statutory recognition of the role of the state as regulator of industrial relations.

Whether the government acted as responsible for the collective survival of the owners of property, even if this meant coercing the die-hards, or whether as supporting short-term consumer interests under capitalism, taking care to blunt the edge of producer-militancy, it was essential that legal forms should be preserved. Preserved, that is, for the long term: successful holding action in the short term was its own justification. The leading forces of capitalism, the functional connections between expanding capitalism and the representatives of the non-owning masses, - these were the dynamic and concealed elements, - in

49 ibid. And, in some ways, the army and police were licensed to show "enough" brutality to prove their loyalty to their class-masters, their willingness to charge or shoot down, members of their own social strata.

50 That is, parliamentary sovereignty and the authority of statute might be strengthened by reformism.

51 "Success" in terms of the resolution of conflict without making concessional generalisations of the common good as "our inter-national trade".
which the Marconi scandal was a brief and lurid exposure. The closer the connection between economic expansion, the justifications of the methods employed in such expansion, and the government, the greater the reliance of the government on the co-operation of the propertied and the acceptability of their industrial relations - the more the passivity of the consumer became a function of activity of financial and industrial capitalists. Social reform could thus be directed at those unable to consume (or indeed to produce efficiently), and the producers. The arguments for this might be put in terms of humanity or necessity - but they did not depend on the socialisation of the means of production.

"The 'governing classes' were, and are, badly shaken. Indeed, they seem to be taking it far more seriously than it deserves - and that is saying a good deal. I have gathered from one or two quarters...that the Tories are still seeing visions of a bloody revolution which will inevitably come upon them if they don't behave - and very likely if they do. I think it has given an enormous impetus to 'social reform' of all kinds - we ought to see a lot done in the next few years."  

In English Conservatism there has necessarily been a considerable element of "après eux la Déjuge." Liberals, however, were as capable of counter-insurgent bravado, and arguably more determined.

In 1895, S.R. Compston wrote of the shooting at Featherstone:

"If we grant that Mr Asquith is obliged to send soldiers at the request of any shipowning, or coalowning, JP we expect a man, who professes such sympathy with the working classes as he does, to take some little interest or care in the work the soldiers are put to do. He might have said, hesitate to shoot. It was not necessary that he should go about the country, bullying and bragging of what he had done and boasting that he will do it again. He may forget Mitchelstown, but shall we forget Featherstone?"

The protection of property from those who have contributed to its

52 C.D. Sharp to Sidney Webb, 28.10.11. (Passfield Papers). The importance of quoting so extensively for this formative period of 1911-12 from correspondence is that the Webbs had to rely on the press and letters sent to them on their world tour in this period.

53 S.R. Compston (of the Macclesfield and District Trades and Labour Council) to Sidney Webb (9.11.93) (Passfield Papers).
accumulation by methods and under conditions from which they withhold legitimacy and from whose enjoyment they are excluded, precludes a "neutral" activity by the government - there is a range of manoeuvre - (as between a Giolitti and a Mussolini, a Simon and a Baldwin) - but the rationale is ultimately common.

The impact of the unrest on the Fabians - if indeed there is a homogeneous group covered by the term - was conditioned by the non-manual attitudes of the members as well as their conceptions of social development. Nor were these attitudes found only in the Society: trade unionists like Barnes had said after Taff Vale that there must be some social restraint on the demands of trade unions, such as Taff Vale supplied - some "vetting" of anti-social demands, apparently irrespective of who vetted, and what were the dominant norms and objectives of society. Beatrice Webb's own opposition to Syndicalism was that

"Syndicalism has taken the place of the old-fashioned Marxism. The angry youth, with bad complexion, frowning brow and weedy figure, is now always a Syndicalist; the glib young workman whose tongue runs away with him to-day mouths the phrases of French Syndicalism instead of those of German Social Democracy. The inexperienced middle-class idealist has accepted with avidity the ideal of the Syndicalist as a new and exciting Utopia. But to the Trade Union organiser or to the Labour Member of a municipality, Syndicalism appears as a fantastic dream barely worth considering. So far as we can foresee, Syndicalism will disrupt the BSP, it will detach some of the branches of the ILP and some important Fabians, it will increase discontent with the Labour Party - but it will have no appreciable effects on the larger currents of Trade Unionism."  

Thus Beatrice Webb was harder on Syndicalism and less impressed by its supposed achievements in 1911 than its critics among her correspondents.

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54 G.N.Barnes to Sidney Webb, 9.6.03. (Passfield Papers) Barnes proposed that "the best method of industrial remuneration is one which while being based upon a standard rate of time wages, yet introduces the element of payment by results by premium or bonus." It may be possible to escape the moral accolade implicit in a premium or a bonus, but not the social approval imposed by such a categorisation. A wage system justified by individual effort circumvents discussion of the collective effort required to re-order the wage system itself.

55 Diaries, 11.10.12. (MS, Passfield Papers).
There is no suggestion that Syndicalism could bring the workers closer to her position, and her to theirs: the stereotype of the Syndicalist as one like Lansbury, with "a sentimentally disruptive mind, forceful feeling, unguided by reason" deprives the workers of their humanity by depriving them of the same feelings and reactions as their class enemies. 56

In addition, the attack was less than fair either to the aims and methods advocated by rank-and-file strike leaders of 1911 and 1912, who in general toned down the demands of their followers, and over-optimistic as to the ameliorative effects of social reform within the existing political and social system. A General Strike, she said in 1926, "aims at coercing the whole community and is only successful if it does so and in so far as it does so". Here, indeed, a defence of democracy became an attack on direct producers' self-government: yet how was the machinery of coercion derived from capitalist society to be removed, if a fresh coercive element be introduced - the "community", which in some aspect or other is surely always coercing or being coerced? Beatrice Webb conceived of this coercing-coerced "community" as being "good-natured": after all, it could hardly take seriously the form which its coercion by strike took - "a batch of compulsory Bank Holidays without any opportunities for recreation and a lot of dreary walking to and fro." Such coercion by inaction was, predictably, seen as a "monstrous irrelevance in the sphere of social reform." 57

It is not revealing to press the point that the middle-class and administrative virtues which Beatrice Webb stressed in her opposition to Syndicalism carry rather more conviction than her remarks on the coercion.

56 ibid.

57 Diaries, 4.5.26.
implicit in strikes, the needs of the community and so on. What is significant for the labour movement was not that the Webbs were not converted to direct action, but that the shape of their argument - on the necessary connection between social reform, governmental neutrality vis-a-vis social class, and the avoidance of revolutionary and insurrectionary tactics - continued to convince many in the labour party and unions that the apparent failure of the strike movement validated the Webbs' analysis.

In fact, the efficacy of social reform at this time was unproven and suspect, government neutrality was politically, legally and socially impossible - and the criticisms of unrest were neither comfort nor analysis to the proletariat. Beatrice Webb's statement that "All advance of socialism might, perhaps even must, take the form of money bills - now that the cleavage between parties is chiefly a cleavage with regard to ownership of property," implied a position where not only was direct action precluded, but where the development of society was wholly haphazard and conjunctural: a "useful little dinner"..."to help forward Haldane's Territorial Army scheme" might indeed appeal to reason rather than emotion, but to assume that social reform could be an end itself and its formal enactment determine the remaining characteristics of social life, appealed to neither. At the time of Ulster, she remarked that for "about three days members of the governing class glared at each other and social entertainments

58 After all, insofar as the General Strike was "another nail in the coffin of uncontrolled capitalist enterprise", she had to recognise that coercion of the community, as she put it, might well involve coercion of the capitalists.

59 Diaries, 27.9.09.

60 ibid. 19.6.06.
were boycotted by one of the party clans or the other" — a curious comment to make at a time of alleged civil war in view of the fact that a strike for a living wage could bring the parties together, terrified of revolution — while she believed it would be possible not only to secure social reform, but socialism itself with the full acceptance of these same people.

"Her reaction to the "unrest" when it was over was to encourage attempts to ensure that an uncontrolled revolt would not again arise from emotion:

"To some extent the enquiry bears out the guild ideal regarded as a trend towards control by the producers of commodities and services," — though the brainworkers must have their own role and organisation in the new framework, as necessary obstacles to "cruder forms of syndicalism and guild socialism". But these "concessions" to producers' control were as much barriers to spontaneity as programmes for revolutionary unions: a society organised for efficiency was more likely to define its "efficiency" in terms of the capitalist efficiency of leading sectors in the economy.

61 ibid. 22.4.14.

62 Curious, that is, in that her description of the "progressive movement" in 1910 was couched in more desperate terms: "The financial basis of the Labour Party has been smashed by the Osborne Judgment. The Labour Members are being attacked by a considerable section of the ILP. The Trade Union movement is distracted by the insurrection of large bodies of its members against their officials - an "insurrection" which involves repudiation of agreements made by the officials. Meanwhile Tom Mann, recently returned from Australia, is preaching General Trades Unionism and the General Strike and running down political action...." The contrast between this and her conviction that the governing class would not split over Ireland is not so much a case of selective perception - as recognition that to get the possessing class to accept "socialism", she must not appear closely involved with a divided and violent proletariat, nor to advocate a socialism to advance a workers' state.

63 Diaries, 14.2.15 (Passfield Papers)

64 ibid.
and in terms of the direction of trends within profit-making industry, towards concentration and monopoly, for instance, than in terms of the immediate demands and organisational improvisation of the spontanists.

Beatrice Webb in fact hoped even from the 1880s, when she was more impressed by attempts at workers' self-government than later, that the workers would acquire capitalist virtues and skills - that they would inter-penetrate with the middle class, achieving both social recognition and retaining the desire to transcend a capitalist society whose mores these declassed technocrats would so fully share.

"As I drove rapidly down the steep streets of Burnley I thought sadly of the mingled ignorance, suspicion and fine aspirations of this small body of working class capitalists," she wrote in 1889. If the workers could not become capitalists, they could emulate them and share their aspirations: the 1889 union leaders had "a full appreciation of commercial and financial matters which makes one feel hopeful of the capacity for self-government of the working-class." One must not press this too far - but certainly she reacted to the 1889 strike more sharply and enthusiastically than to the later -

"Certainly the 'solidarity of labour' at the East End is a new thought to me - the dock labourers have not yet proved themselves capable of permanent organization but they have shown the capacity for common action"

- but the final evaluation carries reservations as well as additional praise - "of temperate and reasonable action." Different indeed was this

65 ibid. 17.4.89.

66 Diaries, Sept. 1889 TUC.

67 Diaries, 29.8.89. She saw the Dock Strike as an encouraging if primitive strike - important in that it awakened a public response, "through the agency of a powerful Press", and because a London strike had more commercial effect than a strike elsewhere. She seems, in fact, to have overestimated the unique qualities of the Dock Strike, and to have underestimated its international and cumulative effect.
solidarity from the

"socialist leaders with the dirty personalities with which they pelt each other, with their envy and malice against any leader and with their ignorance, one might almost say their contempt and hatred for facts — a crew of wretched reputations, politicians 'on the make', and paid intriguers from the Tory causes — interspersed it is true with beardless enthusiasts and dreamers of all ages and conditions — redeemed by a John Burns who seems to be a man with a conscience and a will."68

This opposition, then, between what was emotional, proletarian, direct, and non-empirical — and the approved-of reasonable, organised, professional, pragmatic helps to make up the stereotype and the condemnation of syndicalist action. True, in "What Syndicalism Means", the Webbs maintained that the worker "claims the right of a man: to be an end in himself, and not merely a means to someone else's end."69 But such an emancipation was unthinkable without the complex organisation even syndicalism would require, without discipline, an eye for the community's interest and, parallel to union action, political activity. Unrest itself is not condemned, so much as any theory which could feed on unrest without assuming the moral and bureaucratic form of Fabianism.

If Syndicalism was indeed "Egotistic Materialism",70 it shared this characteristic with capitalism. The "demoralising force"71 of profit now

68 Diaries, Spt. 1889 TUC sup. cit.
69 August 1912, Supplement to The Crusade. (p.151) The Webbs seem to have ignored the vestigial Marxism in Syndicalism — attacking attempts to destroy the wage system on the grounds that any money payment for labour was "wages" (p.138). It is hardly surprising that the failure of their attempt to fit a theory to behaviour and a movement (Syndicalism) — which the Webbs attacked for its incompleteness and incoherence — should leave them, and Cole, trying to find a movement to fit their theories, or their paradigms. Consequently it was predictable that their negative attitudes should have been adopted by the leaders of the labour movement, on the whole, rather than their positive alternatives.
70 ibid. p.150.
71 Diaries, 30.10.89 — of the middle-class, Beatrice Webb wrote "an experience of this class makes one wonder whether 'profit' is not on the whole a demoralising force" and profit sharing "a sharing of unlawful gains."
became the unlawful gain by strike action of privilege at the community's expense. The justification of reform and socialism was not so much emancipation - nor the sense of rightness and separateness underlying working-class political action - as improvement: raise "the status of labour" which "can only be done by the increased mental and moral training which follows leisure." But could this be done by what Mann called "tin-pot schemes", undertaken indeed by a "schemer"?

Could it be done especially when the collectivism implicit in administrative socialism abrogated the possibility of that "Individualism" which was the mark of capitalist enjoyment, of self-administration, and which must, under socialism, become the property of each? That is, after the Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Beatrice Webb is proposing that the "working, sober, economical, prosaic" values of the industrialist should be perpetuated in a state providing indeed "a wider sphere for the other's self-indulgence", yet as under capitalism, preventing an end to the compounding and confounding of things. This would involve preventing the full possibility of disposing of oneself, of the "Ability of mankind" which each and all partake of in their disalienated condition. The spontaneity which comes closest to this, Marx's spring-song, when the perception of discontinuity in the organisation and value-structure of society appears to present a glimpse of freedom - and an area of "open ground" to be covered rapidly and easily until the forces of the existing system reappear - is described here by Marx. Thereafter, in fact, Marx

72 Diaries, 19.11.89 - on Mann's advocacy of the 8 hour day.
73 13.1.91. V. Nash to Beatrice Webb concerning comments on Beatrice by Tom Mann.
74 K. Marx, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (NY, 1964) p. 156
75 ibid. p. 168.
was primarily concerned with social, political and economic situations where man was indeed a commodity: but one might well argue that the strike is the nearest experience under capitalism to a position where the worker escapes from his commodity-status, without resolving his conflict with nature and other men - hence the references to strikes as "playing", "holidaying", and so on. 76 In fact, however, the Webbs' formula stressing the need for a collectivism within the framework of the old society attempted to prevent an actual victory by the mass of the workers.

Beatrice Webb oscillated between a disillusion with the modes of reformism and despair at the slowness of embourgeoisement: the Royal Commission on Labour for instance was "a gigantic fraud. Made up of little known dialecticians - plus a carefully picked parcel of variegated labour men and the great rent landlords and capitalists pure and simple." 77 Her belief in the usefulness of such commissions, however "senile" they might become, contrasted sharply with her disapproval of Marxism: it was "melancholy to see Tom Mann reverting to the old views of the SDF and what is worse, to their narrow sectarian policy." 78 But in many ways, this policy of preferring to convert the opinion leaders of influence and authority in the system of administration and exploitation, rather than permeate the mass through the activities of a "Church" of convinced members, was based on class prejudice. The Derbyshire miners were "a stupid, solid lot of men, characterised by fair mindedness and kindliness - but oh! how dense!" 79

In theory, the criteria are of intelligence and constructive suggestion: "No

76 of Robert Blauner, Alienation and Freedom, The factory worker and his industry (U of Chicago, 1964)
77 Diaries, 24.12.92.
78 ibid. 23.1.95.
79 ibid. 12.11.95.
class of Englishmen can long tolerate the simple wrecker." But this is middle-class intelligence — or classless — and middle-class constructiveness. Bentham "was certainly Sidney's intellectual Godfather" — via Spencer: or rather, the mixture of London "card" and German professor, was further from the formative influences on the industrial proletariat than from the professional men of the second half of the nineteenth century, trying to patch up a vestigial entrepreneurial ideology with "social service" and science. This did not require Sidney to have a correspondence to common socialist categories: in 1901, for instance, "Sidney is pro-Boer in sentiment; he agrees with Asquith and Haldane, by reason, but he has not thought out the question, has paid little or no attention to it." The limitations of politicians lay more in their style, their intelligence, than their beliefs — "That lack of imagination and sensitiveness to needs lies at the root of Asquith's failure as a leader of men." Thus, education became a constant, an Helvetian trust: the railway directors were supporting the LSE "both as an educational training and as a test of capacity of their staff of clerks." This is reminiscent of Mansbridge boasting that the WEA was "a replica in miniature of English life".

80 ibid. 5.3.93.
81 ibid. 25.5.01.
82 ibid. 13.2.90.
83 ibid. 9.7.01. In 1902 "We are at present very thick with the "Limps"... (28.2.02)
84 ibid. 28.2.02.
85 ibid. 10.11.02.
Yet even here and on these terms the improvement in education, so often seen as one of the working-class's invisible earnings before 1914, was certainly not universal. Keeling, for instance, wrote that "It has not even been possible to enforce the apparently unconditional minimum age of 10, which was established by the English Act of 1876 and the Scottish Act of 1878." Holmes spoke of the teachers' manumission of 1895 leaving many "purblind": "the old régime, though nominally abrogated, overshadows us still." 'Results' in history, geography, nature study and English are seldom asked for by the inspector; and the teacher takes but little trouble to produce them." True, this is also an argument for further reform: but it may be also a strong argument for improved working-class education on a class basis - not from the elementary school teachers "as a rule uncultured and imperfectly educated, and...many, if not most - of them are creatures of tradition and routine..." The social purposes of education were clearly recognised by men like Canon Barnett - "The popularity of soldiering and the tales of the war may have given a new direction to the spirit of the boys." That there may be a causal connection between this and the "Black Hundreds" and "hooligans" in the cities, the "street fights" and "ruffianly acts" is not proposed by the Canon. Nor indeed, that low educational standards and the surfeit of messenger boys, station loungers and so on were a necessary

87 F.Keeling, Child Labour in the United Kingdom (1914) p.xxi.
88 Edward Holmes, What is and what might be (1911) p.116.
91 Canon and Mrs Barnett, Towards Social Reform (1909) p.182.
part of the low wage, low skill, policy – pursued among others by the railway companies. Reynolds remarked that

"'Twice one are two, twice two are four....' parrot-fashion, and 'Tommy, don't yer wish yer wuz a gen'leman?' are the two characteristics of our present educational system."  

In other words, it was not possible to divorce "education" from policies of industrial recruitment, the implanting in the workers' children, whether in indifference and lack of imagination, or by design, of a serviceable sense of deference and level of aspiration. Education was taking on, in the context of the Ruskin strike, the Plebs classes, the SLP groups, openly and explicitly, a specifically Socialist form – a development which Beatrice Webb would not only have difficulty in regarding as functional, but could regard as a perpetuation of that "old-fashioned Marxism" she had condemned from the 1890s.

The collaboration with other apparently hostile forces was in fact part of a conviction that Fabian socialism would act as a social infection, as it were, a beneficent virus attacking the healthiest of non- or anti-socialist bodies. Sidney could save his seat by an "appeal to the official Conservatives to support him, and he will have the enthusiastic support of Catholics and Church."  

So easily did the debate on collaboration in government by socialists pass over the Webbs, that Beatrice could write in 1904,

"if Jo could only grasp the whole policy of a National Minimum I would willingly throw in the import duties as a silly and expensive ornament to attract the employing class to the policy of state regulation."  

92 Stephen Reynolds, Seems So! A working-class view of politics (1911) p.47.
93 Diaries, 17.12.03.
94 ibid. 1.3.04.
- in other words, the principle of state regulation on behalf of the working class would be coupled with a similar incorporation into governmental machinery of the (supposed) interest of the employers.95

The bitterness and doubt she showed against the lapsed or the wild in the labour movement had indeed some elements of exasperated sympathy: but she herself remained profoundly convinced of the superior wisdom of the "governing classes", deeply suspicious of the possibility of the workers emancipating themselves - even to the point of trying to destroy an attempt to make a start on that road. When she said of Burns, that he had told her "They are all so kind to me," "especially the great employers, just the men who might have objected to my appointment" and she commented "Oh! The wisdom of England's governing class" she effectively showed that the two of them were in the same dilemma.96 Rejecting and rejected by those whose condition they sought to improve, they could only stand neutral, or join the "counter-revolution" - exhorting the workers not to take independent action, not to rebel against a system which condemned them to misery on the grounds that those who controlled it were individually decent and open to reason and collectively could be persuaded to transcend their own prejudices and identification of interest.

Yet the alternative to such a policy is not indiscriminate butchery and Apocalyptic ignorance: rather, it is, at this somewhat simplistic level of personal preference and prejudices, what Gay remarks of Bernstein -

95 In dismissing Churchill (10.6.04), she observed "The impression he makes is an unpleasant one: he drinks too much, talks too much, and does no thinking worthy of the name...He has no sympathy with suffering, no intellectual curiosity, he is neither scientific nor benevolent." This is a nice guide to the qualities sought in politicians of any persuasion.

96 Diaries, 9.2.06.
"Equally sterile, Bernstein continues, would be a Socialist movement without ethics, and, in fact, the movement is shot through with moral preferences. The workers want a new world order. To the extent that this wish is more than self-interest grandiloquently expressed, it is a genuine ethical impulse." 97

In striving for the moral and physical improvement of the workers, Beatrice Webb ignored the argument that the rationale for such improvement came from below: that it was only the corporate state which would be built on the ruins of her benevolent absolutism.

Again, Cole surely avoided an important point in stressing that direct control of industry was impossible, that the people would have to arrange "by employing officials - commonly called bureaucrats - to manage it for them". This implies a parallelism, by its form of words, with the capitalist corporation. If the people employ managers, then they are owners and, to the extent that they can share in ownership, they cease to be managed themselves. They do not control it "as the capitalists do". 98

98 G. D. H. Cole, Workers' Control in Industry (ILP 1919) p. 6. James Burnham made a useful point amidst a great deal of semantic and analytical confusion - that ownership was control: up to a point, only, however, is this a sufficient description (in James Burnham, The Managerial Revolution (NY, 1941)). On the links between Fascism and Syndicalism, see e.g. Clarence H. Yarrow, The Forging of Fascist Doctrine (Journal of the History of Ideas, no. 2, 1942) and Ernst Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism (1965). Despite some flirtation with syndicalists and syndicalist ideas in the early stages of 'left' Fascism, it seems more reasonable to suggest that administrative syndicalism, economic federalism and so on were ideas which, without a specifically class basis and analysis, were as vacuous as the systems to which they were drawn were justifications of counter-revolution. The point is that without a basis of revolutionary working-class militancy, "syndicalism" was merely a travesty, an intellectual dodo. It is not suggested that the Fabians were proto-Fascists - simply that the sundering of the theory from the mass movement deprived both of a grasp of the sociology of that movement, the relationship between the growth of forms of effective protest, and the experience of the capitalist economy which the workers had to undergo.
not only because this implies that all social relationships are, after Dühring, relationships of force, but because it presumes that "popular" and "capitalist" systems would not in some form, confront each other in hostility. Cole seems to be arguing that all appropriation, public or private - as all production - is the same activity. At most this is profoundly disillusioned and static - at the least it presupposes a reduction of conflict to a restricted and personal level: the functions and objectives of a global caste of bureaucrats become the values of all societies. But this is either a phenomenon which makes meaningless the categories "capitalists" and "people" - or it would require social, national and economic structural analysis to show that as conflicts are resolved, so is the basis of conflict itself narrowed - and that the form of resolution tends towards homogeneity and constant equilibrium.99

The two aspects of tactical strike activity are nicely seen in Punch: in August 1911, a constable is shown arresting a workman: "Who have I got here? Why a bottle-throwing hooligan." Mr Punch replies "March him off; that's the worst enemy of labour. You've done your duty, as you always do." On the 6th September, the "right" - and cynical - way to win the gratitude of employers is presented: a policeman comments on the recent pay rise that it is "'over and above' as you might say, and not had to strike for it."100 As Thomas's figures showed, the increase in former officers of the State as MPs made them as large and influential a group as the industrial, financial capitalists, and the landowners. The state

99 See Chapter 2 on material conditions.
100 Punch, 23.8.11. and 6.9.11.
socialism to which the Webbs and the Labour Party aspired would have to be built on or round a mass of officers of state who accepted their alliance with, and shared interests with, the representatives of capital. Gay's suggestion that "such trivial things as the availability of low-priced pictures helped to keep the proletariat from becoming revolutionary" may be correct at one level of description: possibly more significant even at this level, is the existence of deep interconnections and interpenetration between the political and economic systems which already prevented the "state" becoming "neutral" or a "national forum" where all future social development could be decided. There is both a movement away from liberal myths of the super-rationality in allowing "haphazard" growth of new institutions (a formidable defence in depth of established positions) - and a movement into parliament of solid if unremarkable representatives of the bourgeoisie, bourgeois if only in the revisionist class sense of - "a social stratum largely formed by similarity of living conditions." That is, party alliances of professional, entrepreneurial and bureaucratic bourgeois had been formed, and were to press on into the Labour Party.

The possibility of a socialist production which would differ materially from capitalist managerialism (or socialist "managerialism") was implicitly denied by the Webbs. Sombart likewise suggested that the

101 Gay, op.cit. p.128.

102 ibid. p.205. Dahrendorf's reconstruction of a notional "Marx on class" in 'Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society' does at least bring out that class had for Marx static and dynamic, "scientific" and expressive aspects, that the descriptive-analytical work on the generation of a proletariat in Capital, for instance, did not suppose either a uniformly high level of consciousness nor a fully articulated working-class - or, indeed, a fully-proletarianised proletariat. As Ossowski has shown (in Class Structure and the Social Consciousness, op.cit.), and as appeared in Lukács's Histoire et Conscience de Classe (1960, Paris edition), the "stratum" aspects of class and class activity are not necessarily exclusive of Marxism.
They have, however, traditionally been used as a specious means of testing Marx's hypotheses on class politics, and rejecting them: the submission is, however, that to concentrate on this aspect tends to see only strata, only interconnections and interdependencies. This can be partly illustrated by, for instance, the growth of dependency between and fusion of function among directors of capital, the large numbers of former state servants in Parliament (cf J.A. Thomas, The House of Commons 1906-1911 sup.cit.), over and above the apparent conflict of interests institutionalised in the two-party system, between representatives of identical economic interests. The system changes its scale.
socialist emphasis on production was "worthy only of cotton spinners" - the emphasis was identical. Kautsky too warned that "Chronic civil war, or its alternative under a dictatorship, the apathy and lethargy of the masses, would render the organisation of a Socialist system of production as good as impossible." In the revisionist case, one comes near to saying with Henry - "le patron, c'est les maîtres." But in a way the detailed discussion of "socialist production" and "socialist bureaucracy" is irrelevant and idealist under capitalism: without rehearsing the discussion of "production" in Capital, one may say that the attractiveness of production without the capitalists, as Rocker put it, is

103 W. Sombart, Socialism and the Social Movement (tr. of 6th German edn.) (1909) p. 114.


105 R-A. Henry, Le Socialisme et l'art de commander dans l'industrie (Liège, 1914) p. 74. Henry, an engineer, proposed a classic defence of private property under the guise of bureaucratic administration - the workers require to be convinced that they need "serviteurs pour les commander" (p. 46); and by the Taylor system proposed "leur imposer leurs méthodes scientifiques" (p. 112) - always in a system dominated by entrepreneurial values and formal class war: "La résistance des patrons est indispensable à l'équilibre" (p. 79). Throughout this runs a Spencerian attack on a situation where the shiftless and degenerate claim to command and where, by the same token the workers claim it is they - "nous seuls, les ouvriers, qui nourrissons la société, donc nous avons de droit d'organiser la production!..." (p. 27) This not only shows some affinity at least with the sources of Fabian collaborationism, but provides a warning of the way in which an apparently neutral manager, from an "intermediate class", steeped in "scientific methods" and a desire for efficiency in fact seeks to impose by guile and occasionally force the "old-fashioned" system of exploitation. e.g. "The capitalist mode of production has brought matters to a point where the work of supervision, entirely divorced from the ownership of capital, is readily obtainable. It has, therefore, come to be useless for the capitalist to perform it himself. An orchestra conductor need not own the instruments of his orchestra, nor is it within the scope of his duties as a conductor to have anything to do with the "wages" of the other musicians. Co-operative factories furnish proof that the capitalist has become no less redundant as a functionary as he himself, looking down from his high perch, finds the big landowner redundant. Inasmuch as the capitalist's
work does not originate in the purely capitalistic process of production, and hence does not cease on its own when capital ceases; inasmuch as it does not confine itself solely to the function of exploiting the labour of others; inasmuch as it therefore originates from the social form of the labour process, from combination and co-operation of many in pursuance of a common result, it is just as independent of capital itself as soon as it has burst its capitalistic shell." Capital iii, p.379 (Moscow 1962). This capital it is, of course, which "incessantly forces him to sell his labour power in order to live, and enables the capitalist to purchase labour-power in order that he may enrich himself"..."In reality, the labourer belongs to capital before he has sold himself to capital. His economical bondage is both brought about and concealed by the periodic sale of himself by his change of masters, and by the oscillations in the market price of labour-power." p.591 (Capital i, 1889 edn.)
to demonstrate that workers "are able to carry on production and to do it better than a lot of profit-hungry entrepreneurs." 106

Marx put it, "Only as personified capital is the capitalist respectable" 107 - "Except as personified capital, the capitalist has no historic value, and no right to that historical existence, which, to use an expression of the witty Lichnowsky, "hasn't got no date"." 108 Naturally, to demonstrate practically that production can be carried on without the capitalist is emotionally and politically a proof of his dispensability, of his "Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation, and the desire for enjoyment." 109 True enough that under the capitalist, the workers may find that "their dependency upon capital assumes a tolerable form", 110 but so long as they perceive that it is the fruits of their labour which are being enjoyed or accumulated by Faust the workers will never wholly suppress their own subculture - be it only a culture of slaves or gladiators.

106 Rudolf Rocker, Anarcho-Syndicalism (1938) p.104. One might make a similar case about the period 1910-14, when organised labour was on the offensive, and the government generally anxious to conciliate, preserving the decencies of bargaining - a period which gave confidence that the strike was a similar method of dispensing with the capitalist: That this was not the only outcome of a strike was perceived by Beatrice Webb - "The Cabinet seem bent on provoking a big strike so as to avoid the issue of nationalisation and clear up on the relations between Capital and Labour" (Diaries, 23.7.19. p.166, 1952 edn.) - that is, even a victory in a strike was of tactical value only. There is a useful discussion of this area in S.Merlino's essays in Concezione critica del socialismo libertario (Florence, 1957).


108 ibid.

109 ibid. p.605.

110 Capital (Everyman edn.) p.681. (p.650 of the 1889 edn.)
Much of this culture is defensive as well as reactive: in the war, militants might say "We are living in the shadow of the iron heel" — but seldom that the moment of crisis had arrived. Again, Pelling pointed out that the CPGB was recruited from elements peripheral to the Labour Party, as if the processes of political education in the Labour Party were less likely to encourage Marxists to work effectively as leaven in the lump. That the trade union version of industrial unionism dispensed with the idea of an SLP cadre and with the syndicalist conception of permeation with a militant minority implies strongly that defensive attitudes were firmly entrenched in the labour movement. Bevin, for instance, "continued to react to economic fluctuations whilst deploring the need to do so." Partly this was institutional defence: partly too a distrust of innovation. Working-class experience itself did not encourage vigorous, independent action — one aspect of community solidarity might well be a passive resistance to all outside pressure — and to dynamic forces within the group: Murphy described unemployment "You are a C4 animal on two weary legs without the guts to commit suicide." Drummond suggested that malnutrition was as widespread in Edwardian England as in the Tudor plague years and crop failures.

The recognition of the need to build a distinctive culture was clear in the IWV: the organisation's decline and decadence might even thus be

111 Trade Unionism and the Crisis (Trade Union Rights Committee (?1915) p.14.
113 V. L. Allen, Trade Union Leadership (1953) p.93.
114 J. T. Murphy, New Horizons (1941) p.178.
115 in J. C. Drummond and Anne Wilbraham, The Englishman's Food (1957 edn.) p.403.
"From soapboxers on Union Square, from humorous books on trampdom, from Communists and from Communist publications, and even from certain loyal members of the IWW, one gets the impression that the organization is losing its revolutionary fervour." 116

The need to acquire a distinctive "style", before, or instead of, proceeding to structural change lay beneath Soral's attempt to reject "abstract rationalism and abstract morality, both of which were responsible for compromise, for reformism, and for the rejection of heroic virtues." 117

This desire for - and recognition of - a viable and separate culture at the point when it seems on the point of changing structures themselves was accepted by Ormsby-Gore in the Commons:

"If we are to have Socialism in any form, I would far rather be governed by Tom Mann than by Mr and Mrs Sidney Webb." 118

That is, Ormsby-Gore argued that if one postulates here an antithesis between capitalism and socialism - better Mann's syndicalism which will liberate the workers and enslave the masters, than Fabian socialism which appears merely to strengthen the machinery of coercion.

It is reasonable to object that "closeness to the masses" by itself may tap spontaneity at its source - and turn protest into a channel of the existing system.

"Lloyd George serves the bourgeoisie splendidly, and serves it precisely among the workers, brings its influence precisely to the proletariat, to the place where it is most needed and where it is most difficult to capture the masses morally" 119

- most difficult exactly because to build up a new legitimate system, having only foreign relations, as it were, with the prevailing political

116 John S. Gambs, The Decline of the IWW (NY, 1932) p. 205
117 S.P. Rouanet in Irrationalism and Myth in Georges Soral (Review of Politics 1964, p. 51)
118 House of Commons debates, 27.5.12 (col. 557)
119 quoted in Lenin in Britain, Imperialism and the split in Socialism (October 1916) p. 324.
and social system and its values - required a level or organisation and
an actual and cultural separateness which liberal democracy and expanding
capitalism were least likely to provide, indeed most likely to prevent
by force or fraud.

"Nothing can be done in our time without elections; nothing
can be done without the masses, and the following of the masses in
this era of printing and parliamentarism cannot be gained
without a widely-ramified, systematically operated, well-equipped
system of flattery, lies, fraud, juggling with fashionable
and popular catchwords, and promises - right and left - of
all sorts of reforms and blessings to the workers, so long as
they renounce the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of
the bourgeoisie."120

The dilemma, then, was that with a reformist-revolutionary axis, the
reformist socialists were finding both that their distinctive quality was
being lost, assimilated by other reforming parties, and that their reforms
neither satisfied the workers nor seemed to transform the characteristics
of the state.121 The revolutionaries found that the workers themselves
had to wish and now no inducement to overthrow a system which sustained
them, however intermittently and absentmindedly, and that in any case
even when - as in depression, the golden chains proved to be leaden,122

120 ibid.

121 And, indeed, might be put down to the credit of the traditional
governing parties.

122 of Semmel's assertion that social-imperialism 'aimed at undermining the
argument of the socialists and demonstrating that, contrary to the
Marxist allegation, the workers had more to lose than their chains.' p.24.
It is important to notice that although the Coefficients were divided
on the issue of social-imperialism (p.81), the Fabians as a whole,
however isolated they might be from the body of the labour movement (p.131)
with their turn against 'the cosmopolitan anti-imperialism of Richard
Cobden, John Bright, and W.E.Gladstone', were in fact parallel to the
reformist wing of the Liberal-Imperialist government (see e.g. p.139)
a revolution of the masses in Britain seemed precluded by the very values and culture which liberal democracy had instilled.

Engels claimed that the Fabians and their fellows in the "tail" of the Liberals were

"a clique of bourgeois 'Socialists' of diverse calibres, from careerists to sentimental Socialists and philanthropists, united only by their fear of the threatening rule of the workers, and doing all in their power to spike this danger by making their own leadership secure, the leadership exercised by the 'educated'." 123

The tactics of these "dedicated" Fabians, Engels dismissed as

"in the course of this process ('of not resolutely fighting the Liberals as adversaries but of pushing them on towards Socialist conclusions and therefore of intriguing with them, of permeating Liberalism with Socialism, of not putting up Socialist candidates against the Liberals but of fastening them on to the Liberals, of forcing them upon them, or deceiving them into taking them') they either are lied to and deceived themselves or else belie Socialism." 124

Between this, however, and those other forces making for a community of class interests -

"their sense of imaginary national superiority, with their essentially bourgeois ideas and viewpoints, with their 'practical' narrow-mindedness, with the parliamentary corruption which has seriously affected the leaders", 125

- there was a correspondence. Indeed, the shortcomings of the workers as described by Engels are precisely those which Beatrice Webb proposed to transmit to and perfect in, the working-class.

Thus we see that Beatrice Webb was far from sympathy with the aspirations, militancy and desire for independence of the working class.

123 Engels to Kautsky, 12.8.92. in Marx and Engels on Britain (Moscow, 1962) pp.575-6. This reference to the implicit Social-Darwinism which effectively united the Webbs with men like Milner, provided an "iron law" of oligarchy which was bound to exclude from meaningful political activity the bulk of the working-class.

124 Engels to Sorge, 18.1.93. ibid. p.578.

125 Engels to Plekhanov, 21.5.94, p.583. On the English roots of revisionism, see Samuel H. Baron, Plekhanov, The father of Russian Marxism (1963)
She built on, drew out, those features in the labour movement discouraging both militancy and independence. This development was to be seen most strongly after the war, when the need to provide the Labour Party with a reformist programme and a tactical, if not a longterm, justification for opposition to unconstitutional action was greatest. This had not been so crucial in the 1890s, when

"A majority of the wage-earners appear to be in favour of legislation; a large majority of the middle class, the Political Economists, and professional men are against it", and reform itself might be a foretaste of the reforms which would follow revolution in abundance. Nor was it pressing before 1914, when Beatrice Webb did not need the Labour Party. When Sidney Webb and Harold Cox said

"The state is compelled to interfere between machinery and man, because otherwise man would be crushed by the demon of his own creation" they were justified in doing so because there was no movement capable of producing that result but the existing government. But one feels that the approval with which the Webbs quoted Mann's 1886 pamphlet soon disappeared:

"How long, how long, will you be content with the present half-hearted policy of your Unions?...The true Unionist policy of aggression seems entirely lost sight of...I take my share of the work of the Trade Union to which I belong; but I candidly confess that unless it shows more vigour at the present time I shall be compelled to take the view - against my will - that to continue to spend time over the ordinary squabble-investigating, do-nothing policy will be an unjustifiable waste of one's energies." If the Marxists criticised Syndicalism for its opportunism, the (Fabian)

That is, she supposed that the conditions of class war would either be "evolved away", or that reform itself played no essential part in furthering the war itself: consequently, when the traditional parties had been transformed, the way would be open for the gradual disintegration and absorption of the working-class.

Sidney Webb and Harold Cox, The Eight Hours Day (1891) p.38

Ibid. p.243.

opportunist could appeal to the 1889 strike, the decisive point of
conversion away from Owenism - to constitutional action. And yet
the trade union world the Webbs described - without large federations
and amalgamations, without a front bench, turned against Whitleyism
and co-partnership - was warned against producers' associations on the
grounds that these led to conservatism and destroyed unions, still had
the task of destroying capitalism and profit. The progressive and
cumulative programme of the Webbs was thus optimistic enough - insofar
as the philanthropic and concentrating tendencies in capitalism were
supposed to be leading to the abolition of profit and capitalists. It
can, of course, be argued, that older forms of industrial organisation
have been so transformed that the Webbs would regard a system based on
profit for individual capitalists as having disappeared, and that the
modern corporation with its power of raising capital internally, its
pervasive managerialism, its close connections with government policy, was
socialist in all but name.

Yet when Trotsky talked of the 1912-14 strike wave as being "not from
above downwards but from below upwards" he described a phenomenon which
made Beatrice Webb profoundly uneasy. After the revolution, however, when
the stress again was on the building up of order and production, the onus
appeared to her to be again on the managers and the experts:

"as the soviet trade unions have not to fight profit-making
employers, but to share in the organisation of the industry
in which they are engaged, it is the establishment as a whole,
not any particular craft within it, and the whole of the
establishments turning out the same kind of product, not any
particular branch of the industry, that is made the unit of
trade union structure." 131

130 ibid. passim.
and pp.173-4.
That is, the emphasis is always on the functional similarities between systems — the common factors which often enough are precisely those on which there is little political or social dispute. On the factors and pre-conditions which made for revolutionary movements, Beatrice Webb, and many in the Labour Party, were severe: eager to prevent a revolution in Britain, unlikely as it seemed, she not only supplied arguments which implied that the workers themselves were a danger to the existence of the labour movement, but also made it impossible for the British movement to have sympathy for revolutionary struggle elsewhere.

She approved of the Russian revolution, but only when it had ceased, in her view, to be concerned with revolution itself and the questions of disalienation which concerned her British contemporaries.

"The Soviet Government is the 'servile state' in being — the very thought of which was denounced by the rebels of 1910-14. But it is a servile state run by fanatics who refuse any compromise with the 'bourgeois fetish' of personal freedom" — curious that, however heavily qualified, she suggested that personal freedom should stem from the bourgeoisie. Yet this belief that the sources of action lay in legal and constitutional change, that oppression itself could be undertaken and experienced only under a legal form spoke loudly for a bourgeois sense of legality and order:

"the abrogation of Trade Union liberty during the war gave the same sort of intellectual fillip to Trade Unionism and the Labour Party in 1915-19 that had been given in 1910-13 by the Taff Vale Case and the Osborne Judgment." 

The effect of this belief in the need for an equitable constitutional and legal system whilst opening the eyes of many in the labour movement to the

132 Diaries, 1.7.20.
133 History of Trade Unionism, sup. cit. p.645.
inequity of the system, moved men away from the appreciation of unconstitutional action elsewhere, the dynamic behind "illegal" movements, and those developments in politics and the economy which did not produce such easily-understood superstructural changes.

Mass democracy, said the Webbs, led to "inefficiency and disintegration, or to the uncontrolled dominance of a personal dictator or an expert bureaucracy."\(^{134}\) The range of alternatives here is so wide, that all that is established is a dislike of the mass meeting, which is betrayed by the "workman's simplicity in matters of government", his "spirit of local monopoly".\(^{135}\)

For the industrial democrat, the common rule seems to have had a moral purpose: "go canny" may easily bring about the final ruin of personal character"\(^{136}\) —indeed the whole concept of the "moral minimum" implied that a shared "faith in the efficacy of the Common Rule" was to be the basic principle of Trade Unionism within or without state-run industry.\(^{137}\) This regime would exclude or reform those "Physical and moral weaklings and degenerates" who were such a danger to industrial and political democracy.\(^{138}\) In addition, liberal democracy — political democracy — "will inevitably result in industrial democracy":\(^{139}\) the

134 S. and B. Webb, Industrial Democracy vol. i. (1837) p. 36.
135 ibid. p. 73.
136 ibid. p. 308
137 ibid. pp. 595-9 (vol. ii)
138 ibid. p. 786.
139 ibid. p. 842.
problem throughout, though, is that the workers' morality, the common rule which is its expression, is essentially static. .."The very fact that, in modern society, the individual thus necessarily loses control over his own life, makes him desire to regain collectively what has become individually impossible" - which means that organisation makes for a collectivism founded politically and philosophically on a bourgeois individualism - the ideology of labour aristocracy, but with its monopoly position, its rationale, subjected to control by the community.  

The logic of the position was seen in 1919: "But where is Parliamentary Government?" asked Beatrice Webb during the "coercion" of the government by the miners. In the last resort, "morality", strict adherence to a common rule - and a common rate of progress - obedience to the wishes of the community, leaves Beatrice Webb on the side of the status quo.

There is a constant hint of satisfaction at the defeat of militants - "The 'Direct-Actionists', especially the revolutionary 'Direct-Actionists', have been severely disillusioned - the lightning strike has failed to paralyse the community, and the railwaymen have actually got very little by it - they could have got more by negotiations backed by the whole Trade Union movement."  

Admirable though it might be for the whole movement to press forward with one policy and unanimity, in practise this would mean proceeding at the pace of the slowest, supporting always those with the authority to make and enforce policy - rather than the unofficial militants. She was, too, far from sympathetic to militant union action even when officially backed: of 1921, she said "I am merely bored by it"..."it all seems to be

140 ibid. p.850.
141 Diaries, sup. cit. 12.2.19.
142 ibid. 6.10.19.
a futility - a wasteful futility which has little constructive element in it.\textsuperscript{143} This whole approach to practical demonstrations of the inadequacy of social evolutionism and parliamentary reform as the path to socialism was summarised in 1918:

"The Bolshevik creed was the latest edition of the philosophy represented in Western Europe by Syndicalism and Guild Socialism - a philosophy which had its foundation in a contempt for intellect and an almost equal contempt for 'conduct'. It relied on impulse, more especially the impulse to violence. It is a strange irony that this faith in violence has been, in nearly all countries, intertwined with Tolstoyan cosmopolitan pacifism - this unnatural alliance being due to the possession of a common enemy - the Law-and-Order Imperialistic Capitalism."\textsuperscript{144}

Thus revolution may be accepted as soon as it resembles in some respects the system it has replaced - but the intellectual revolution needed to produce the political revolution itself is not appreciated - "revolutionary ideas, more especially of the syndicalist type, are being discredited by the collapse of Russia."\textsuperscript{145}

Thus, just as the dislike of violence is here in part a fear of the masses, so too is opposition to revolution an opposition to direct, non-mediated, mass action. Sometimes, the references were explicit:

"There is very little that is sinister or actually corrupt in the British Trade Union Movement, but there is appalling slackness, moral, intellectual and practical...Will the British Labour Movement ever succeed in making use of middle-class brains?"\textsuperscript{146}

Perhaps here we see the root of her dislike of "that pernicious doctrine of 'workers' control' of public affairs through the Trade Unions, and by...\textsuperscript{143} Quoted in Beatrice Webb's Diaries (1952) 1912-24 (pp.206-7)

\textsuperscript{144} Diaries, 19.2.18. The passage starts: "the rout of the Bolsheviks clears the air."

\textsuperscript{145} Diaries 5.10.17. It should be noted that her distrust of direct action broadened into a general impatience even with the political democracy she had seen as a barrier against Bolshevism - "The Trade Union Movement has become, like the hereditary peerage, an avenue to political power through which stupid untrained persons may pass up to the highest office if only they have secured the suffrages of the members of a large union."(7.6.17)

\textsuperscript{146} ibid. 9.9.15.
the methods of direct action." Fabian Socialism was a way of ensuring that the middle-class did not lose either its power, nor see its values transcended by a proletariat "for itself".147

This "absurd doctrine", (Syndicalism) which one might feel justified in seeing to some extent derived from "Industrial Democracy"

"has led throughout the world to the extension and strengthening of state bureaucracy - a form of government which the Syndicalists and the Guild Socialists were intent on superceding by the vocational organisation of the workers. The Webbs may end their joint work as they began it by pleading the validity of vocational organization within the modern community however organised."148

But as she herself dreaded

"What oppresses me is the fear that these elements of crass stupidity and pigheaded obstinacy may prevent the revival of British trade and that Trade Unionism may diminish and not increase efficiency."149

This is in fact the essence of opportunism, in which "efficiency" is the efficiency of the going system. The germ is here of the idea of the Labour Party at national level losing, as the roles and objectives of its leaders changed under ideological and institutional pressures, its traditional support for and of labour against management and becoming the party to support capitalism and run it "efficiently" - still with the hope that this was a method of producing socialism. Just as the Webbs were forced to oppose revolution and mass movements by the logic of their position, so too, even when no British revolution was in view, attitudes towards the

147 ibid., on the failure of the General Strike: "Future historians will, I think, regard it as the death gasp of that pernicious doctrine of "workers' control' of public affairs through the Trade Unions, and by the methods of direct action. This absurd doctrine was introduced into British working class life by Tom Mann and the Guild Socialists and preached insistently, before the War, by the Daily Herald under George Lansbury."

148 ibid. 18.5.26.

149 ibid. 18.5.26.
dynamics of revolution and mass, direct action, are profoundly significant.\textsuperscript{150}

The criticism of Syndicalism demonstrated that the Webbs saw Syndicalism as essentially reactive, rather than aggressive: it represented only a realisation that promises had not been kept, rather than a desire to break rules and agreements. It was "disillusionment" with orthodox Unionism, Co-operation, and Parliamentary action – indeed "with the present order of things". But though this implied "a loss of illusion," the Webbs seem to advise the readoption of illusion because – "In a state of civil war, all social progress comes to an end."\textsuperscript{151} The movement is a biological "sport" – a thing of paradox: it would "unwittingly have robbed the worker of his Trade Union" in claiming to give him control by and through the union.\textsuperscript{152} A movement of solidarity, of contagious militancy would become one of "exclusiveness", leading to "mutual rivalry, mutual hostility, even mutual envy and hatred."\textsuperscript{153} Thus a movement which seems to express the exact opposite of such tendencies is criticised for having them: using this criterion, no movement or form of organisation cannot be represented – dialectic or no – as tending towards its opposite. To suggest that from the workers' point of view, work itself was not so bad, but "the limitations which his present penury sets to his use of his hours of leisure" was surely Jesuitry.\textsuperscript{154}

The concept of "leisure" necessarily assumes a social system in which work is not disagreeable. If the focus of industrial disputes is on the workplace, the fact that the fruits of victory may include more time for

\textsuperscript{150} Diaries, 17.3.25, for instance, she speaks of the Snowdens' "far more intolerant of revolutionary Socialists than we are."
\textsuperscript{151} S. and B. Webb, What Syndicalism Means (supplement to 'The Crusade, August 1912') p.136.
\textsuperscript{152} ibid. p.148.
\textsuperscript{153} ibid. p.150.
\textsuperscript{154} ibid. p.153.
leisure is really irrelevant to the form and force of the movement. The Webbs drew a picture of syndicalism in this way because syndicalism stated that the workers had no need for the bourgeoisie - that the bourgeois were the allies, the theoreticians, the justifiers, of the capitalist system: syndicalists did not demand "equality of status in industry", but simply the redistribution of power and status - not for the sake of having status, but to transform and destroy the former bases of status. 155

The mass of workers might deplore the practical effects of redistribution - but at least the old bases would be changed: a partnership conceded by "the technicians and managers of all grades" would either be no concession - that is, it would not yield the power which had, in their perception, as its object the coercion of the workers - or else by definition it could only be "conceded" after the workers had, by themselves, achieved a measure of power and status. This "partnership in the direction and management of the business in which he is engaged" was explicitly not a straight attempt to build the workers into the existing system - since the community was to own the enterprises, decision-making was to derive from outside - and so long as sources of conflict remained, were indeed institutionalised, in society - how could such decisions be socially neutral and non-coercive? 156 How indeed would they be closer to giving the workers' self-government if they pretended to be based on "non-antagonistic" social relations in a society in which this "partnership" was based on a truce in the class struggle?

The Webbs spent much of their time in a series of somewhat formal and utopian constitution-making - ideal communities based on non-specific and

156 ibid. p.15.
unhistorical functionalist divisions — apparently in a world of "steady-state" trade, an assumption that economic life became at once more rational and more humane and more equitable as efficiency increased. The Webbs' "Constitution" is an hilarious managerialist document in which the workers' aspirations and desires have "no clear or identical alternative scheme of direction and discipline", the Trade Unions too have "been unable to come to any clear or consistent view as to where it would wish the authority or the power to give decisions in the factory or the mine, ultimately vested", where citizen-consumer democracies are soulless and callous, and producer democracies "stand for full livelihood, personal dignity and individual initiative in the exercise of a vocation", but cannot be "trusted with the ownership of the instruments of production."

Having failed on paper to produce an ideal community by definition, the Webbs proposed self-determination for each vocation and free enterprise for every type of socialised administration,

"a stratification running right across the vertical divisions among citizens and consumers according to their position on the earth's surface."

In fact, the whole plan is riddled with spatial, diagrammatic concepts — oddly enough seeming to presuppose the tabula rasa following utopian revolution, while criticising the ideas of any of those bodies working to


158 ibid.

159 ibid. p.154

160 ibid. p.156

161 ibid. p.283
produce a revolutionary proletariat. 162

"At the price of increased trade union control over the party organisation, the Labour Party accepted Fabianism as its doctrinal basis; while on their side, the Fabians at last accepted the Labour Party as the appointed instrument for bringing about socialism in Britain". 163

It is interesting to observe that despite its verbal revolutionism, the Labour Party on the start of its most massive quantitative advances should adopt a romantic anti-revolutionism, - an inverted Sorelianism, for though Sorel might not be able to distinguish between the machinery of administration and the machinery of exploitation, the Webbs believed that administration itself had absolute standards and values. 164 Hobhouse showed much the same visionary enthusiasm, which passed for pragmatism:

"The work of the nation would then be carried on under the direction of communities of consumers. There would be the great national works developed from those which exist at present. There would be probably a still greater development of municipal works, and there would be, supplementing these, voluntarily formed co-operative associations on the existing model, united by the Federal principle, and ultimately co-extensive with the community."165

These schemes of economic federalism, functionalism, vocational

162 The book in fact rests on a fine legal interpretation of the protective power of advanced constitutional government: "The Trade Unions have, in short, compelled the owners and organisers of industry, whether they represent functionless shareholders or voluntary or obligatory associations of consumers, to grant their workers a constitution." p.44.

163 A.M.McBriar, Fabian Socialism and British Politics, sup.cit. p.345.

164 A "romantic anti-revolutionism" was shown not only in the attitude towards colonial matters where a bipartisan imperial policy was sought which would not have satisfied party members if applied to Britain, but also in the belief that the more moderate, legal, constitutional the Labour Party was, the nearer it would approach that whole-hearted socialism it desired.

representation and so on, seem concocted less to encourage working-class political action, than to provide the possessing class with an assurance that socialism was an improved capitalism: the theory of the union becomes the theory of the corporation, until the supporters of the one can easily support the other. After all, there was nothing in the schema to imply social conflict: the only problem was how to apportion decision-making so that conflicting institutional objectives and individual roles were co-ordinated within a homogeneous and fully homeostatic system.

The "unrest" itself was important precisely because it was unpredictable, because in seeking to repair discontinuities men were open to a wide range of theoretical explanations and types of organisational direction. However, there was a distance between the realisation that subjective interests were not being pursued and furthered by those parts of the system claiming and designed to pursue them collectively, and Hobson's "spiritual State": the said of the producer, for instance, "between him and the consumer, his must be the final word; whilst, as between the producer and the citizen, the citizen must decide and speak the final word through the State. The State, whatever its ultimate form, must be the expression of the life of the citizen community." These arid and schematic discussions seem to seek to diminish the future role of the producers, and to imply that the state can not only "keep the ring and see that each side has fair play", but that it is open to

166 For a discussion of this point - "Both J.A. Hobson and Hobhouse witness the decline of extreme individualism and go far in meeting a plea for a collectivistic state. But their theory lacks a sure foundation for this state which is to take an ever increasing role in the direction and control of social and economic life never appears as more than a pale concept" - see A.B. Ulam, Philosophical Foundations of English Socialism (Harvard, 1951) p.59, and especially on the strand of "statism" in Bosanquet and Green, and the discussion of the Pluralism of the Webbs, Laski, and Cole, see p.60 et seqq.

167 S.G. Hobson, National Guilds and the State (1920) p.32. See too his Pilgrim to the Left (1938)

168 Keir Hardie in the House of Commons, 24.11.10 (col.406)
pressure only from "citizens" and the national interest. Though the
debate stems from syndicalism it seems to have become its antithesis, and
critique – economic federalism. The pluralist case derives after all
from Cave's vulgar abuse:

"Get into your hands, if you can, the whole of an industry;
let it be, if possible, an industry upon which the very life
of the nation depends; gather together in one industrial union,
or federation of unions, all the branches taking part in that
particular industry; get them together under one control, and
then when the moment comes, strike and let the whole industry
come to an end." 169

Cole's proposals also slide easily from analysis to prescription and
attack. The "Labour movement in search of a philosophy" 170 was at a
peculiar disadvantage in Britain, in that, as Cole pointed out, "Nationality
is the strongest bond which can join men together...Syndicalism can only
deny patriotism by representing industry as the whole of life." 171 In
Britain the bond of common nationality, on which, apart from American
capital and management, there was little overt foreign influence, was such
that for a revolution to take place would require a revolt specifically
against the capitalists and their allies. The political culture, however,
made this increasingly difficult. There were no peasants eager to seize
the land, and no first generation industrial workers ready to occupy the
factories: "the Labour leaders entered the governing classes, and Labour
was left, perplexed and unmanned, to find new leaders in its own ranks." 172

In Britain, as in France, Syndicalism ceased being direct, simple and

169 Cave in the House of Commons, 19.3.12 (col.1783).
171 ibid. p.27.
172 ibid. p.207.
perceptive, and was turned into academic exhortation. And yet the case - over and above questions of whether the "State is an expression of the wills of all the people" remained, that the division of society into classes still meant

"In the first place, the great majority of people are condemned to an existence which holds out to them very little possibility of leisure or happiness. In the second place, they are compelled by the struggle, to forego any possibility of being able to control the processes of production, and thereby of expressing their own individuality in the work they do..."  

Morris, useful in this context, prophetically criticised the Guild and the technocrats with his description of the victory of Syndicalism: after the movement "to get themselves improved slave-rations", the masses showed they depended

"not on a carefully arranged centre with all kinds of checks and counter-checks about it, but on a huge mass of people in thorough sympathy with the movement, bound together by a great number of links of small centres with very simple instructions."

The Guild workshop, the Post Office, the nationalised industry could not be so structured as to produce the impulses which should create them:

"The art or work-pleasure, as one ought to call it, of which I am now speaking, sprung up almost spontaneously, it seems, from a kind of instinct among people, no longer driven desperately to painful and terrible over-work, to do the best they could with

173 W. Mellor, Direct Action (1920) p.48. The consequences of this political monism were that it became difficult to deny the legitimacy of state action. It is unlikely that the opponents of socialism would be as generous: as Cole said (in The World of Labour, p.348) "Capitalism, by accepting Socialist logic, has entrenched itself more firmly: to Socialist ethics it shows no sign of being converted."

174 Mellor, op. cit. pp.29-9. Guildsmen and Direct Actionists came closest to a common position in "The Policy of Guild Socialism" (May 1921, p.11) - "The Soviet may not be our way of doing this; but, whatever our way is, it can only succeed if it is based upon organisations created by the workers and directly expressing their will. There may be a place in our scheme for the use of Parliament and parliamentary elections as a means of hampering the operations of capitalism and of educating the workers, but there is certainly no place for "parliamentarism" as a means of achieving Guild Socialism."

175 William Morris, News From Nowhere (1907 edn.) p.117.
176 ibid. p.134.
the work in hand - to make it excellent of its kind; and when
that had gone on for a little, a craving for beauty seemed to
awaken in men's minds, and they began rudely and awkwardly to
ornament the wares which they made; and when they had once set
to work at that, it soon began to grow."177

Clearly, this "mass" has more potential than the post-war, rather
dissillusioned and soured view of the "ochlos" "the mob, the unthinking crowd,
including the un-class-conscious proletariat. With all the issues of
life set away by the class struggle, the 'people' is not a real entity at
all, and 'democracy' is a figment."178 Stripped of its spontaneity, the
only function of the mass was to support a crass plutocracy.

In this process, the theory of workers' control lost not only its
revolutionary force, but its revolutionary significance: Robertson could
justly ask of Cole

"will the most complete control of workshop conditions fit the
Trade Union for control of the broader issues of business policy
unless it sits at the feet of those who know their job, profit-
mongers though they be?"179

For both Cole and the Webbs after the war were trying to "build in" to
their theories a place for spontaneity, the Webbs after condemning it
before the war, and Cole after seeing its decline in 1912, and the weakness
of the ideas it threw up.

In France the transformation of Syndicalism led to a greater divergence
between those idealists - as Sorel and Berth - who wished to preserve
heroism when the workers seemed to have failed their own myths, the CGT

177 ibid. p.150. See Edward Thompson, The Communism of William Morris
(William Morris Society, 1965), where he suggests that Marx and Morris
are complementary.

178 Eden and Cedar Paul, Creative Revolution, A study of Communist
Ergatocracy (1920) p.39.

179 D.H. Robertson, Mr Cole's Social Theories (Economic Journal 1920) p.539.
putting its reformist syndicalism into a form of industrial relations, and the economic federalists, administrative Syndicalists and so forth, who stripped Syndicalism of its class content and political specificity. Here, Bergson and his critics were central: Ruhe and Paul said "although intuition transcends intellect it is by means of intellect that it has grown beyond the limitations of mere instinct" - or in other words, the revolt of the masses and ensuing violence is legitimated and given theoretical status and direction by intellectuals, theorists and propagandists. The assumption was that theory and ideas only originated outside the "mass", that the mass was instinctive - and unless it was instinctive must be judged and condemned by those bourgeois standards which neither produced nor condoned violence. Sorel with his "vision d'ingénieur", the moralist "âpre et sévère" was yet capable of thinking in the dimension of the absurd, of violence. His appeal to the working-class to use violence to establish their identity and justice is an inversion of his real purpose - an attempt to create a revolution without either a revolutionary situation or a revolutionary theory.

In their search for a lost morality, middle-class reformers might find or implant the desired qualities among the workers. Alternatively

180 see, e.g. J.E.S.Hayward, Private Interests and Public Policy. The experience of the French Economic and Social Council (1966).


183 Berth, for instance, showed the symptoms of classic alienation - to be resolved in the utopia of "l'atelier de la grande industrie moderne - l'universel concret -, où se concilient la discipline collective et la personnalité individuelle, où les énergies se groupent autour du
travail au plan du réel, où les antinomies classiques entre l'individu et l'État, la liberté et l'autorité, la théorie et la pratique s'accordent en une synthèse originale" (p.48) – and where the worker "Par son travail à l'atelier, par ses liens directs avec la production, garde la profondeur de vie intérieure et la concentration sur soi-même qui fourniront les assises d'une société nouvelle" (p.49) (in G. Pirou, Les Doctrines Economiques en France depuis 1870 (Paris, 1930). In fact, there seems no reason why, as Pirou pointed out in his Essais sur le Corporatisme (Paris 1937), the glorification of these qualities should not be made and welcomed in any system, and why, having disposed of the diagnostic Aunt Sallies of the state and authority, "l'universel concret" should not be re-discovered in any institution claiming to represent the workers' interests. Berth's "concrete" evades all analyses of material conditions.
they might find harmony in the corporation — the physis whose everlasting life was capital — or in a well-ordered pluralism: the "synthesis of living wills"\textsuperscript{184} which obscured even the social reality of

"a vast complex of gathered unions, in which alone we find individuals, families, clubs, trades unions, colleges, professions and so forth; and further, that there are exercised functions within these groups which are of the nature of government, including its three aspects, legislative, executive, and judicial, though, of course, only with reference to their own members."\textsuperscript{185}

Whether this bourgeois false consciousness came from an oppressive sense of class guilt, or class incompetence, from a desire to institutionalise and resolve all forms of dispute, the unspoken context was the failure of the working class to seize power as, in this model, no class ever could or would seize power.

Sorel’s diagnosis was that liberalism stopped "de comprendre lui-même et déchoie ainsi de sa haute ligne"\textsuperscript{186} permitting commitment "joyeusement à l’assaut du prolétariat contre la citadelle du capitalisme et des belles-lettres".\textsuperscript{187} Indeed, in a sense the confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the European left, resulting in the massive purges of communists and social democrats in the 1930s and 1940s, did dispense with the liberal niceties. Then was the bitter harvest of spontaneity. Capital was assuming new, vastly destructive and flexible forms, beside which the apologists of liberal democracy like Hobhouse seemed both insignificant and irrelevant. Indiscriminately applicable to liberal democracy and the

\textsuperscript{184} J.N.Figgis, Churches in the Modern State (1913) p.92.
\textsuperscript{185} ibid. p.79.
\textsuperscript{186} P.Lasserre, Georges Sorel, Théoricien de l’Impérialisme (Paris,1928)p.264
\textsuperscript{187} ibid. p.37. In fact, for his analysis of the decadence of Liberalism, Sorel produced a paradigm of workers’ imperialism "l’armée ouvrière imposera sa volonté impérialiement" (p.38) which was a straight moral inversion of the liberal aristocracy which it confronted.
corporate state, Hobhouse's hopeful remark that "social progress consists in a harmonious development..." showed that the anarchy of capitalist production had given way to an immorality of capitalist accumulation, in which the rules of the game could be broken without forsaking the traditional language of support for the rules. 188

"Certainly if the brewers spend ten millions in giving the Tories a fresh term of power, they may easily get twenty in return. So would other great monopolies or compact alliances, such as water companies, urban landowners, money dealers, contractors et hoc genus omne, including patriots who own gold-mines; to say nothing of our friends the parsons, who provide, not much money, but vast quantities of platforms for rural audiences. It is the principle of Tammany - simplicity itself..." 189

It is against this background that Hobhouse's attempt to make liberal democracy a fully participating populist democracy must be seen, and here too that consumer-voter control seemed to Hobhouse at least as important in the Labour Party's democratic ideology as that sense of belonging which derived from the possession of property.

"Each man is, so to say, the meeting point of a great number of social relations. Each such relation depends on him, on his qualities, on his actions, and also affects him and modifies his qualities and his actions. The whole complex of social relations constitutes the life of society." 190

The gentleness of a system based on social relations other than those generated by power structures worried Hobhouse - did this not seem a description of such harmony which must already, or could never, exist?

Thus he proposed hopefully that

"seeing the state is a form of association and is limited by the fact that its functions have to be crystallized in definite

188 L.T.Hobhouse, Social Evolution and Political Theory (NY, 1911) p.185.


190 Hobhouse, Social Evolution and Political Theory, sup.cit. p.85.
institutions, expressed in universal laws and in large measure carried out by the use of compulsion, their sphere must be determined by considering how far the objects of social cooperation can be furthered by methods of this kind, or how far, on the other hand, the nature of the methods necessary will itself conflict with the ends desired."

In other words, as he himself said, the only solution to conflicts of ethics with power is that of the men quoted in Carlyle, who shouted "Je demande l'arrestation des coquins et des lâches!" Hobhouse's atomism seems precisely based on that scale of social psychology where actual political and social conflicts cannot occur:

"the human beings of whom society is composed do not with their whole being enter into harmonious co-operation: they are centres of independent life with interests of their own, in the pursuit of which they impinge on one another, crossing each others' paths."

And so Hobhouse too fills his state with Rousseauist citizens and damns the protective associations of the workers - accepting the right of self-defence, but not the existence of the basic conflict which had moulded not only the unions, but the overlapping and intermingled political and social systems.

"The trade union organization, the only effective organ of expression for this discontent, is essentially sectional in its structure, and has all the blindness and collective selfishness of sectionalism. Strikes are ill-considered, vastly damaging to all parties and as blindly resisted as initiated."

What Hobhouse called the "unifying mind" saw its main enemy as that "official Socialism" which "conceives mankind as in the mass a helpless and feeble race, which it is its duty to treat kindly", and in fact sought

191 ibid. p.189.

192 L.T.Hobhouse, Government by the People (People's Suffrage Federation, n.d.) p.17.


to deny and hence to obscure and mystify the class struggle - not only as a central part of British politics and society, but of international social and political life. In this, he effectively denied the existence of struggle at all - and helped to convince the wishful-thinking democrats in the Labour Party that this was a true portrait. Because they disliked and disapproved of violence, they were forced to persuade their own supporters not to resist claims they felt to be unjust, not to demand those reforms which might break the rules of the political system. It was fine to suggest, as the ethical socialists had done, that liberty "rests not on the claim to A to be let alone by B, but on the duty of B to treat A as a rational being...The rule of liberty is just the application of rational method." But the area of individual participation restricted the individual to minding his own business - a man "can understand, for example, the affairs of his trade union, or again, of his chapel" - but presumably the trade unionist and the chapel-goer does not understand the affairs of his industry, his employers, or the established church. A compartmentalised democracy of this kind would simply permeate existing institutions, providing endless participation in faits accomplis. It does not provide the means to differentiate between powerlessness and

196 ibid. p.66. Hobhouse in fact embraces both reformism, a belief in full state sovereignty with full coercive powers - and a statement that "the function of the State is to secure conditions upon which its citizens are able to win by their own efforts, all that is necessary to a full civic efficiency. It is not for the State to feed, house, or clothe them." (ibid. p.83) But against this, one feels the conception of Shaw is more valid: "Legislation to mitigate the effects of poverty is a waste of time and money. It is worse: it is destructive of liberty...The only sort of legislation that is not a snare nowadays is legislation to abolish poverty." Shaw, in W.C. Anderson et.al. War Against Poverty (ILP) p.6.
apathy, between the misery of the worker sweating to become in turn a sweater and that of the unemployed miner.

The impact of the unrest before 1914 was more explicitly recognised in France — by men like Berth, Sorel and the Cégétistes, by the syndicalistes administratifs, by the jurists of pluralism. In 1921, Berth wrote about the case with which democracy absorbed apparently inimical ideas, formed alliances of the unreconcilable. Under the form of liberal democracy, Berth saw the dynamic forces "dans la période la plus haïssable de toute décadence" as "celle de la pure plutocratie à l'américaine." Possibly this was due to the sterility of the "science"

197 Cf the Holmes-Laski Letters, vol.i.1916-1925 (Oxford, 1953) passim, on the problems of the relationship between praxis and theory, and the different roles played by different theories in relation to the formation and apprehension of superstructural-infrastructural links, and between microscopic and "historical" effects. It is as well here to bear in mind that most useful essay by Louis Althusser, printed as an appendix to Contradiction et Surdétermination, in "Pour Marx" (Paris, 1966). It should here be sufficient to notice how "the community", the "social interest" — and to a less significant extent, the "guild", become the classical "economic men" of the twentieth century liberal economists, open to all the strictures in the Poverty of Philosophy — and how such an acceptance by the British labour movement of "philosophizing", "dignifying" of and about their society drew the fire out of attempts to change it — attempts which were also duly weakened by structural changes.

that is, the sociology, of democratic apologists: remove the administrative and bureaucratic element and strip off the moralising, and as de Roussies said "Le gouvernement par l'ensemble des citoyens n'a jamais été qu'une fiction, mais cette fiction était le dernier mot de la science démocratique. Jamais on n'a essayé de justifier ce singulier paradoxe d'après lequel la vote d'une majorité chaotique fait apparaître ce que Rousseau appelle la volonté générale qui ne peut errer."

When Meisel says

"The proletariat, according to Sorel would fulfil its historic mission not by destroying class society but by strictly 'minding its own business', in building up juridical and cultural institutions apart from bourgeois society, very much as the early Christians had created their own world in the catacombs of the Roman cosmopolis,"

one feels this was to make a virtue of necessity, and that in any case the rigidity of the parameter would be a function of the force of the outside threat. But if there were to be a mass struggle against the bourgeoisie, then clearly it must be directed both at democracy which mixed the classes and at the bourgeoisie who presided over the conjuring whereby political activity was directed towards a voting process which changed neither the relative nor the absolute disadvantages of class subordination.

199 ibid. p.124. On the "moralité de la violence", see J.W.Scott, Syndicalism and Philosophical Realism (1919) One might add that the sociology of the workshop was central to intellectual Syndicalists, and that here their analysis was most deficient. e.g., "toutes choses devront descendre sur le plan d'un atelier qui marche avec ordre, sans temps perdu, sans caprice..." (Andreu, op.cit. p.154)..."L'atelier moderne est un champ d'expériences qui sollicite, continuellement le travailleur à la recherche scientifique." p.197. This view that capitalism had provided for the worker a kind of laboratory in which to develop himself is hard to reconcile with the claim of pure spontaneity for socialism, that it should be "pur de tout element étranger" (p.192) - a plea, apparently, that the workers should have a superstructural existence, but no infrastructure!

The alternative to a consciousness of separateness was described by Leroy:

"L'ouvrier, lui, veut asseoir la cité civile et politique sur le travail, c'est-à-dire sur son propre travail. Plus de murs: surtout des droits collectifs. Et déjà il a quelques-unes des formes sociales qui réaliseront peut-être un jour ce magnifique espoir d'une liberté affranchie du fatalisme économique, du hasard de la propriété."201

The idea that syndicalism had in fact secured a significant part of its programme merely by statement and assertion, that the CGT "a établi qu'elle ne voulait connaître que des hommes de labou, c'est-à-dire faire prédominer la qualité de producteur sur celle de citoyen - en somme, jusqu'à résorber le citoyen dans le producteur," implied that while syndicalism had a morphology, everything else stood still.202 As Leroy himself had pointed out

"La démocratie n'est donc qu'un régime de liberté et d'égalité de classe: elle exprime ce fait que le pouvoir est impossible entre individus égaux. Mais elle ne peut rien pour diminuer l'inégalité économique: voilà pourquoi il y a une Puissance publique régaliennne dans l'État démocratique."203

Participation in democracy is not necessarily participation in the exercise of power - still less, then, is a verbal declaration of independence. Syndicalism itself ceases in the meantime to be the leading idea of the proletariat - "Le syndicalisme n'est pas une forme définitive: ce n'est qu'un moment de l'évolution de l'État."204

The problem was that Syndicalism as doctrine relied on a mass movement which shared fully the virtues and vices of spontaneous movements: arising from the perception of discontinuity, it must either destroy the whole system at once or remain static until a repair in the system was made: the

201 Maxime Leroy, Les Techniques Nouvelles du Syndicalisme (Paris 1921) p.206
202 ibid. p.41.
204 M. Leroy, Syndicats et Services Publics (Paris 1909) p.246.
working-class movement in any case was

"rempli de survivances; à tel point qu'un militant a fait remarquer que 'les organisations ouvrières ne sont pas exemptes d'un certain esprit de routine.' 205

The longer hope was deferred, the more one could talk of

"Ces rêves, ces espérances, ces descriptions dépassent la réalité dont ils s'inspirent, et la dépassent tellement que, au point de vue pratique, utilitaire, c'est comme s'ils ne s'inspiraient plus d'elle: il y a trop de disproportion entre les indications quotidiennes et l'ampleur de la prévision; il y a aussi trop d'incertitude sur le lendemain." 206

"Le prolétariat 'rêve' le travail libre dans une société égalitaire: serait-il sage de penser que ce rêve n'a aucune valeur, qu'il n'est qu'un simple verbiage..." 207

Although the "dreaming" is a result of a distance between social aspiration and the possibility and proximity of its fulfilment, the form this "free work in an egalitarian society" takes, - either as itself a reality, or "exchanged" for substitutes, - determines the attitude, the false consciousness, of the workers and their organisations to the social system as a whole. The "dreams" are not dreams because they are derived from unreality, but in proportion as they seem unattainable.

There are in all this three tendencies: first for the actual development of the labour movement to lay emphasis on different aspects of theory. Thus, that the

"collaboration des syndicats avec l'Etat, les liaisons de 'l'économique' avec 'le politique' ont pris, en France, depuis quelques années, un caractère systématique, après n'avoir eu jusqu'alors qu'un caractère fragmentaire"

was in Britain and France reflected in a more systematic and juristic


206 ibid. p. 839.

207 ibid. p. 844.
political and social ideology of the limits of union action. Secondly, tactical confrontation gave rise to ideologies of class and functional cleavage independent of sociological analysis. French syndicalism seemed to provide a stimulating but impossible oppositional theory —

"Pas d'intérêts intermédiaires entre chaque individu et l'État, proclame la nation issu de 89; rien que les intérêts intermédiaires, proclame le syndicalisme."\(^{209}\)

Finally, the very advances of the labour movement opened its way for a repairing of discontinuity, a reintegration of socialists into the total system on a basis of opportunism and an institutionalising of conflict within the industrial system:

"Corbou, en 1865, disait dans le Secret du Peuple, que le peuple est un mystère surtout pour lui-même: le syndiqué est devenu impatient du joug de son ignorance, prompt à discuter sur son propre sort. Il a été, dans les syndicats confédérés, par un avancement dont nous sommes les témoins, curieux non seulement de lui-même, mais de l'ensemble social, à sort de cette multitude incoordonnée des consommateurs dont il a comme honte d'avoir fait partie en fainéant, lui, le producteur si orgueilleux de son outil, en égoïste, lui, le producteur si pressé à se soumettre à une discipline collective. Ainsi un civisme professionnel est né, avec toutes les ambitions constitutionnelles et ainsi toutes les violences que comporte un tel état d'esprit."\(^{210}\)

This movement from revolution to one of jurists "ni pontifes, ni guerriers", attempting to restructure the democratic jacobin state — "une poussière d'hommes"\(^{211}\) — was a travesty of syndicalism. To say that syndicalism "tend à donner une structure juridique définie aux différentes classes sociales, c'est-à-dire aux groupes d'individus, qui sont déjà unis par l'égalité de besogne dans la division du travail social"\(^{212}\)

209 ibid. p.89
212 ibid. p.122.
may be either an attempt to so decentralise political power and influence as to avoid - even to prohibit - overt conflict, or simply to recognise constitutionally differences of interests, and make these the legal basis of the state - thus dodging the issue of social conflict by transferring conflict from society to the state, making its resolution and generation part of the legal and administrative function of the state.

As Cole said

"It was almost a matter of chance that in the great British unrest revolutionism appeared mainly in the form of an industrial rather than a political movement; the essential conflict was between evolutionary gradualist on the one side and basically revolutionary impulses on the other - though in the particular British situation most of the instinctive revolutionists stopped a long way short of the positive advocacy of a violent social revolution, which they knew to be wholly outside the range of real possibility."

The British unrest itself showed tendencies leading away from economic federalism. Ablett, for instance, said the main problem in Trade Unions was a "Babel of interests" that the locally autonomous strike

"in South Wales (was) as dead as the dodo. Where they are now conducted, they are strikes of desperation which the workmen involved would be only too glad to make general."

The trend to centralisation, to obscuring the divisions between trades and functions - these were a trend in the unrest which from the start moved away from functionalism and federalism. One might indeed argue that the

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215 ibid. p.3.
pressures in British Trade Unions were to be described in terms of an industrial right and left, a partly co-extensive political right and left — with the left representing a maximalist position of rejecting compromise, and thus before 1914 more closely representing the spirit of rank and file pressure.

When Cole said

"the control of industry is no more a leading issue in French Trade Unionism than it is with us"... the CGT "consists very largely of the enlivening process of making a merit of its own weaknesses"216

he was surely missing the point — that the latent and logical extension of successful strike action was to end with the workers' control neither functionalist nor formally representative. Indeed, in the FSRD report Cole correctly pointed to the fluid state of theory in the movement —

"Without the French movement to provide it with a theory, the Labour Unrest could never had become so identified with a view. It was really a practical upheaval, and the identification ot it with Syndicalism does not go deep."217

But the point was that no movement can itself "be" a theory: the "identification" with theory is partly a matter of categorisation from outside, partly a guide to further activity for those inside the movement.

Cole's view of theory was of static analysis imposed from without:

"if a theory of the control of industry by the workers in Guilds or Unions arises, it will be evolved, not by Trade Unionists, but by middle-class idealists".218

As Cole reported

"Syndicalism as the advocacy of the self-governing workshop

216 Cole, ibid. p.4.
217 ibid. p.6.
218 ibid. p.9.
is negligible as a national force everywhere" and "the Union have neither the men nor the desire to run industry themselves." 219

However, "Nationalisation as by itself a remedy, is certainly dead and buried: but no other dogma takes its place". 220 But the rejection of nationalisation coincided with a movement based

"on the more or less widespread belief that the existing system of power relations between people is somehow thwarting their humanity". 221

And was this not evidence of what Macpherson urged

"we must notice that the offsetting transfers which the welfare state provides can never, within capitalism, equal the original and continuing transfer". 222

- and for this reason, no "welfare" theorising - no middle-class idealism, can have the value, integrity, and legitimacy for the labour movement which Cole and the Webbs hoped? As Macpherson said of the Emergency Powers Act, "The Act did not prohibit strikes, but indirectly it gave the State an efficient legal strike-breaking weapon". 223 because although the need of the state was for "sufficient authority to protect the existing property structure", 224 it could invoke a public interest, which "it was the primary duty of the State to protect. What is notable is that the Labour Party in Parliament shared this view". 225 - notable because "the interests of the community" which the State puts forward in justification

219 ibid. p.11.

220 ibid. p.11.

221 Macpherson, The Real World of Democracy, op.cit.p.18.

222 ibid. p.48.

223 C.B. Macpherson, Voluntary Associations within the State, 1900-1934, with special reference to the place of Trade Unions in relation to the State in Great Britain (M.Sc. Econ. thesis, LSE, April 1935) p.128.

224 ibid.p.12.

225 ibid. p.129.
are the interests of a capitalist community." 226

Hardie on the other hand simply saw syndicalism as a pressure group - "The more Syndicalism outside, the quicker would be the pace that Parliament moved". 227 That is, there was a direct exchange between revolutionism outside and reformism within, Parliament. This itself was a dubious proposition: as Hobson showed,

"Every really dangerous onrush of progressive forces has always been checked by a free desertion of moderate Liberals to the enemy". 228

Even if industrial direct action be ultimately acceptable as a form of constitutional action, which would appear doubtful,

"There is in every people a half-conscious recognition of the fact that the will of the people is not really operative unless it is able to perform concrete acts of government...This feeling is not satisfied by the act of choosing a representative once in five or six years. The instinct of self-government is starved on such a fare." 229

Nor would the "instinct" necessarily be satisfied by a more frequent formal participation.

Despite the anti-Hegelianism of the British pluralists, their antimonism, their profession to have learnt from Syndicalism the lesson of spontaneity and political "instinct", one feels they have reservations such as Hobhouse's:

"If we went bald-headed for every strike that occurs, we should not have the slightest authority with anyone...Well, you will say, vogue la galère. It all brings us nearer to the great class war, nothing is to be got except by fighting. The moment you convince me of this I shall shut up shop as a radical or a socialist or anything reforming, because I shall be convinced that human nature is hopeless, and that

226 Ibid. p.136.


229 Ibid. p.15.
the attempt to improve society had better be left alone. Moreover, all that I see or read goes to convince me that if it comes to a class war, the class in possession will win hands down. Numbers are nothing. When it comes to force, organisation, drill and tradition are everything."250

The conclusion is obvious: bourgeois opportunism (not pluralism) is produced as critique of militancy. In 1926

"moderate Labour, - Labour in office - has on the whole represented essential Liberalism - not without mistakes, but better than the organised party since Campbell-Bannerman's death"..."The deduction I draw is that the distinction between the kind of labour man who does not go 'whole hog' for nationalisation, on the one hand, and the Liberal who wants social progress on the other is obsolete."251

In other words, in the battle between revisionists and "the socialist generation" of which M. Beer speaks, the recruits from liberalism were used to help keep the centre of gravity away from socialism or a too-close connection with the rank and file. Only after thirteen years, Hobhouse was prepared to admit an error, that there would be "some form of class war to end in the triumph of Fascism."232 By underrating the aggressiveness of the nationalists, of the bourgeoisie, the political involvement of capitalism in politics, Hobhouse was helped to encourage the working-class movement to lose the will and capacity to resist.

"The fact is that the unrest is deeper than pounds, shillings and pence, necessary as they are. The root of the matter is the straining of the spirit of man to be free."233

250 Quoted in J.A. Hobson and Morris Ginsberg, L.T. Hobhouse, His Life and Work (1931) pp.64-5. LTH to Margaret Llewellyn Davies.

251 Quoted in ibid. 29.11.26, p.66.

252 LTH to Margaret Davies in 1927, quoted ibid., p.259.

233 C.L. Goodrich, The Frontier of Control, A Study in British Workshop Politics (1920) p.3. (quoting William Straker of the MFGB) He went on to make the point that "There is no one break in the long series from Syndicalism to Whitleyism, and the widespread acceptance of the latter in middle-class thinking is a hint of the driving force
of the more drastic doctrines." (p.7.) However, the impact was not of direct, though lessened, impetus. It was clearly possible for many intermediate aims of unions bent on restricting the rights of private property owners, and opposed to the government adopting entrepreneurial modes in its employment policy, to be achieved in a capitalist system. ..."In mining, the merchant service, boots and shoes, and pottery, for example, the union is generally recognised by others to have exclusive recruitment rights throughout virtually the whole of the manual labour force. In textiles, live entertainment and the non-industrial civil service an entire industry or trade is divided up between a number of unions, each of which has an exclusive right to recruit in specific trades. In yet other cases, i.e., shipbuilding and engineering, there are a number of unions with recognised rights to recruit." (in W.E.J.McCarthy, The Closed Shop in Britain (Oxford 1964) p.14). Thus "real" gains and effective palliatives, involvement in liberal democracy are alternatives to a socialist success - they neither outstrip the forms of corporate capitalism nor do they produce the effects of a spontaneous or directed revolution.
Goodrich adopted the style of the movement he was analysing to make two points: that it was probable that to consider merely trade-union demands would be to ignore both the sociology of emancipation movements, and the significance of their ideology. Secondly, he nicely illustrates how the utopianism of working-class movements produces associated and at times hostile middle-class idealisms. Syndicalism produces thus an idealised version of the class struggle and the independence of the working-class - and arguments for economic federalism and legal pluralism which ignore, distort or counter the material conditions producing the original unrest. These bourgeois ideologies reflect deficiencies in the consciousness and ideology of the proletariat - but their function is to magnify and develop these deficiencies.
Chapter Six

"Now I am witnessing something difficult".
The government of a union, 1910 - 14.

Introduction

In this chapter we have considered those institutional pressures which, changing the objectives of Trade Union leaders, removed the government of these unions ever further from control by rank and file members and by militants. Participation in Union affairs was turned into an institutional means of controlling and defining their social and political attitudes - though the task of interpreting and directing such attitudes can be taken as another and necessary element in the same process. With the growth in Union power and size, the development of relations with national parties and institutions, there came changes in objective which grew out of and transformed traditional policies, often contradicting the emancipatory aims of earlier unionism. It was perhaps inevitable that local initiative and variety should be severely restricted as the size of industrial units grew, and the technical and occupational basis of the Unions changed. The functional needs of Union bureaucracy reduced the element of "pressure" or "communication" from below, especially when this was of a class or militant character which conflicted with the objectives and socio-political ideology of the leaders. Trade Unions rely for both strategic and tactical success on strength of organisation, and for this reason alone are perhaps peculiarly susceptible to institutional pressures.

The "unrest" before 1914 can scarcely be described in terms of an individual spontaneity - in which without plan or signal or inter-communication individuals acted simultaneously and in the same way. This
would contradict not only the empirical evidence of communication-flow and the diffusion of ideas, but would be precluded by the nature of work-groups and the organisation of industry.

Collective spontaneity – groups acting apparently without a plan, timetable or leaders imposed from outside can be conceived of in three contexts: primitive, where communication flow is restricted within an enclosed environment and men act without reference to a theory or considerations broader than this environment, populist – where leaders and organisations arise from a dynamic situation, the opinions of the opinion-leaders derive from situations within, not outside, the sub-system, and intellectual, where novel, or in Lenin’s phrase "fantastic", forms of organisation and behaviour are created.

The growth of unskilled and "mass" unions, coinciding with a movement towards the deskilling and dis-entitling of the labour aristocracy, was itself a reflection of the structural changes in the British economy before 1914. However, there is a parallelism between the efforts of socialist militants to trace the taproot of discontent down through occupational strata and organised groups, and the re-location of the organisational centres of militancy. From a movement to convert, or replace union leaders, to transform and revive the union movement, the attention shifted to the shop committee, and finally the factory cell: one may perceive a similar movement in socialist theory from a concern with mass conversion to organised, disciplined programmes of action, and finally to action by a vanguard.

1 see for example, E.M.Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations (1962) Free Press, Illinois.

2 V.I.Lenin, Left Wing Communism An infantile disorder (1920).
The problems arising from this are clear: before 1914, the militant movement was torn between a desire to renounce organisation, with the mediation, delegation and interpretation which this involved, and a desire to rely on the creativity of spontaneity - which meant renouncing a socialist defence, leadership and "rectification" of the movement. The reluctance to divide the movement can be seen in terms of an implicit desire to see projected courses of action legitimated by the enthusiasm and participation of a "spontaneous" movement - though the "spontaneity" itself must be lessened, structured by the very success of socialist re-organisation and the assumption of a socialist leadership and programme. Although this desire for legitimacy encouraged the bureaucratic leaders to retain the language of an earlier militancy and the militants to address the mass of unionists as if their opposition to their leaders' policies, and indeed their dissatisfaction with social relations, was both spontaneous and, contradictorily, consciously socialist-revolutionary, the myth of spontaneity was dangerous.

By definition, spontaneity could not be organised, but existing leaders could claim to be repairing discontinuities in answer to rank and file criticism, whether they were being encouraged to press for better conditions, to purge the dissidents, or simply to wait till the protest died down. In all cases, opportunism was encouraged.

Again, so long as British militants hoped that mass spontaneity would turn out to be the concerted rising of a class to destroy capitalism, they were in fact confessing two kinds of defeat. The spontaneity for which they waited would represent a protest as much against their own socialist organisation and its deficiencies as against that of the conservative and opportunist labour movement. Furthermore,
there was no guarantee that such a protest would advance socialism as they defined it, nor indeed that any concessions made would be either permanent or that they would modify not only the social relations of British workers but also those of the millions of workers, peasants and the scores of reserve armies under the sway of British capital and diplomacy. Nationalism and reformism could clearly so structure levels of aspiration as to produce at least a psychological form of nonantagonistic social relations in Britain.

The existing distribution of property and the system of property relations were, however, defensible in depth: the immunity of the imperialist system to the Liberal reforms is itself an argument for their vital function within a global system, not of reformism but of imperialism.

When Connolly said "Fighting spirit is of more importance than the creation of the theoretically perfect organisation" he was not suggesting that organisation could be dispensed with in favour of a "spirit" - though there is a sense in which the theoretically perfect organisation, and fighting spirit are the poles of a "subservience to spontaneity" to which danger Connolly was peculiarly alive. He did not propose that all problems could be solved by a politically active mass, nor that there was necessarily a complete identity between self-government by individual "selves" and the government of a corporate self. Connolly saw that to some extent the task of encouraging "unrest" and building a revolutionary government were separate, if not contradictory activities.

4 V.I. Lenin, What is to be done? (1902)
Had Mann and his fellow syndicalists and industrial unionists seized, if not the government of the country then the government of the unions, they might have found that their socialism was incompatible with the nature of "unrest", that those institutions which replaced the State necessarily copied the State, and that their choice of priorities showed that, for instance decentralised decision-making made it impossible to reduce hours of work or raise wages.

One can, however, make two points which mitigate the charges of "subservience". The discontinuities in the labour movement, in so far as they were repaired were mended under pressure which surprised and often explicitly criticised their leaders — and this pressure was towards a line long urged by socialist militants and even revolutionaries. Although some of the changes in the labour movement were "closures" of previous options, and although many traditional attitudes were reinforced by the movement, in the first instance the changes were in the direction of militancy. Again, however vulnerable to institutional pressures and the reinforcement of "compromise" policies the Unions were, the period of the unrest directed attention to the rate and effect of structural change in capitalism, and to the limits and potential of various forms of mass working-class action and organisation.

* * * * *
H.A. Clegg raises an interesting problem when he writes:

"This notion is now dead. No one now believes that direct industrial self-government by workers could provide for the running of a modern industrial society."

The question of industrial self-government is, however, less one of management than of participation, and of the relation between the desires and aspirations of individuals and the organisations through which they seek the realisation of these aspirations. The aim of a trade union may, for instance, be stated as the promotion of

"the social, moral, and intellectual interests of its members, to obtain and maintain for them equitable rates of wages, and reasonable hours and conditions of labour; to regulate the relations between employers and employed, and to endeavour to arrange the differences between them by amicable and conciliatory means."

but this may be more, or less, than the individual wishes. The unorganised worker has his aspirations translated more or less accurately, a start is made or proposed to redress his grievances when he joins an organisation whose aim this is. Some aspirations may, however, be denied or at least not acknowledged by "his" organisation: and the motives which led him to join a union are transformed and transcended by his actual membership. "Spontaneous" unrest in this context is but the conjunctural aspect of structural disfunction: in another sense it is the search of individuals for suitable organisations.


2 National Amalgamated Union of Labour. Special Delegate Assembly, Newcastle 1905, p.6. The Clause continues: "These objects shall be promoted as provided for in the following code of rules and in no other way." Thus for the NAUL's members, conciliation was an aim and a method of the union before the majority of its members were formally covered by conciliation agreements (see for this E.H. Phelps Brown, The Growth of British Industrial Relations (1959)).

3 S.M. Lipset, Martin A. Trow, James S. Coleman. Union Democracy (Free Press, 1956). This is useful on intra-union politics, but because the ITU's party system is unique, democracy in Trade Unions is regarded as "deviant" (see e.g. pp.417-8) - which implies an over-restrictive use of the term "democracy".
On joining, or forming, such an organisation, men find that there is not complete correspondence between their original aims and those of the organisation, nor do their changing perceptions and environment develop in step with the organisation. A union leadership may value loyal acquiescence above vigorous participation in union affairs. It is instructive to consider the attempts made to interpret and formalise the interests and demands of new recruits and members by the officers of the National Amalgamated Union of Labour over some thirty years, and to analyse the changing union policies and attitudes as they reflect and affect the changing relation of members to their union. Where recent writers have proposed a systematic approach to five areas of development in trade unions under the impact of changing conditions, structure (distribution of power), demands on officers, activities, recruitment of officers, and policies, our inquiry is rather different. L.T. Hobhouse nicely demonstrates the difficulty of generating enthusiasm and acceptance for policies whose implementation requires only a minimum of activity by the voter. The success of participatory democracy depended "on the response of the voters to the opportunities given them. But, conversely, the opportunities must be given in order to call forth the response." Liberalism, 1911 (OUP edn., 1964) p.119. Further to this see John Plamenatz, Interests. (Pol. Studies, Feb. 1954). Plamenatz's description of individual interest in terms of the frustration of customary expectations does not seem a satisfactory major cause for the "unrest", but the article can be profitably read with reference to the "pre-organised" interests of men. This union is described in H.A. Clegg, General Union (1954) and in his General Union in a changing society (1964). The amalgamation which founded the NUGMW is described in Sixty Years (NUGMW, 1949). Two biographies concerning similar unions are Will Thorne's, My Life's Battles (n.d.) and J.R. Clynes, Memoirs, 1889-1924 (n.d.). On political and skilled men's attitudes in the North-East, see D.C. Cummings, A Historical Survey of the Boiler Makers' and Iron and Steel Ship Builders' Society (Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1905), and Thomas Burt, An Autobiography (1924). I have found helpful in this section three works by V.L. Allen, Power in Trade Unions (1954), Trade Union Leadership (1957), and Militant Trade Unionism (1966), and H.A. Turner's Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy (1962). e.g. Workers' Participation in Management, in the Bulletin of the International Institute for Labour Studies, Feb. 1967.
Nettl suggests

"it is quite a common phenomenon to find existing structures serving different purposes, and eventually different functions through time. We tend not to see this as change, since the institutional structure has remained intact and outwardly unchanged, even though the pertinent roles and functions have changed."7

In the case of the NAUL, on the other hand, a number of policies remain outwardly unchanged while the institutional framework was being transformed and the significance of the policies themselves altered by the influx of new members between 1911 and 1917 as well as by socio-economic developments in the country at large. To contemporaries, this phenomenon and the difficulties it raised for the labour movement were crucial.

Lenin referred to the escalation from individual protest to controlled, continuing and significant organisation in the context of the need to preserve the dynamic of the original protest in a heightened institutional form:

"Only the defenders of the bourgeoisie and its excessive profits can sneer at the demand for a 'rise'. But the workers know that it is the widespread character of the demand for a rise, it is the comprehensive character of a strike, that has the greatest power to attract a multitude of new participants, to ensure the strength of the onslaught and the sympathy of society, and to guarantee both the success of the workers and the national significance of the movement."8

In fact, Lenin blends here two traditions in pre-1914 theory: first a theory of the (ideal) correspondence between worker, working-class, and

7 P. Nettl, Political Studies, Oct. 1966. The Concept of System in Political Science, p.331. See too his account of the growth of the SPD bureaucracy "which thought of itself as 'neutral' in questions of policy, supported the executive at all times and became in turn the structural apparatus of the leadership's control." The German Social Democratic Party, 1890-1914, as a political model. Past and Present, no. 50, April 1965, p.79. In the NAUL, "neutrality" itself was enforced as a policy!

working-class organisation. The initial demand for an increase, the collective form this demand takes, and its subsequent generalisation and political form, heightens but never distorts the élan of the initial impulse. The second theory is one of organisation: only a movement can provide the necessary continuity, theoretical explanation, education and power to survive and generate fresh demands, without which the initial demand would either be satisfied or frustrated.

One of the clearest British statements of the first tradition, close to Kropotkin, can be found in The Miners' Next Step. Leadership, by interpreting and mediating the real interests and demands of the workers "corrupts the aspirants to public usefulness": what is required is an organisation conforming in all (organismal) respects to the rank and file. That is,

"the legislative power of the workers through their industrial votes will operate directly, through an united organisation, in the interests of the rank and file"..."so that pressure at one point would automatically affect all others."\(^9\)

This ideal identity of individual and collective interests is derived in Cégétiste theory from extreme individualism. Griffuelhes said that his "revolutionary journey" had "fortifié en moi les convictions anciennes, le désir d'autonomie, d'indépendance, la valeur d'effort personnel, la nécessité d'une action toujours accrue."\(^{10}\) These individual values could, however, be expressed not only through the collective activity of revolutionary gymnastics, but through such


10 V.Grigguelhes. Voyage Révolutionnaire, Bibliothèque du Mouvement Prolétarien, x. p.43.
organisations as the Bourses.11

Pouget declared "le syndicat s'érige comme une école de volonté"12 — that is, the union refines and draws out the moral superiority which the member enjoys over his employer by virtue of his being working class. In Britain, writers of this outlook tended to see union or party membership as not only total commitment, but as arising from the totality of their experience:

"What brings people into a movement is not so much the material effects of modern economic life as a sense of outraged justice. People's lives are determined not so much by membership of a particular class as by their daily experience of the society as a whole in which they live."13

This profound belief in the correspondence between individual, collective and organised action, and its frequent betrayal by organisations and their leaders, is at the root of pre-1914 demands for self-government in industry. The reintegration, the disalienation of man in society through the ever-responsive organisation runs through syndicalism, industrial unionism, the workshop committee, and finally the guild, as it had through the commune and the free workshop of the late nineteenth century. The actual problem it attempted to solve in the labour movement, (not the theoretical one,) was how to translate the enthusiasm and protest of concurrent groups into organisations which would at once maintain, and be progressively sensitive to, the quality of these attitudes.

In Britain the second tradition was that of the Webbs and Cole, standing


for the more pragmatic view of organisation: that it involved
delegation, nor direct control and representation, the re-shaping
of sectional interests in the interests of an harmonious common interest.
In Beatrice Webb, this becomes indistinguishable from an integrative
majoritarianism:-

"are men to be governed by emotion or by reason? Are they
to be governed in harmony with the desires of the bulk of
the citizens or according to the fervent aspirations of a
militant minority in defiance of the will of the majority?"14

Majority rule thus plainly excludes the guiding contribution of "fervent
militants": but the hope of self-government is restricted for all.

Cole likewise dismissed the urge for self-government in theory and
in practice:

"The people, therefore, cannot manage industry for themselves,
and can only control it as the capitalists do, by employing
officials - commonly called in this case bureaucrats - to
manage it for them."15

This is effectively an attack on spontaneity arising from
consciousness of grievance and the desire to take effective action to
remove the cause. By 1927, Sidney Webb proposed that the desire for
this kind of remedial action was directly opposed to the aim of the
improvement of organisation: he blamed

"some lingering idea of 'workers' control' - which is, in
this country today, standing in the way of any improvement
in Trade Union structure."16

To the Webbs, too, amalgamation did not require justification on grounds

14 B.Webb, Diaries 8.xii.13 (MS)
that it permitted the more accurate and effective representation of
developing sectional and individual interests:

"to competition between overlapping unions is to be
attributed nine tenths of the ineffectiveness of the
Trade Union world."17

And yet, what is this effectiveness? Sidney Webb criticised "self-
government" on the grounds that

"Three-quarters of a century of experience has shown that such
'self-governing workshops' fail to command either the necessary
amount of capital required, or the managerial ability, or the
necessary 'knowledge of the market', or the workshop discipline,
without all of which efficient production is impossible."18

But if self-government is incompatible with efficient production, and
efficient organisations must resist the claims of enthusiastic
minorities, there still remains the question of which attitude to
self-government the organisations existing in 1911-1914 took in this
period, whether to majorities or minorities in the "Unrest".

"The history of the international labour movement furnishes
innumerable examples of the manner in which the party becomes
increasingly inert as the strength of its organisation grows;
it loses its revolutionary impetus, becomes sluggish, not in
respect of action alone, but also in the sphere of thought."19

For Michels, every (spontaneous) party carries within it an anti-party
(organisation). Childe was so struck by this in Australia that he
believed this to be a fault and a phenomenon confined to the working
class and their organisations.20 Unless consciously so structured that
they are responsive to pressures from below, the tendency to continuity

18 S. and B. Webb, What Syndicalism Means. The Crusade, August 1912,
to retention and husbanding of members and funds, and to self-preservation of organisations will probably tend to reinforce tendencies to gradualism, caution and compromise. Bearing in mind the "libéralisme de classe" of French and British syndicalism as according a special role to participating activists, majority or minority, it is instructive to consider a few policies and attitudes which raise in acute form the question of accommodating within an organisation changing forms of individual, collective, and militant interests.

Amalgamation is the first policy to be studied. This was an old revolutionary demand — a fusion of sectional interests and fusion or superorganisation of unions into a whole — be it the GHOTU or Engels' "At the side of, or above, the Unions of special trades, there must spring up a general Union, a political organisation of the working-class as a whole." In this sense, amalgamation involved the blending of heterogeneous groups to produce a harmonious organisation in accordance with pure consciousness. By 1910 amalgamationists were seeking to accelerate existing tendencies within the movement as a more hopeful and controllable development than a campaign for completely new organisations, industrial unionism: and there is an overtone of wishful thinking even as early as W.F.Watson's advocacy: the union "shall definitely wage the

24 B.Pribićević, op.cit., especially p.69 et seq.
class war, thereby preventing the Amalgamation, when realised, becoming an amalgamation of officials."

In practice, there was no reason why a huge union with a phalanx of officials, should not resist rank and file pressure more stoutly than a small union - nor indeed why, as the distance between leaders and rank and file grew, union policy as a whole should not become less able to promote the economic interests of sections of its members. The Workers' Union, for instance, paid unusually high benefits to its members and retained some at least of its socialist orientation, but benefits and the radicalism of 1898 were extinguished on amalgamation.

It seems in the NAUL that there are at least four phases of the movement to amalgamation, but the fact that recent research has attempted to quantify union amalgamation implies that there are constant administrative


26 K.G. J.C. Knowles and D.J. Robertson, Differences between the wages of skilled and unskilled workers, 1800-1950. Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics, April 1951. These figures bear out the contention that "The Unions have not hitherto been concerned with justifying existing differentials" (p.117) - nor indeed with narrowing them as a matter of policy.

27 H.A. Turner, in Trade Unions, Differentials, and the levelling of wages (The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies, Sept. 1952) suggests that flat-rate increases which maintain fixed cash differentials will naturally tend to favour the lower-paid because the percentage differential will narrow. This type of increase, though, is clearly intended not to raise the question of relative sectional advantages: some unions which do press for percentage, nor flat-rate increases favour by this not the mass of union members, but a core of high-status and high income workers. In both these instances, the interests covered by the union, and its wage policy have an immediate influence on the extent to which individual and group economic interests are satisfied and status raised - yet these are the least advertised and publicised performances of large unions.

27 H.A. Clegg, General Union in a changing society op. cit. passim. The Workers' Union had a programme which included the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. (Workers' Union Circular no.1. Why the New Union was Formed, 25.ii.98).
and economic advantages in amalgamation which persist over long periods. In the case of the NAUL, although the demand for amalgamation could be described as laying down a precondition for class-consciousness and action, the aggregation of 1911-14 effectively removed the union’s officers and the policy of amalgamation from the threat of takeover by any possible self-governing camarilla or jacquerie.

Second, we consider the labour aristocracy. The early inter-union and inter-occupational disputes in which the NAUL took part determined both its attitude to parliamentary representation and to cooperation with other parts of the labour movement. This in fact seems to have been a more potent force than conflict with the possessing class: a general labourers' union is likely to be more concerned with the maintenance of

28 See e.g. E.A. Turner, British Trade Union Structure - A new approach. British Journal of Industrial Relations, July 1964. Martin S. Estey, Trends in Concentration of Union Membership, 1897-1962. Quarterly Journal of Economics, August 1966. P.E. Hart and E.H. Phelps Brown, The sizes of Trade Unions: a study in the laws of aggregation. The Economic Journal, March 1957. Turner sees the shop steward as a necessary interpreter of disparate union policies while at the national level union leaders are increasingly dependent on government direction of the economy, and it is in relation to government policy that further structural change and amalgamation in the movement should be undertaken. Hart and Phelps Brown, however, suggest that in the past, policy has had little effect on the incidence of amalgamation, or indeed on the concentration of membership - though Estey relates his figures to different policies. One may make two points here: the NAUL held a policy of amalgamation for nearly twenty-five years before it finally lost its identity. As I have said, while the policy outwardly remained the same, its context and significance altered. It is the effect rather than the fact (the who whom? argument) of amalgamation which is significant, and this may well turn out not to be quantifiable. Again, as Turner points out, the amalgamation of the T&GWU, NUGW, and AEU would profoundly change both the labour movement and industrial relations over a large area - and its significance would lie in the attitude of the amalgamating officials to government policy, reflecting "The main strand in labour thinking today (which) is clearly that of central governmental responsibility for the guidance and planning of the economy as a whole, perhaps increasingly diluted by ideas of "workers' participation" in management (if not yet of workers' self-management) at the enterprise level itself". (Turner op. cit. 174.)

29 See e.g. E.J. Hobsbawm, The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth-century Britain, in Labouring Men, op.cit., and J. Kuczekynski Darstellung der Lage der Arbeiter in England von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart (Band 25) Berlin 1965 (p.28)
labouring work and the narrowing of differentials than the problems and social relationships in depth of a single industry or locality.

General unions were in competition for members with unions of skilled men - but at first the social and occupational resentment thus generated, and the desire to prevent expensive disputes caused by skilled men, led to NAUL demands for federation, amalgamation, and political action. Kautsky went so far as to propose that the antagonism between aristocracy and working class was such that the bourgeoisie could woo the aristocrats away from their class by reforms. In fact, it was the NAUL which remained solidly reformist to the end, and rather than the whole working class becoming aristocrats, the union aspired to the security, respectability and job control of the aristocracy, but, for very pressure of numbers, not to its privileged position in the working-class. This old struggle, which was rapidly being superseded by aggressive employers and "deskilling" long before the war, not only stabilized and froze attitudes but prolonged them in a changing socio-political environment.

Next we shall proceed to examine militancy in the affairs of the NAUL. There has been a long debate on the role of militants in unions, the academic preoccupation itself being explicable in terms of the "closure" of unions as centres of radical debate. Militancy ceases to be intra-union democracy, or exercises in self-government, and becomes harassment.

32 V.L. Allen, Power in Trade Unions, p.15, suggests that unions do not exist to educate their members in democratic procedures. That this has become an arguable proposition is a result of the institutionalisation of ideology, its incorporation in the very administrative framework of the union.
and disruption. In an extreme case, Clegg quotes Clynes, who in 1926 "commented, without much regard for the truth, 'that it was the first time in more than thirty-five years service that the General Secretary and certain other officers had been opposed.'"\textsuperscript{33} The attack on militants ends the serious discussion of what Goetz-Girey called syndicalist imperialism:\textsuperscript{34} it inhibits, or attempts to inhibit, the local guerilla warfare which the CGT appears to have institutionalised.\textsuperscript{35} It is also certain to prevent the basic political expression of intention which "s'unit directement à la volonté d'un contrôle direct, non étatisé, de l'entreprise."\textsuperscript{36} Militancy is both an essential and inescapable feature of capitalism and in failure "un anticapitalisme verbal qui sclérose leur pensée et les cantonne dans le conformisme au plan des méthodes d'action",\textsuperscript{37} to which bourgeois ideology sees the only alternative as to adopt a different policy.

The academic discussion of the causes and content of socialist militancy becomes a discussion of occupational grievance, or conjunctural

\textsuperscript{33} H.A.Clegg, op. cit. p.123.


\textsuperscript{35} see e.g., Jean-Daniel Reynaud, Philippe Bernoux and Lucien Lavorel. Organisation syndicale, idéologie et politique des salaires. Sociologie du Travail, Oct-Dec. 1966. They suggest that the federal structure of French unions permits and encourages local militant supplementation of central policy - something which structure, if not policy and ideology, of British unions would restrict if not prevent (on the strength of the syndicats and Bourses at local level, compared with the poor co-ordination and strong central government of British Unions, see G.D.H.Cole, Self Government in Industry, (1920) p.272-3.


"retentissement profond". It is interesting that Bean's discussion of militancy should be one in terms only of militant leaders, aspirants to the union bureaucracy, in which rank and file activity is explained in relation only to the "type of union" and "types of industry" to which they belong. This somewhat mechanistic and often tautologous description of militancy ("the more grievances the more sense of grievance") is often seen purely as a reaction by officials to attempts to replace them. In the NAUL, however, opposition to militancy was specific and political, not customary and administrative. Union leaders seem to have welcomed the Labour Party since it removed politics once more from union affairs and meant that the unions did not have to serve as "proletarian nations".

Finally, we analyse the impact of the pre-1914 increase of numbers on structure and politics. The unrest and the rush to the unions after 1911 presented an immense administrative challenge to the existing officers: one would expect it also to challenge existing policies and enliven union thinking on the problems of mass membership and the political and economic advances which would now become possible. In fact, the union's gradualism and conservatism were confirmed, strengthened and formalised by the accession of 100,000 new members in six years. This reaction was crucial. Sir Charles Owen of the London and North Western


Railway said in 1911

"the logical working out of the position taken up by the Trade Union Congress as regards sympathetic strikes would put the trade unions in a position of power not inferior, but probably superior, to that of the Imperial Parliament itself." 40

Amalgamation was a barrier against strike action for the NAUL; bitterness toward skilled men stopped the NAUL offering sympathetic support - if the Parliamentarism and constitutionalism of the officers had not already made it unlikely that the leap forward in membership would see an adoption of a new strategy. Even a revolutionary NAUL would of course be no guarantee of effective class and party consciousness: Lozowsky called industrial unionism, for example "a rather interesting variety of the combination of Marxism and syndicalist sectarianism." 41

The years 1911-20 which saw so many attempts to fit a drive to organisation into some theoretical framework, and which was the period of the formation of the big general unions, determined the location in unions of policy-making machinery, and the development of relationships between unions and party and state. The retention of power by the leadership of existing unions and the restructuring of unions to accommodate a mass membership, if not its continuing protest, determined the tactics of subsequent campaigns. As Mellor said of Guild Socialism, "whilst it appealed apparently to the rank and file, it was really only concerned with the leaders." 42 Similar points were made at the time of the General Strike - that the leaders led the strike to keep the leadership. 43

40 The Need of National Resistance to the Claims and Methods of the New Trade Unionism. 1911
41 A. Lozowsky, Marx and the Trade Unions (1935) p.156.
42 W. Mellor, Labour Monthly, 1921, August. p.404.
It is not suggested that there must be opposition between organised and unorganised, rank and file and leadership: what was significant was the end of the theory, and the possibility, of self-government through the labour movement, and the closing of many unions to the continuous and stimulating pressure of waves of unrest, and new organisations of different strata of workers.

"It is evident that there is a widespread movement for the control of industry. It is a ragged movement, without any common direction." 44

This movement, however, was coloured by the need, depicted by William Morris, to find as it were an industrial and social modular: a measure of organisation based on the human scale, in union or workshop — and the very enthusiasm for such a search inflated the unions so that government by centralised bureaucracy was virtually inevitable.

The NAUL

The first phase of the drive towards amalgamation was one for federation. There seem to have been two pressures acting here, both conditioned by the relative soundness of the unions of skilled men and the resistance and organisation of the employers against their claims. The labourers of the NAUL were thrown out of work by other trades when these were in dispute. The NAUL was determined that it must provide a route of mobility for its members which would be closed if it actively recruited skilled men, or federated too closely with skilled unions. Federation with semi- and unskilled men's unions might help to stop strikes and competition from other unions. It would also demonstrate the respectability and moderation of the NAUL and its members, the justice or their claims and of their demand for social acceptance alongside the

44 C.H. Lloyd, Trade Unionism, (1921 edn., p. 274)
skilled.

Second, by limiting disputes, federation would save money otherwise spent in other men's strikes, as well as simplifying the demarcation and poaching disputes which were also expensive. This desire to federate was, however, not merely reactive and defensive: it marked a determination to spread organisation, copy the activities of skilled men (for example, by starting a newspaper), seeking redress from political action, and above all, perhaps, seeking to demonstrate that labourers were as vital to industry as the skilled men. Strength of organisation was thus directly linked both with the economic security of members, and also with their social standing in the community at large. The unorganised, and the members of competing sectional and, indeed, skilled unions, pushed the NAUL towards a recognition of common interests, and of the connection between trade union work and political and social emancipation. The fate of the union and of its members was recognised to be dependent on the appeal of unionism: but aggressiveness came not from the NAUL but other unions and employers. In 1894, "disputes that have occurred have been as numerous as ever, though every possible effort has been put forth in trying to prevent them." The reason was plain: although the NAUL in the 90's was usually successful in strikes, it spent twice as much on the disputes of other unions than on its own:

"These figures hardly bear out the contention among whom it has been fashionable to maintain that the 'New Unionism' is a thing of reckless and aggressive character." 46

It was not further progress so much as stability which the union desired:

45 NAUL Annual Report, 1894, p.3.
46 ibid. Annual Report 1898, p.3.
"safeguard lies in Federation." 47

Already the union was organising in many trades and areas, and the core of Irish shipyard labourers was early outnumbered by a heterogeneous mass of trades: in 1896 the union showed interest in horsekeepers, lamplighters, copper workers, ship and river workers, engineers, gas and brick workers - as well as the powerful group of colliery surface workers. 48 This extension of interest was marked by attempts to contact other Northern unions to discuss ways of resisting employers' association and "Free Labour." 49

As a union for the unskilled, the most vulnerable, the NAUL could not escape the logic of the need for greater coverage and wide recruitment: the social and economic position of members, the opposition of employers and the resistance of the skilled, however, inclined union policies to gradualism. Security, respectability, and social harmony were the basic aims of the NAUL in its expansionist push to Federation. "The stronger the organisation became the less likely would disputes lead to a strike" 50 - this was the aim, and the attack on sectionalism was explained in such terms as "the Amalgamated Union of Labour was generally at the bottom, and

48 ibid. EC Minutes, Oct - Nov. 1896.
49 ibid. EC Minutes Nov. 14, 1896.
50 Tyneside and National Labour Union of Great Britain and Ireland. 3rd. Annual Delegate Assembly, 1892) (Middlesbrought). p.21. This scheme of federation was effectively one for amalgamation or industrial unionism: "The basis of federation, as I understand it, is not to include this or that union, it was for all unions. You see today one union in the South of England fighting against another union in another part of the country. Each has its own jealousies and circumstantial troubles. Now we want all unions representing trade and labour organisation connected with the shipping industry to federate." p.21.
they were invariably the victims."\(^{51}\)

The second phase was a search for amalgamation, with the encouragement of the GFTU, which led to the setting up of the GLNC in 1907. The NAUL was urged by its Secretary to political action - concern over Taff Vale, tariff reform - full participation in the work of the LRC and Labour Party. \(^{52}\) Two developments become clear in the years of depression in shipbuilding after 1900: the union was so diverse and extended that the interests both social and economic of various groups in the union had to be generalised. The distinctive character of the union was disappearing in face of the difficulty of negotiating with employers in different industries over the country, organising large numbers of trades and maintaining benefits in time of slump with only the same membership as in the early 1890s. Bell, the General Secretary, was now pressing for amalgamation:

"even if we fail to amalgamate these Unions, any steps that will bring them into greater harmony with each other will make for greater strength," "amalgamated we should have one huge union, with something like 100,000 members."\(^ {53}\)

The second development was the satisfaction of the need for social and political acceptance: the LRC's foundation meant that the "so-called unskilled" "have moved with quickened pace in the direction of securing an increased influence over the legislative and administrative machinery of the country". \(^ {54}\) Although the financial problems of the NAUL remained it had political representation, and a national organisation -

\(^{51}\) NAUL, Report of Special Delegate Assembly. Newcastle 1896 p.4. The expense of strikes encouraged the union to apply for and achieve the formation of a Referee Court for NAUL, Boilermakers, and their employers.

\(^{52}\) NAUL, Annual Reports, 1901 and 1902.

\(^{53}\) NAUL, Quarterly Reports, June - Sept. 1907.

\(^{54}\) NAUL, Annual Report, 1901, p.5.
amalgamation would give it the weight of numbers it required. Thus one can see that original attitudes, formed and present in the 1890s persisted when the social and political environment of the union and of capitalist society was changing: increasingly the union, as it grew stronger, was mediating and interpreting the desires of its members in a wide range of new activities - offering, by amalgamation, to transform and even extinguish the promotion of particular interests.\textsuperscript{55}

In the event, the increase of numbers came not by amalgamation, which might have broken the continuity of traditional policies, but from the unrest. In 1911 the GLMC voted to amalgamate with the new NTWF, though this idea did not proceed: the NAUL was effectively an element in a "union imperialism", promoting a complex of organisations, federal councils, and a political party. Clynes traced the impulse to amalgamation to 1911/12, saying that

"With the growth of our numbers, and with the great increase in our responsibilities, our obligations, and our activities, the need for amalgamation is growing with the very strength of the separate organisations."

Organisation is needed to face counter-organisation —

"the growing aggression of the employing classes, and the increased organisation that is manifest throughout the country in the interests of organised capitalism."\textsuperscript{56}

The problems of the 1890s are presented here in an acute and heightened form: but organised strength had become a solution made possible by the increase in numbers — and this was seen as virtually the only

55 The 1911 vote on amalgamation showed a large majority for the principle. (Circular, 14.7.11) See the Report on the Delegate Assembly, Belfast, 1920, for a full account, p.7.

56 General Labourers' National Council and NTWF. Special Conference on Amalgamation, July 1914. pp.7 and 12.
significance of the "unrest". Gosling agreed:

"I find that even the old-fashioned conservative view of some of these old unions is fast disappearing because of the necessity of linking up closer and drawing together."56

This defensive reaction changed slowly, as the financial and industrial security of the unions increased during the war, to discussions of amalgamation for almost solely business reasons: In 1917 there was talk at the NUGW conference of

"amalgamation on lines which would result in considerable economies and increasing efficiency in the business of the two unions. There are, however, difficulties to be overcome because the conditions of management and other important matters in the two Unions are very difficult."57

The merger of unions was now not merely a business undertaking, but a matter of public interest and concern:

"amalgamation between Unions somewhat jarred against public conscience (in wartime), or, anyway, could not receive from the organised workers that serious consideration that the importance of the subject warranted."58

Rapidly, the effects of the "unrest" became those of administrative readjustment: Gosling said in 1915,

"With a Federation practically in name only the great upheaval of 1911 had to be taken in hand, new unions formed, and a large influx of new members had to be dealt with."

Some, like Sexton, perceived the magnitude of the change

"a new force had come into the Trade Union movement, and the younger generation had risen and expressed in a very forcible manner their opinions on the treasured-up wrongs of twenty years."59

56 General Labourers' National Council and NTWF. Special Conference on Amalgamation, July 1914. pp.7 and 12.

57 NUGW Annual General Council Meeting, 1917, p.16.

58 National Federation of General Workers. 1918. Annual Report, p.4. On the spread of amalgamation schemes, federal bodies etc., see the discussion in the 1919 report of the Annual General Council Meeting (Manchester).

The NAUL used the numbers, rather than the force of grievance, to further traditional policies which, though once stemming from a sense of bitterness and dissatisfaction, became after 1911 increasingly directed against rank and file militancy and the organized Left.  

In 1917, there was interest in amalgamating with the Workers' Union, which would produce an income of £74,135, and end "unseemly competition and wasteful overlapping". This union trustification was finally achieved in a time of depression, when the conservative NAUL was itself the size of ten or a dozen pre-1911 general labourers' unions. The justification of amalgamation finally relied on two traditional defensive reactions: an attack by the employers, and trade union depression: W.H. Girling of the MEA said

"a very heavy slump had set in in the trade union movement and the employers were getting bolder and bolder as the weakness of the employers disappeared."  

The atmosphere is both defensive and reactive: mention was made "of the necessity of following the example of the employers, who had a powerful organisation under the heading of the British Federation of Industries."

In fact Jack Jones was right: the impression of tradition and continuity had been maintained while the material conditions and extent of the labour movement had changed. The significance and tradition of the policy had thus

60 The special problems of the NAUL led in 1915 the General Secretary to support a special organisation and rate of contributions for agricultural workers: "There was a wide field for organisation where strikes would be few and lock-outs practically impossible, and the possibilities of a Union like ours enormous". (Delegate Assembly 1915, Sheffield, p.34).

61 NAUL Conference of EC. December 1917, p.19.

62 Manchester Despatch, 19.9.22.

63 South Wales News, 20.9.22.
"they were not politicians of the old type. They believed in bread-and-butter politics. The Radicals used to have a slogan, 'One man one vote.' Men now had the vote, and their own cry was 'One man one dinner and no man two dinners until every man has had one.'"  

It is as if, having dimly perceived the need for united action, supplemented by parliamentary reformism, and having struggled to promote federation and the LRC, the general union had, in the name of hundreds of thousands of members, declared that its aspirations were now diminished. In the amalgamated general union unrest and self government had been subordinated to the need for mass membership and financial stability. The NU-MW demonstrated the new terms well in 1929, when it used the slogan of a revolutionary past to advertise for members: "The One Big Union" with 300,000 members, £420,000 and 11 MPs. It might have added that it was a body which had achieved the social integration its founders had so bitterly demanded, and in amalgamation a perpetuation, and a form of extinction, and that at last there could be no strike action by the whole union.

Much of what was radical in the NAUL sprang from the social resentment of the status and power of the skilled men. The NAUL itself, however, did not perceive a simple dichotomy between skilled and unskilled: in 1901 it was claimed that the Dry Dock workers were "of a very low order."  

64 Manchester Guardian, 2.10.22.  
65 1929, May Day Leaflet.  
66 For example, NAUL Quarterly Report, Sept. 1894, "the aristocrat of labour will either have to fall in with the majority, or leave the Congress. ..." "What does even Will Thorne or Ben Tillett know of the conditions under which lesser skilled workers are employed in the shipyards and other places? ...it cannot be denied that in very many cases the interests of skilled and unskilled labour are, under present circumstances, absolutely opposed." (pp.5-6).  
The remarks made by the General Secretary Stanley in the 90s express well, though, the bond of interest and organisation which united the union's members:

"You are aware that though unskilled labour is the principal driving wheel of all kinds of skilled labour, that yet for a temporary period it can be dispensed with. Thus, our members employed in building and kindred trades are at the mercy of skilled operatives". 68

This attitude also determines class attitudes: "The skilled operative has his wages raised, not at the expense of the capitalist, but out of the sweat and bones of the down-trodden labourer." 68

This immediate consciousness that the aim of the union was to resist the unjust claims of skilled men's unions was clearly shared by the rank and file. In 1892 a member said

"He was a labourer pure and simple, and he would say as labouring to painters, that they could do any kind of work on the outside of a ship of a certain colour, but the painters would not work with them if they used any other colour than 'red'. If they did, they would have to walk the streets," and went on to oppose to admission of skilled men to the union:

"he would ask what they were going to do with such men in our society?" 69

Occasionally the bitterness is expressed in even stronger terms:

"the Boilermakers' Society had committed more acts of oppression against the labouring class than any other class had done. They had plundered and robbed the labourers' wives and children and they were doing it yet. It was nothing more or less than white slavery. It represented one of the worst stages of the sweating system." 70

It is hardly surprising, then, that this early opposition to militancy in other parts of the labour movement should continue in a changed form to

68 T and NLU 2nd Annual Delegate Assembly, 1890, Newcastle, p.9.
69 T and NLU 3rd Annual Delegate Assembly, 1892, Middlesbrough, p.11.
70 NAUL 6th (First Biennial) Delegate Assembly, 1895, Newcastle, p.6.
stress not only defensive action against the employers, but action against intra-union militants, and amalgamation of general workers across industries - a form of organisation whereby workplace or local federation is virtually impossible.

As the differentials between levels of skill decreased, as unions for skilled men opened to other grades, and as machines destroyed or devalued old skills, the old social attitude lingered on in the expanded NAUL. Bell said of the Triple Alliance in 1922 "we cannot very well go forward and thrust our help upon other people who think us beneath their notice and do not want us until they are defeated." In any case, "It was certain that we should never take part in it at all"\textsuperscript{71} - though there is evidence that this was a pretext for avoiding involvement in a movement he disliked for political reasons. What had once been a spur to organisation and political action became a defence against radical attitudes. In the same way the desire for social advancement implicit in demarcation disputes - for example, if the boilermakers took over the job of drilling, it would prevent "present and future generations of labourers from progressing to it"\textsuperscript{72} - was replaced by concern for the institutional advancement of the union.

Even in the 1890s, however, this policy of opposition to the skilled, and the retaliatory organisation of the unskilled, was losing its dynamic and its relevance. In the mid-1890s a branch which moved that the delegate assembly had "violated the constitution of this Union by admitting skilled workmen into membership" received little support\textsuperscript{73} it was the London and Sheffield branches who were more interested in opening membership of

\textsuperscript{71} NFGW Fifth Annual General Council Meeting, 1922, Leamington Spa, p.93
\textsuperscript{72} NAUL December 1897 Quarterly Report, p.9.
\textsuperscript{73} NAUL EC June 1895 p.109.
the EC to areas other than Tyneside, the London branch's interest in political representation,\(^74\) and the defeat of the ASE in the eight-hour movement which demanded and to some extent achieved a new social orientation.\(^75\) The former attitude persisted, however, and was maintained by the fact that the union continued to organise the same occupations and industries as before.

There came a stage in the development of the NAUL when the size of the union and the range of interests it had to cover meant that all that was necessary or possible for the maintenance and self-estimated success of the union and its officers was the efficient working of the administration. This structured distancing of rank and file from officers and official policy had started early: "In Mr Mitchell's opinion, Shop Stewards must be paid, or they will not otherwise work."\(^76\) Yet, although the shop stewards were midway between the position of paid negotiators and dues collectors, despite a lay EC and an active Delegate Assembly, it was the paid officials who were particularly influential in deciding amalgamation and political policy.

Even so, there was for many years an attempt to maintain local connections: only in 1905 could EC members come from further away than a 16 mile radius from Newcastle.\(^77\) The shop stewards were recognised by the union as workshop negotiators: "several disputes between the Platers and Platers' mates have been satisfactorily settled."\(^78\) Again, direct control of officials was probably more feasible in the 1890s than in any subsequent time: the 1891 attempt to depose Stanley is a good

\(^74\) NAUL Tenth Delegate Assembly, Liverpool, 1905, p.18.
\(^75\) NAUL Eighth Delegate Assembly, Newcastle, 1900, p.10.
\(^76\) T and NLU Annual Report, 1892, p.4.
\(^77\) NAUL Tenth Delegate Assembly, Liverpool, 1905, p.17.
\(^78\) T and NLU Annual Report, 1892, p.4.
instance. Mr Kelly had been sent to London to find Stanley, and telegraphed back "Stanley in fearful condition: believe him insane: drink the cause." But despite all this, Stanley won his vote of confidence by 153 to 100: "I got along with some of the Ironworkers' Society, and got some drink, which made me bad." 79

As the union and its area of effectiveness grew, opportunities for self-government and even discussion of policy became rarer and more academic. There were again two aspects of this: if the effective distance between shop floor and officials increased, so too the officials themselves found their control and autonomy in danger from external forces. In 1913, Bell spoke of the possibility of unions "being 'regulated' out of existence", and, despairingly, that they must "retain what little control over our own affairs is left to us." 80 The initial agreement to a policy may have been crucial: but just as the very existence of a long-established policy may discourage the formulation of new policies, so the rank and file who found their relative importance diminishing as that of their organisation increased were told by Bell that the union's relative importance vis-à-vis state action was diminishing.

A similar transformation as regards militants in the union can be seen. The NAUL consistently opposed direct action: just as the later attitudes can be, in part, explained with reference to the earlier, so too one must make the point that a policy to placate employers, economise on strike pay and attract new members for a union of 16000 labourers in the 1890s, may not be the most functional for a union of a third of a million members with a Labour government thirty years later.

80 NAUL Quarterly Report, June 1913, pp.5-6.
Stanley laid down the original policy:

"I am aware there are large bodies of men who do not accept arbitration as a panacea for all the wrongs the labouring classes endure. They are disposed to unsheathe the sword and fight every case with naked blades. That policy, in my opinion, should be the last resource of reasonable men. How often does it happen that all the employers require is a fair, full, and accurate statement of the case of the men, in order to give redress." 81

This doctrine of social harmony received something of a blow between 1897 and 1906: but Bell, a member of the ILP, was always opposed to direct action (Ca' Canny "was first laughed at and then treated with contempt") 82 and apparently unaware of the growth of rank and file discontents encouraging its use: in 1917 he wrote to allay fears of the Shop Stewards' Movement

"one might have imagined that the shop stewards were something new and specially dangerous. Now the fact is that there are probably very few unions that had not had shop stewards all along." 83

For Bell the labourers were, and must be presented as, a solidly conservative and reliable body: militants were always in a minority, and usually skilled men: in December 1916, he warned that militants among skilled men might be causing "the same kind of trouble as we had before the war": the government was playing into the hands of the "really dangerous element in the community". 84 This traditional opposition to the skilled men had, however, a more significant justification.

"Had the movement for 'direct action' of what is called 'The Triple Alliance' come to a head...our transport workers might have had to decide on general strike" and "then there must be an end of all Parliamentary Government."

The firm refusal to consider direct or sympathetic action is made in the

81 T and NIU Second Delegate Assembly, 1890, Newcastle, p.8.
82 NAUL Quarterly Report, December 1901, p.10.
83 NAUL Quarterly Report, December 1917, p.4.
name of the union: "I hardly think that such a policy will commend itself to the National Amalgamated Union of Labour." For Bell, the debate on politics and political activity was now over: the Labour Party was responsible for political work, and only "a handful of fanatics" was interested in Bolshevism. There was no danger to the NAUL save from "extremists in other unions." These attitudes do not represent a major divergence from Bell's early interests in political intervention: 78 branches to 29 backed Bell's proposal to affiliate with the LRC to provide "redress for Working Class grievances, and, above all the attacks upon Trade Union funds." Bell's own hope from the LRC was that it would oppose the Taff Vale judgement and Chinese Labour, and "the placing of a tax on tea, which is one of the necessaries of a working man's household." During the war, despite complaints at the Munitions Act ("there is a limit to human endurance") the union accepted a moratorium on disputes on government contracts, and indeed on its own debate about amalgamation. What had been a tentative attempt to raise union activity to the political level, and a determination to see immediate grievance redressed by legislation became after the war a conservative opposition to such renewed advocacy in the labour movement. Bell had ceased to lead his members towards a wider interpretation of their social and economic position, and a greater understanding of the political means needed to produce their emancipation.

In fact, the role of the union as an organ for political education

85 NAUL Quarterly Report, June 1919, p.5.
86 NAUL EC Minutes, May 1922, p.18.
87 NAUL EC Minutes, April-June, 1904, Secretary's Report.
88 NAUL Quarterly Report, March 1904, p.5.
89 NAUL Quarterly Report, September 1915, p.5.
had changed: although the NAUL was criticised by other unions which joined the NUGM and T&GWU for its conservatism, the development and reinforcement of its parliamentarism and reformism were part of the experience of most of the trade union movement in the '20s. By the mid '20s, the NUGM was developing its organisation as a barrier to militancy. In 1926, Clynes "is taking vigorous measures against the Communist menace in the trade unions and labour movement".90 This was appreciated by the Times as an attack against more people than Communists: it was "a practical step indicating consciousness of the danger threatening the trade union movement on the path it has recently been treading."91 The conversion to socialism of the unions occurred at a time when they were tightening up their organisation, and this closing of the system virtually froze the debate in the posture of 1911. Spontaneous protest seemed not organic to capitalism, but deviation. In a different context, one is reminded of Lansbury's attack on his "sheep-like party", an attack on the unresponsiveness and satisfied isolation of the leaders:

"I came out because to have stayed in would have been martyrdom; to have stayed in with a set of men who think they have done well by the democracy during the past seven years during which Railwaymen, Colliers, Dockers, and Navvies and workers of every kind have been exploited and beaten to their knees by the capitalist class with the acquiescence of almost complete silence on the part of these champions of the Labour Movement."92

The perpetuation both of the criticism and of the policies which caused the criticism in the first place, produced some curious effects. The "Communist dictatorship" being prepared by the "paid agents of Moscow" against which Clynes was struggling in the '20s is, it appears, "half trade-

91 Times, 2.ii.27.
92 George Lansbury on his resignation, November 1912 (Coll. LL. LSE).
unionism": "the more subtle; the more insidious" indeed, not only because it places the bureaucracy in a new relationship to the rank and file, but because it is a "'cell-building' parasitical organisation."95 "Largely by and through Parliamentary effort the position and comfort of millions of manual workers can be, and will be, effectively improved in the future" said the Workers' Union in 1912: the trouble was that having taken this line, secured MPs and so on, there was little left for the rank and file to do but vote - in the same way that in the unions certain kinds of traditional activity were now proscribed.94

Old ideologies became institutionalised: but they do not cease to be ideologies by becoming conventional. By this, the range of working class grievance which could be expressed through the official labour movement was lessened.

It is worth considering the immediate impact of the "unrest" of 1911-1914 on the NAUL in terms of its impact on the officials. There is a dynamic to the collection of members which was already a familiar feature to the NAUL: Stanley described how

"He had stood on a chair at Jarrow and spoke for an hour and a half to get 14 members, but these fourteen put their shoulders to the wheel and soon made that 14 into 4000. The same experience was his at Shields. It was with difficulty that the first 120 members were obtained but these soon made the members up to 5000."95

Although such experience of "leaps" in numbers was common enough, and the union was experienced in organising many trades and areas before 1911, it is the suddenness and the overall change which are remarkable in 1911. In 1896 there were 16,986 paid-up members and in 1909 16,543. In 1911, 95 Times, 2.6.28.
94 Workers' Union Prospectus no. 6 (1912) p.27.
however, there was a rapid though not revolutionary increase of 5700 between January and July. But in December, there were 44,369 members and in the year the Union had gone from its lowest to its highest ever membership. "It is extremely difficult to account for this extraordinary movement", said Bell, though he thought the seamen's strike had been important "in the general movement which has gone forward." Even in the heart of NAUL organisation, "On Newcastle Quay there has been a general quickening and perfecting of our organisation." "The most phenomenal increase is in the London, Thames and Medway. There, the membership at the end of June stood at 201, while at the end of September it was 5700. Nothing like this had been seen since the new unionism, in the air "About the time when our Union was started." In 1912, the rate of increase was slower, but in September 1913, there were 58,549 members: there was a further "leap" in 1916-17 to 123,627, including many new women members, and in March, 1920 the figures showed a ten-fold increase in nine years, to 166,756.

Bell's response was to suggest that members in 1911 should "bide their time and persevere", and not think that "because the wrongs of a lifetime are not immediately righted, Trade Unionism is of no use to them." 96 Unlike the Workers' Union, ("we are here to be bothered"), the NAUL was slow to respond to the possibility of recruitment: the pit prop and timber yard hands on the North East coast "have sought our Union and become members." Bell does not seem to have proposed either explanation for the increase, or modification of policies to make concessions to the immediate interests of new members: the rules were applied as usual. "Unfortunately many of the 200 members had not been long enough in the Union to be entitled to benefit", Bell wrote after the strike of North Shields herring workers.

96 NAUL Quarterly and Annual Reports, 1911-13, passim.
Bell did produce figures to show the percentage of insured workers, and made the point, without much analysis, that although the national percentage in the union which was insured was 57%, the large, long-established branches tended to fall below this (Sheffield 52%, Mersey 49%) and the small, newer ones to have insured a much higher percentage (Tees 89%, Gateshead 71%). Thus there seemed no link between Liberal reformism and membership increase save possibly in terms of types of union branch. It is by no means certain that, if indeed the NAUL followed the national tendency, the Insurance Act was a major factor in the explosion.

Those who joined the NAUL in 1911-1917 found an organisation whose ideology had already been formed, and which was used to framing conventional demands in a conservative manner. This union, like so many others, (especially, perhaps, those whose structure was so ordered that it could accommodate a growth of branches and branch membership, and which organised many occupations across industrial lines, negotiating with other unions in enterprises of different kinds) was not adapted for the transmission of "spontaneous" protest to political and economic action. Nor was the union leadership disposed to consider the implications of the unrest for traditional policies. Jack Jones had claimed in 1913 that "the men would come in when we ceased this waste of competition."

A union official accused Tom Mann of recruiting for his union by saying that "all they had to do was pay in twopence a week for about three weeks, somebody would turn a wheel, and Paradise would come." If, however, the

97 NAUL EC Minutes, 1912-14, passim.
99 C.Watney and J.A.Little, Industrial Warfare, 1912, p.85.
union leaders then instructed their members in political realism they 
instructed them in reformism and a painful gradualism. There was no room 
here for pure class-consciousness. They also extinguished much of the 
onward movement. It is not so much that the new division was between 
organised and unorganised, with the former playing the part of labour 
aristocracy, as Marcuse has suggested, as that the weight of organisation 
plus reformism neutralised the political importance of small numbers of 
militants, while the industrial basis of the union deprived its members 
of strategic importance in their workplaces. The common complaint at the 
end of the war was that "neither the vote nor the strike were satisfactory 
weapons:" one could also say that neither the party nor the union 
were satisfactory institutions. The movement into the unions in 1911-13 
had to some extent been a move away from the Labour party - the move 
to the strike was a move away from the vote.

What was at stake here, however, was the question of responsiveness 
to these different forms of activity - activity which itself expressed 
the desperation and hope of the critical years of the unrest.

"Perhaps these months of tropical sunshine had given them a first 
revelation of the poorness of their clothes, the smelling nastiness 
of their food and houses, the ugliness of their paint-stained and 
mutilated hands, that demanded catastrophic action."101 This is not the "trade-unionism" of "What is to be Done", which leads to 
subordination by bourgeois ideology: the unrest was much closer to the 
impulse of 

"the men and women of Lebuja or Villamartin or Bornos (who) 
downed tools not so much to overthrow capitalism as to demonstrate

101 Labour Leader 18.8.11.
102 What is to be Done, op. cit. passim for Lenin's analysis of "spontaneity" 
- Lenin talks of the spontaneous labour movement which is "pure and simple 
trade unionism", susceptible to bourgeois ideology, rather than using the 
term to refer to protest by the unorganised workers.
that they were ready for its overthrow which must, somehow, occur, now that they had demonstrated their willingness."

It was at a later stage that organised unionism, deeply influenced by reformism, Liberalism, "bourgeois respectability" and an administrative aristocracy, impressed a range of policies on inchoate protest. With this organisation and mediation, many routes were closed: the strength, wealth and diversity of the NAUL, for instance, required after 1900 that amalgamation should suit the platform - the interests of the platform being and becoming, as it were, the interests of rank and file.

103 E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (1959), p. 89.
Chapter Seven

"On sort du tombeau comme on peut"

In previous chapters, we have looked at the sociological and economic forces producing strike waves in Britain before 1914. In particular, we have inquired into the role of old and new ideologies in a period of crisis, the significance of the class interests the demands made before 1914 were intended to further, and into the process whereby working-class theorists and propagandists struggled for the intellectual leadership of their class.

In the last chapter we examined the impact of unrest on a single union, without attention to the global forces forming the larger system within which the British proletarian movement must be seen. In this chapter we propose to analyse the impact of unrest on the Labour Party, the TUC, and the leaders of some large unions. Only in the last chapter, on Tom Mann, is it proposed to return to the global crisis of imperialism and the attempts to create a global ideology for the world proletariat.

In the case of the NAUL, paternalism became a policy of opposition to militancy. In the labour movement, large general unions were transformed by demand for their services between 1911 and 1920 into huge corporations, amalgamating to extinguish competition. Hard as it is to generalise about the whole trade union movement, and artificial as it must be to consider justifications of policy without at this stage considering extraneous pressures bearing on these policies, one can discern three struggles in the movement at the time of the pre 1914 unrest. These are: the conflict between centralisers and the upholders of federal autonomy,
between the upholders of union leadership with plenary powers against the "democrats" favouring direct representation and rank and file control, and between those pressing for autonomous and independent unions in contrast to the supporters of a party and trade union movement with a common policy and mutual interdependence. Broadly, the leaders won the contest for centralised union decision-making machinery, and under the guise of organizational pluralism the unions achieved their independence of the party they had created - and this independence deprived even the reformism of union leaders of much of its potential political influence, making it appear much nearer to the classical trade unionism of the nineteenth century on which, in any case, its theory was based.

These contests were never conclusive - partly because of unconcern for theory, because conjunctural changes encouraged usually non-militant leaders to think in radical opportunist terms - partly too because the "right" and "left" on industrial matters did not necessarily coincide with the political left and right - but above all because there was no successful breakaway movement before 1914. The union leaders, for instance, might reject the Syndicalism which inspired or explained much of the unrest - but they could hardly refuse any increase in membership which this caused. Again, depending on the structure of the union and the special characteristics of actual or potential members, and the theory of the militants, the conflicts took different forms and created different lines of
opposition, though the fundamental conflict was that between opportunism and revolution.

The first great advantage the established trade union movement had in the period of unrest was the strength of its organization, and the existence of constructive opportunist policies to offer men whose heightened perceptions of grievance were at bottom reactions to long-established tendencies and increasing discontinuity. In 1914, for instance, Edith Hunter accounted for the reaction to "order" by pointing out that the state was making greater demands on its citizens, that these had a "great apathy and indifference to reform generally" - which created an irrepressible spirit of unrest, slow to be allayed because men retained laissez-faire attitudes surrendered by the government. "They do not know the moral basis nor the practical necessity of a standard rate of wages."²

This raises the question of whether a working class apparently longing for the perfection of a liberal democracy based on the free market³ corresponded in important respects to its supposed needs as were actually put into legislative form in the nineteenth century,

1 One of the best examples of the attempts to reconcile these conflicting tendencies which are found in both "revolutionary" and "reformist" unionism is Lenin's Left-Wing Communism: an infantile disorder (Little Lenin Library 1934 edn.). N. Barou's book, British Trade Unions (1947) is helpful on union purposes and types (e.g. p.22 et seq.).

2 Edith Hunter, Order and Unrest. The Hibbert Journal, April 1914, pp.643 and 652.

and whether this hypothetical desire for a non-intervening State was not based on a suspicion and contempt for the class character, partiality, and coercion of the actual "liberal" State. Having made this reservation, however, it is indeed useful to remember that unions themselves, challenged and challenging in the language of liberal democracy, faced like the State itself the problem of redirecting and reshaping both the élan of the unrest, and its fervently federal, sectional, individualist idealism into a collective form - albeit a kind of collectivism different from the socialistic collectivism implicit in the unrest itself. That is, the unorganized workers were to be purified as regards consciousness, and organised to increase their effectiveness. In this chapter it is argued that the opportunist ideology provided was a false consciousness, and that the organisation was used to enforce an ideology which prevented the workers taking part in the revolutionary class struggle.

Murphy pointed out in the 1930's, for instance, that the trade unions

"had overwhelmed all efforts to create rival revolutionary unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World, the Industrial Workers of Great Britain, as well as all attempts to form new industrial unions in various industries ...; swallowed up the Amalgamation Committees of various industries; withstood the impact of the Shop Stewards Movement and absorbed many of its features; wiped out the reform committees; broken and smothered the Minority Movement, and finally tucked its "Left Wing" under its "Right Wing".\(^4\)

\(^4\) J.T. Murphy, New Horizons (1941), p.234. cf. too J.R. Campbell, who said that the Minority Movements had been vulnerable, since as bodies outside the unions "dictating to the unions what they should do ... This enabled the officials to raise the question of loyalty and discipline ... It is not so easy with the rank-and-file movements because they grew up from within the unions and cannot be open to the same charge and can defend themselves against expulsion tactics in a way that rallies a greater amount of support than the old form of opposition movement could do." (quoted in A. Bullock, The Life & Times of Ernest Bevin, vol.i, p.612 (1960)).
The process of absorption, the adoption of new methods of organization, tended to obscure the extent of this political reorientation on the part of the unions. For instance, the tripartite division of union types, craft, industrial and general, was being modified by the slow transformation of some craft unions into what were virtually industrial unions - the A.E.U. and E.T.U. for instance.\(^5\) It also became less easy to say as Morton had done in the 40 hours strike, that "the rallying grounds for all reactionary elements" were the craft unions.\(^6\) Again, re-organization of union structure could answer much of the old propaganda concerned with the efficiency of types of union government - which had, after all, been scarcely-veiled criticisms of union politics. When the National Workers' Committee Movement protested that "the geographical branch is absolutely hopeless as a unit of a modern industrial organization,"\(^7\) the explicit criticism could be met by a reorganization of constitutional and bargaining procedures - accommodating the letter but not at all the spirit of the rank and file committee movement.

Briefs said that

"There are forms of the workers' struggle that are not at all part of the class struggle. Trade unionism, for example, and the co-operatives can be named as movements which have taken root in the soil of the prevailing socio-economic order."\(^8\)

5 Barou, op. cit.

6 D.S. Morton, The 40 Hours Strike: an Historic Survey of the First General Strike in Scotland (Clydebank SLP), (p.16).


What was at stake before the early 1920's was in fact precisely this question - whether unions were to direct unrest as motive power for the mechanisms of the "free market", or of statutory conciliation procedures, or whether the value of unions for the working class lay in their convenience as, their possible development into, fighting and training organizations. Paul claimed that

"the constructive element in the social revolution will be the action of the Industrial Union in seizing the means of production in order to administer the wants of the community."9

Unions, however, under this theory, must have the attributes of both community and future state, if they were to conduct the revolution as well as the class struggle. Ultimately, in this argument, it was the attributes of various organizations, rather than their immediate effectiveness, which were important - these attributes arising from the working class, as the advanced class of Capitalism itself.

Mann said of the movement that it was a

"practical demonstration that they know where their root difficulties lie, and how to cure them. We come not to destroy but to fulfil, not to make life harder but increasingly easier, brighter and better. No Titanic disasters will be possible when intelligent workers, directly responsible for the safety of the places where they work, are ever alert for their own welfare as part of - never in hostility to - the whole community."10

If the unrest was based on liberal democracy, in Macpherson's sense, then it was also a profound criticism of that democracy in practice, of its foundation on a dominant class, which had excluded so many from the very exercise of that responsibility and welfare which its supporters and promoters had claimed were its special merit.


10 Tom Mann interviewed in the (Liverpool) Weekly Citizen, 11.v.12.
Thus the tradition of judging union action not by its intention or avowed ends but by the scope and determination of its action kept alive the hope that a fresh political orientation had been, or was, being achieved. Griffuelhes called strikes "la gymnastique nécessaire, de même que les grandes manoeuvres sont la gymnastique de la guerre"\textsuperscript{11} - but the use of analogies with war, the novelty of strikes on the pre 1914 scale, (Cipriani wrote of the 1912 coal strike that it was "the greatest economic battle which the organised proletariat has waged since the world began")\textsuperscript{12}, masked the process of integration and redirection of protest taking place within the unions. Union leaders might adopt the militancy, the position on the industrial left which Syndicalists were urging, and still remain implacably hostile to the social relationships proposed by Syndicalists and revolutionary Socialists. Union leaders might regret deeply the deficiencies of a system run by the inexpert for the inert, but still agree with Jaurès's argument that "to hold in one's hand a few pebbles of a deserted road is not to be master of transportation."\textsuperscript{13}

The rejection of such cataclysmic, and possibly millenarian, action involved necessarily the rejection of much that was liberal and humane - ideas of devolution, self-government and so forth -

\textsuperscript{11} V. Griffuelhes, L'Action Syndicaliste. Paris 1908, p.32.
\textsuperscript{12} C.D. Sharp to Beatrice Webb, 10.i.12 (Passfield Papers).
\textsuperscript{13} Quoted in Robert Hunter, Violence and the Labour Movement (1916), p.270.
which derived not only from socialism, but more nearly from liberalism and anarchism. Above all, it deprived the expanding unions of the chance to transcend their immediate concerns by an inventive restructuring and reorientation, on the lines of Dolléans's remark on Sorel's theory,

"dépendance de la raison à l'égard de la technique (inventez des machines nouvelles, et vous gagnerez quelque chose sur le demain de l'inconnu); rôle d'agglutination des sentiments."\(^{14}\)

Instead of invention, the immediate reaction of many in the labour movement to the unrest and the offensive against the movement was to repair and revive the "old bovine spirit of Labour"\(^{15}\) - Beatrice Webb wrote gloomily in 1910 that the

"Position in the political world is most unsatisfactory for the progressive movement. The financial basis of the Labour Party has been smashed by the Osborne Judgment. The Labour Members are being attacked by a considerable section of the ILP. The Trade Union Movement is distracted by the insurrection of large bodies of its members against their officials - an 'insurrection' which involves repudiation of agreements made by their officials. Meanwhile Tom Mann, recently returned from Australia, is preaching General Trades Unionism and the General Strike and running down political action. And behind it all there is the likelihood of a compact between the Front Benches which will keep the Liberal Cabinet in power, in spite of the Labour and Irish parties, till after the next election."\(^{16}\)

The advantage of such a loosely co-ordinated movement was that it had always contained a large number of often conflicting currents and aims, its disadvantage that it was difficult to alter quickly the attitudes and policies of the whole movement. But just as the Webbs,


15 cf. the August, 1922 review in the Labour Monthly of "What Labour Wants" ("What we want and why" (1922) ), p.128.

16 Diaries, Sept. 17, 1910.
in the name of the "progressive movement" regretted competition from other parts of the labour movement, so too in the move towards greater co-ordination, there remained a desire and the possibility of retaining independence and of suppressing the autonomy of others.  

Clynes, for instance, said in 1921,  

"It is not so much in action that the Triple Alliance has done good as in the very fact of its being. It has certainly exerted a great deal of influence for good in the Trade Union and industrial world; but we well know that it would be much more difficult for the Miners to give to the Railway servants and to the Transport Workers a form of assistance corresponding to the assistance which the Transport Workers and Railway Workers can give to the Miners ... If the Railwaymen strike in support of the Miners, to a great extent the Miners are blotted out of the picture."  

Increased co-ordination not only raised the stakes but lengthened the odds against success - and the greater the resistance, the less defensible did a policy of attack appear.  

The debate on the measure of social responsibility owed by the unions, the scale - European or national - and the system - economic or political - within which action would be judged, began well before the first world war. The context of the debate and the importance of the ideology of the union movement had changed with the growing size and industrial and social participation of the movement. When Sexton opposed a general transport strike in wartime, the fears to


18 J.R. Clynes in NTWF Special Conference Report, April 1921, p.28.
which he referred assumed the more importance in proportion as did the effectiveness of such strike action

"...it is very possible that if an invasion of this country took place, and the Continental Powers were successful, we might see women here, as you do on the Continent, working on the railways for 1s. 6d a day, scavenging the streets for 1Od a day. You can't see anything like that in England. (A Voice: You can see worse.) ..."19

The process of organizing the unrest was clearly enough seen:

Tom Fox at the Labour Party conference in 1914 said,

"I am convinced that it is taking a more conscious character. It is becoming less the struggle of a blind giant against an unseen and elusive enemy. It is our duty to guide this unrest, not to suppress it."20

But so long as the policy and structure of the unions were in dispute, the policy of existing leaders and the opportunities they presented to their opponents for changing these policies, were crucial. Smillie's Socialism in 1912 sounds, for instance, little different from advanced Liberalism:

"The Gospel of Socialism in this country is not that all people should be made equal and divide the wealth of this country, but that they should have an equal opportunity of life with others."21

Collectivist preconceptions rather than a class will to power, a profound desire to escape from the consequences of vulnerable and insecure workers' organizations and the resulting irreconcilibly dichotomous view of society encouraged even militant union leaders to consider interests more comprehensive than what they suspected was

19 MTWF Third Annual General Council Meeting, June 1913, p.34.
20 Labour Party, Annual Conference, 1914, p.91.
21 MFGB Annual Conference, October 1912, p.12.
not class emancipation, but the temporary and sectional interests of the working class.

However, before 1914, it was becoming harder to argue that "recognition" and conciliation were sufficient guarantee of union success and equitable and improving shares in distribution.

"After ten years of such a game, we find our customs broken down, and our price lists a farce, and in the face of a very serious rise in the cost of living (which many of us have nicknamed prosperity) we have been reduced 10 percent in the standard rate."

From such experience might arise the questioning of the principle of leadership itself, and of local representation: the Reform Committee proposed a centralisation based wholly on majority rank and file direction. With one organization and one executive, all men in the industry would "be required both to join and observe its decisions."

With the vote of the lodges - or a coalfield ballot supreme, the executive would be unable to "vary the demands of the men."

Experience of conciliation and the difficulty of shaking union policy on the issue led to a popular movement which was also inevitably to involve an attack on the leaders and on the social and political assumptions underlying their policy - and by the concentration on centralisation give a lead against the reluctance to lead breakaway movements or to consider the French type of federal syndicalism. Such a process was familiar enough - Clarke described the 1897-8 engineering dispute as "a battle against progress. It was inevitable that new machinery should be introduced,

22 The Miners' Next Step (Tonypandy, 1912), pp. 7 & 18 (et seqq).
and that unions representing a relatively small part of the manpower of the industry should fail to control its use." As a result "The militants regarded the dispute as a great defeat, and, seeing no hope of turning the tables industrially, turned to the possibility of political action." Just as former policies were enshrined in remodelled organizations, so too new organizations could lead to a rapid extension of strategic possibilities, and a check to policy encourage a questioning of the very principles of union government.

Such reactions, however, and their causes, were neither comprehensive, uniform, nor consistent. W. J. Davis, for instance, broke with conciliation and Parliamentary action before 1908, not as a protest against political and social integration so much as against standardisation and changes in the trade basis of unionism: Davis in the end achieved a conciliation board with employers well enough organised to allow him to resist strike action and the standard wage, and institute a wage structure based on seven grades of skill. Reactions against the "closing" of the economic system might lead to the frustration Askwith found:

"threats and hatred growing among the young men against Capital, because mere Capital appeared to be the cause why they could not get on in the world and why they could not get more leisure and why they must stay where they were with a possible halfpenny an hour added to their pay sheet..."


26 Lord Askwith, Industrial Problems and Disputes, (1920), p. 129.
but often enough the transformation from "unrest to order" was indeed made by a payment of a halfpenny an hour, duly enforced and upheld by the union. Even if one accepts in the joining of an organization an element of "personal unrest", militancy of Davis's type might well absorb interest and enthusiasm as effectively as a less specialised and more compromising policy: "Union membership is particularly easy to maintain in piecework shops, because there are so many disputes over new rates."

Despite the similarity between the economic fortunes of large sections of trade unionists, there were great discrepancies between theoretical dispositions and policy. In the 1910 TUC, a vague motion on the need for amalgamation by industries was carried by 1,175,000 to 256,000; the familiar vote on nationalisation in 1912 had only 16,000 votes cast against it. But in practise, the rank and file reacted - judged by intra-union votes - less uniformly. The AUCE said that its members voted 75% for federation to 3% for amalgamation. Clearly some members agreed with, or reflected, the opinion of Irwin, of the Grocers' Assistants, who maintained "the benefits accrued to the worker are produced by sectional or trade organisations."

28 September 1910, 43rd TUC Congress, p.125.
29 September 1912, 45th TUC Congress, p.264.
suggested that federation was "a loose form of Industrial Unionism":\(^{31}\) clearly, it would be wrong either to ascribe a vote for amalgamation as a vote against sectionalism, or one for federation as a vote against the principles of amalgamation or industrial unionism.

There are occupational and organisational considerations involved in amalgamation, desire to retain group consciousness, as well as growing class unity and class consciousness. In 1919, for instance, of the 56% of the members of the ASE voting, 92% voted for amalgamation - but only 9 of the other 17 unions asked did so.\(^{32}\)

The Fabian Society Research Department's enquiry into industrial unionism as an alternative to amalgamation or federation, pointed to the defects of the NTWF's federal scheme - the looseness of its organisation, the smallness of its central fund, and the continuation of inter-union disputes: amalgamation was clearly the answer to these deficiencies, but the problem of political and social role of members in union government, of balance between official and rank and file movements' policies, was scarcely considered.\(^{33}\)

One may make three points, then, in this connection. The variety and diffuseness of the labour movement meant that the impact of the unrest itself became diffuse, and the resistance within the unions encouraged concentration on work by militants within these organizations - as Connolly said,

\(^{31}\) N. Barou, op. cit. p.54.


\(^{33}\) FSRD Committee on the Control of Industry, 1912-3. Industrial Unionism or Amalgamation versus Federation as the Future Form of Trade Union Organisation, pp. 4-7.
"the fight for the conquest of the political state is not the battle, it is only the echo of the battle. The real battle is the battle being fought for the power to control industry."34

Secondly, in addition to the struggle to control unions, and subsequent concern with somewhat confused attitudes to various kinds of organisation, men tended to assume that rank and file participation itself was sufficient to radicalise union policy and activity: Murphy said of the Workers' Committees, that they showed how industrial unity and class unity of the workers could be established before the unions could be amalgamated and thereby assist the process of amalgamation.35

But in this context, questions of the advisability of such centralisation and amalgamation, and above all of what exactly rank and file politics were, were central. Finally, the traditional attitudes of union leaders, their hopes of social integration, their ethical and constitutional orientation, encouraged the perpetuation of those attitudes favouring either a limited union role in society - Jack London believed there were in fact two quite distinct class struggles in the labour movement - one labour's, one that of the socialists36 - or a mass, not a class, unionism.

This latter attitude, based on a desire to achieve harmony through symmetrical organisation, balancing unions against party, economics against politics, trade matters against parliamentary affairs, was dated much later in the Labour Party. This arrangement

34 From the Axe to the Root, quoted in J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland, (NY, 1925), p.233.
35 J.T. Murphy, New Horizons, p.65.
encouraged positivism and opportunism, and the acceptance of traditional modes. Scanlon put it in 1923,

"It was a struggle of wills between those who wished to keep the Party a fighting working-class party and those who had decided that Labour, if it was to attain power, must become as like the other great parties as humanly possible."

In terms of 1914, the struggle was between those who wished to convert unrest into order and efficient administration, or order and efficient participation in union policy - making the membership aware as far as possible of their class interest.

Criticism of the leaders shows both awareness of the distance between rank and file and the leaders (the distance from self-government), of the intra-union pressures producing uncongenial policies, and also of a lack of sympathy and co-operation between leaders of different organisations and the rank and file in general.

37 John Scanlon, Decline and Fall of the Labour Party (?1932), p.44. The preceding remarks are not intended as a balanced history of ideas in the Labour Movement, nor as upholding a conspiracy or betrayal theory. The process I wish to describe is closer to that kind described in Marc Pilisuk and Thomas Hayden's article, 'Is there a military-industrial complex which prevents peace?' Consensus and Countervailing Power in Pluralistic Systems. (Journal of Social Issues, vol. 21, No. 3, July 1965), though dissenting from their conclusions. One is concerned with tracing historical and theoretical attitudes and morphology, and noting their persistence and shaping force over a long period. Thus one is not suggesting that the Labour Party of 1910-12, with 'no programme of reform ... induced to support National Insurance only by a bribe - the payment of MPs' (H. Pelling, in the Autumn 1966 Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, p.18) is identical with that of 1918. Rather, one is concerned with the nature of the 'compromises' of the labour movement, andjustifications of rejection of militant policies - especially at the time of the unrest.

38 On the concept of social distance, see Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, vols. 3 and 4, (NY, 1937 and 1943), and his Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time, (Duke UP, 1943).
Mother Jones said the leaders (in the United States), "strutted like peacocks."39 The enhanced status, the tendency to make officials' salaries secure and independent of delegates' votes,40 the respect given to union and party leaders by their opponents, tended, if it did not declass them, to develop a gap between the members' sense of grievance and the permanent officials' professional concern with negotiation.41

Two further questions are involved here: first, that of the degree of co-ordination of leadership required - a point which aroused much bitterness - "why", asked Fyfe, "do Miners' Federation officials always rush off to distant homes as soon as decisions have been reached?"42 In one sense, this local leadership brought officials closer to their members - but it removed them from the centre of national events and estranged them from other leaders: the "miners were not big enough. They were not trade unionists in the proper sense."43 Although in this case Thomas wanted to

41 For a late stage in the development of professional advisers in Unions, their attitudes to union, rank and file and professional job-satisfaction, see Harold L. Wilensky, Intellectuals in Labour Unions. Organisational Pressures on Professional Roles, Free Press, Ill, 1956.
substitute for sympathetic action mere sympathy, problems of inter-union relations were less open to intra-union rank and file pressure than other parts of union policy. Secondly, in addition to the differences in their status and function, there is considerable difference between the Socialism of the rank and file and that of the leaders: Sidney Webb points to this contrast -

"Afterwards, two of the Socialists (spinners) took me to a humble beerhouse where I had supper and drank beer with a dozen gas-stokers just off work - all virtually Socialists - who were immensely struck by the contrast between my hand and theirs - and sang the Marseillaise from an English songbook of which several had copies."45

For the official, as for the intellectual, Socialism was rather less a hope deferred. It is almost incongruous to find the veteran Mann without union or other official position writing from a lecture tour of Scandinavia "as usual I am with the hard up crowd."46 Where De Leon proposed that "You cannot move faster than the masses move with you in this twentieth century",47 he might have added that the temptation to rise out of the "mass" was always greater than the desire to outstrip it in terms of political task-setting.

44 This is borne out by Citrine himself: in the mid 20s he said "Now things are dealt with on a national level by officials whom many of the thousands of rank and file may never have seen. The effect of strikes today is much more serious than it was twenty years ago ..., we must try to settle our disputes by reason instead of by resorting to force." (ibid. p.83).

45 S. Webb to Beatrice, 21-24. ix. 90.

46 Tom Mann to his wife, n.d. (Mann papers). (c.1913).

The attack on union leadership, as in previous periods of rapid organization, came as a challenge to the new leaders so to close the channels of opposition that they would not have to face such a mutiny without compromise, warning, or escape. In the SWMF, the 1910 strike "broke Mabon's hold over the miners, the union, and its policy." Although an understanding was reached between the old and the new leaders, Hartshorn put it that "a certain amount of wiping out must be done on the executive committee", and Stanton blamed "the faint-hearted, over-cautious, creeping, crawling, cowardly set who pose as leaders but do not lead (and) are responsible for the rotten conditions of things today." But though the failure of Mabon's policy might contribute to the growth of a mass movement, the emergence of an executive with a reputation for militancy was no guarantee that similar union explosions would produce similar policies and leaders interpreting their rank and file's demands as the miners' leaders did. Wilson in 1921 blamed the coal crisis on the union leaders, accusing them of deliberately encouraging "soldiering": "It was done on the advice of the leaders, who said: 'No increase of output until we have nationalisation of mines'."

If leaders could justify withholding support on the grounds that they could not approve of other unions' policies, so too they could invoke the doubtful loyalty of their rank and file: Bevin said of


49 J.H. Wilson, NTWF 1921 op. cit., p.23.
Black Friday,

"We knew that there were a number of men in the Transport Workers' Federation who had decided to come out that night, but we also knew that there were a number who had volunteered for the Government Volunteer Forces."\(^{50}\)

In this way, pressures on the working class as a whole were rendered diffuse and uneven by the new gradualism - derived from former sectionalism - which was justified in terms of the special circumstances, constitutions and industrial tactics devised and maintained for trade, rather than common, action.

"We have grown too smug, too respectable. There are too many of our people in the House of Commons and too many JPs in our midst. There are too many afraid to dare and do."\(^{51}\)

Change the function of a union member in this way, give him a place in decision making, and whether or not this was a conscious attempt to seduce the more tractable labour leaders, involvement in a system more influential, less hostile than it had hitherto seemed, made such honours and appointments part of the normal and desirable proofs of successful careers. The labour leaders saw the smiling face of the liberal bourgeoisie leaving the rank and file to its soldiers battle against the monopoly capitalism which was the dynamic and rationale of that class's dominance. As Tom Smith of South Wales declared:

"We are not here throwing this out upon sentiment; we are not throwing this out as anarchists. We are here on the forty-third week of our strike, fighting for a fair wage. You know what the backbone of this fight is. It is not the Federation's 10s a week; it is not the 10½d supplementary aid which has been

50 Bevin, NTWF Eleventh Annual General Council Meeting, Edinburgh, June 1921, p.52.

51 46th Annual TUC, Manchester, September 1913. C.B.Stanton, p.70. This Congress undoubtedly marked the peak of prewar verbal militancy.
paid to our men. That is not the backbone of the fight. It is the heroism, the self-sacrifice of the women. Women who have stood up by their husbands and said 'die rather than give in.' You can withdraw the £3,000 a week from us. If we know that our end will be buried in confusion, and smoke, and blood, it shall go down to posterity that the men of the Cambrian died fighting while you with the power to be our saviours trample us under your feet. The Cambrian men are determined they will fight the greatest despot in South Wales and will not go down that pit until they have got a guarantee of their wage."52

The more extensive and secure the union becomes, the more it becomes concerned with its relations not only with other sub-systems, but the political system as a whole - and the interests of the local leaders and rank and file increasingly conflict with the structure of union policy-making, and with the national strategy of the union: unless, that is, the executive of the union is convinced, or its structure so designed as to admit, that local disputes under local leadership have a national significance in a class struggle which it is in the interests of all members to promote. The Miners' Next Step compared the members of a mass union in which decision-making was removed from the competence of the rank and file to a "crowd at a football match." Conferences "are only called, and ballots only taken when there is a difference of opinion between leaders." There is an element of truth in the accusation that the present leaders are to be deplored as

"the inevitable step-block he becomes on progress, because quite naturally, leaders examine every new proposal, and ask first how it will affect their position and power."53

53 The Miners' Next Step, sup. cit., pp.8, 10, 15.
There is here certainly resentment at authority not legitimated, but also a perception of the drift to gradualism and alienation from local, as well as militant, demands in such unions. On this periphery, indeed, the liberalism of the bourgeoisie was weaker, and monopoly capitalism more clearly visible.

In encouraging amalgamation and concentration, the unrest did not uniformly realise John Burns's much-quoted adage "Fewer unions and more unity". In 1923

"the whole movement was shocked by the proceedings of the Plymouth TUC, where the principal note was an undignified and petty squabble, with much mutual recrimination, over a series of inter-union demarcation disputes."

It is also arguable that strength of organization or of purpose could overcome discontinuities in inter-union consultation: the railwaymen in 1919 gave no notice of their strike to the rest of the Alliance, and had only £3,000 in hand. They succeeded with the aid of bank loans, aid from the CWS and the propaganda department of the Labour Research Department. At the same time, however, government by assorted official representatives was more vulnerable than government of a single union by executive:

"The Government's salvation was that its threats broke the backbone of the TUC leadership in Eccleston Square, which, caught between this fire and fear of the organised mass movement, succumbed to terms of peace without honour or safeguard."

54 On the legitimation of authority, see R. Dahrendorf, Class and class conflict in an industrial society, 1959, passim.


56 Ibid. p.30.

Other things being equal, the railwaymen in 1911 and the miners in 1912 outfaced the government with more spirit than the General Council in 1926.

In tracing this estrangement of the leaders from the rank and file, it is not enough to concentrate on the obvious defectors, on Burns, with his "I'm going to be at the top of the tree or nowhere. I will hold no subordinate position", 58 or the activities of the Half Circle Club, formed "to see that Labour people were properly trained and taught to avoid eating with their knives and spitting on the carpet." 59 The process of "seduction by cress sandwiches", so that "By 1931 no explanation or excuse was needed. The garden party had become an essential part of the class struggle", 60 - this was but a symptom of a deeper revulsion from the use of a political power and a disciplined loyalty which organization after 1911 had given to union leaders. Not all made sure that they would not be threatened by militants by expelling or attacking them, but the rejection of syndicalism before 1914 was based on a conviction that the economic and political systems must have different labour organizations. This in turn meant that if there was unity of class there was no such unity in class struggle. In 1926, Scanlon said,

58 W. Kent, John Burns, Labour's Lost Leader, p.147. Burns called the 1911 Railway Strike "a parish-pump squabble." p.220.

59 Scanlon op. cit., p.62.

"Within another week the men who had sung the 'Red Flag' as a prelude to a great fight were grovelling for mercy. Four million fine men had been led into battle by generals who did not believe in the cause for which they were fighting."

The distrust of sympathetic action, the caution and weakness of inter-union government which had its roots in nineteenth century unionism was made the more significant by the rejection of the use of an accelerating programme of trade union political pressure. Thomas simply related the 1919 railway strike to the folly of the cuts in wages which affected at least eight members of the NUR EC. Barnes merely expressed dogmatically that separateness of political and economic activity which permitted unions to regard wage increases as ends in themselves, and wage cuts as failures in distributive bargaining where increases were steps to integrative bargaining.

61 Ibid. p.104, Ben Turner's reaction, like that of many of his colleagues was "from now on I preach nothing but Peace in Industry", p.105.


63 "...if Labour representation is to be effective, Labour representatives should give up Trade Union work and devote themselves to Parliament entirely.", p.60 of G.N.Barnes, From Workshop to War Cabinet, 1924. Citrine, op. cit., nicely illustrates the roots of the division between political and union activity - "when I joined a trade union in 1911 and became immersed in its activities, politics receded more and more from my purview." p.63. Nine years later, on going to the TUC, Citrine saw the distinction just as clearly: "I thought that it must evolve into a general staff for labour, and by labour, I mean the Trade Unions." (p.67).

64 On the concepts of distributive and integrative bargaining, see e.g. Richard E. Walton and Robert B. McKersie, A Behavioural Theory of Labor Negotiations (NY 1965), especially p.59 et seq., and p.281 et seq.
The leaders who were "the thrifty, responsible, and in many ways the most ambitious members of their community" made an uneasy compromise by 1930: increasingly involved in government and inter-union committee work, financially committed to a party which was as wary of the connection as the trade union leaders themselves, the leaders tried to maintain their unions' "independence". At the same time, the development of bargaining machinery showed the measure of their dependence on other antagonistic interests.

Within the union the balance between local, sectional interests and central policy had to be combined with opposition to militants in the branches. This was a criterion of the success of the balance struck - the silencing of militants. There were thus so many contradictory demands on the larger unions that in the absence of non-opportunist leadership, there developed what was, at one end of the continuum of political involvement, political neutrality, and at the other, reinforced by the T&GGB's experience, a thankful acceptance of political leadership from the parties.

Elsewhere, it has been suggested that the attitudes to unrest are often explicitly attitudes to self-government - an assertion borne out by the attack on leaders qua leaders at times of "unrest" and union explosion. Just as opposition to specific policies carried an anti-authoritarian ring (as, for example, in the Shop Stewards Movement), this reflected the contempt for their members which underlay much of the leaders' opposition to demands for

workers' control and official accountability. Sexton, for instance, proposed that "Some of the rank and file I know who talk about running the country could not run a potato machine." As the degree of organisation increased, schemes intended to ensure self-government became so complex and mechanistic that they resembled a multiple division of personality - each aspect of personality and interest having a vote which, when institutionalised, could only lead to a compound schizophrenia of jurisdictional wrangles over Kompetenz. Comintern and Minority Movement propaganda, however, stressed that workers' control itself was not self-government, but only an intermediate stage in self-realisation: the "one building workers' union" would have as its aim "to secure workers' control of industry as a step towards superseding the present capitalist system of society." In many ways, British socialists and unionists had been only peripherally involved in the prewar socialist debates, and the same held good after the war - ideas originating in foreign parties and international debate making their strongest - yet still oblique - impact on trade unions and sectional quarrels. Chabert noticed a similar effect in the 1830s:

"cependant, cette renaissance des idées jacobines en Angleterre n'aboutira pas à la réforme politique et sociale tant désirée. En revanche, ces idées fermentent comme un puissant levain dans la formation du syndicalisme."  

66 NTWF Ninth Annual General Council Meeting, Swansea, June 1919, p.77.  
Before 1914, the ideas of English syndicalism were more of an explanation of unrest than a contribution to it, the theory itself covering almost any action which could be interpreted as an advance towards socialism undertaken by a trade union, official or unofficial, sectional or national, conscious or unconscious. The established leaders were concerned to adopt the "unrest" so long as it presented no theoretical content or challenge. "Syndicalism is not going to ruin trade unionism", said Smillie. Over and above the practical criticisms of French Syndicalism, American Industrial Unionism, and militant unionism, there was a revulsion from revolutionary analysis—contrasting sharply with confessions of faith in socialism, or parliamentary revolution, by the same men—coupled with a revulsion from unplanned action. We have argued that such lack of planning attested to the organic and purely reactive origins of the unrest, and that consequently to damn the low-level or partial theory of Syndicalism implicitly or explicitly damned the emerging class-consciousness of the workers which, at this point in time, assumed a Syndicalist form. That is why we have applied the term Syndicalist to (low-level) theory, specific militant tactics, specific class consciousness and specific (historical) attempts at proletarian revolution in Britain after 1910.

Dr. Hobsbawm describes such union explosions as

"expansions of the movement into new industries, new regions, new classes of the population; they coincide with a clustering of new organizations, and the adoption of new ideas and policies by both new and existing units." 70

69 MFGB Annual Conference 1912 sup. cit. p.12.

However, although several leaders did speak in terms of fighting the government before 1914, this was reactive rather than insurrectionary: the theory of old and new remained defensive, evolutionary - based on a belief in the efficacy of parliamentary or popular liberalism unless there were an ethical, rather than an economic or social breakdown. Ideas and policies were adopted, in general, insofar as they were suggested positivistically or enforced experientially. Cole put it that Syndicalism "In no sense caused the industrial reaction; but it lent it through a minority, force and direction". In fact, this minority and their ideas was closer to the rank and file than many realised: "Their liberalism is certainly more socialistic than they realise, however, and their socialism often has touches of thoughtful, harmless anarchy". Class factors made the liberalism and individualism of the miners of whom Durland wrote of a different order from that of leaders like Harvey and Mabon.

71 For example, Tillett at the 1913 TUC - "we are fully entitled to call this Liberal Government a bloody Government, and it should be handed down to history as the Government which has scotched our liberties and interfered with free speech." pp.69-70. Yet Tillett's Memories and Reflections (1931) while it does indeed show little love for Liberal ministers of the period, has praise for Churchill, Balfour, Baldwin, and Bonar Law. The highest tribute, however, is reserved for Milner - "the sanest and most stable mind in the political mind of the country."

72 On the role of "breakdown" theory in the Socialist movement after 1902, see Paul H. Sweezy, The Theory of Capitalist Development (1946 edn.), p.192 et seq.


74 K. Durland, Among the Fife Miners, (1904), p.41.
It is instructive that C.D. Sharp should write of Syndicalism and Socialism as if the former represented unrest and the latter order.

"But whatever happens it is much the biggest success that Trade Unionism in any country has ever achieved (the 1912 coal strike) and it must leave a permanent mark on our industrial and political history. The 'State within the State' has suddenly come to its full power - it will surely never forget that it has had 'the strongest Government of modern times' practically on its knees suing for peace." ... "this affair marks the beginning of a new phase in the class war - possibly a very dangerous phase. There are suggestions of anarchy about the whole thing - a spirit of lawlessness which may or may not prove to be controllable. I do not believe that any appreciable proportion of Miners are in any sense Syndicalists - but there seems no particular reason why the idea should not take root and spread like wildfire in such a soil. It is on the face of it a much more attractive notion than nationalisation as far as the workers in any given industry are concerned. Perhaps the Socialists will yet have a chance of appearing in the role of the saviour of Society - saviours from the unthinkable disasters of Syndicalism." 75

So long, indeed, as labour leaders were State Socialists under a capitalist State, they might indeed be expected to rally to the defence of the state were it attacked or evaded by Syndicalist rank and file. What the leaders were trying to do was outlined as the tasks for progressives by C.M. Lloyd in 1911 - they must

"try to conserve the best things in this outside unrest - the growing feeling of solidarity, the demand for better conditions, the eagerness for organisation, and so on, and at the same time to combine it with a better and clearer and more constructive action in Parliament. The men don't at bottom want to run away with their leaders, but if their leaders are vacillating old women, what's to be done?" 76

75 C.D. Sharp to Beatrice Webb, 6.iii.12 (Passfield Papers), see also Chapter Five.

76 C.M. Lloyd to Beatrice Webb, 6.xi.11 (Passfield Papers).
This suggestion that a movement whose salient characteristics included a contempt for parliamentary reforms and policy-making by officials should be easily turned aside to parliamentary action and official control, recalls Bill Haywood's remark to Tom Mann, who proposed that the IWW should "bore from within" the AF of L: no doubt, "if the fine energy exhibited by the IWW were put into the catholic church, the results would be the establishment of the control of industry." Yet precisely this kind of conjuring trick was attempted.??

At first, the disarray and the pluralism of the labour movement encouraged the rank and file movement:

"J.R. Macdonald has ceased to be a socialist, the Trade Union MPs never were socialists, Snowden is embittered and Lansbury is wild. At present there is no co-operation among the Labour Members themselves nor between them and the trade union leaders."78

The disunity which had helped to cause the unrest, and encouraged its spread could not be repaired, or papered over, without changing the direction and character of the unrest itself. Once the leaders could re-identify themselves with the loyalty and unity of their followers, erstwhile militants could safely say of pacifists in 1917 "I tell you, Connolly was a brave and honest man who died for his country, but these men have no country."79 Direct control, direct action, were acceptable only as a part of the "common rule"

77 For Haywood's comments on Mann, see W.D. Haywood, Bill Haywood's Book, p.235 et.seq., and F.F. Brissenden, The IWW (NY, 1919).
78 B. Webb, Diaries, 11.x.12.
79 Tillett, NTWF Seventh Annual General Council Meeting, Bristol, June 1917, p.33.
interpreted by leaders - which of course destroyed much of the
directness.

Interpretation, and/or direction of rank and file demands,
somewhat suspiciously, seemed to take on the desired aspect from the
leaders' point of view. Shaw of the Textile Workers said

"He knew something of the mind of the rank and file, and he
knew that so far as the rank and file of his acquaintance went
their opinion was that the policy was too militant." 80

If this were true of textile workers, the opposite was suggested for

the generality at the 1911 TUC by O'Grady (Furnishing Trades):

"The outstanding point regarding this social upheaval is that
the movement originated with the rank and file. I do not want
to discourage the leaders in any sense. On the contrary, I
wish to congratulate them for having seen what was happening
and directing the upheaval in the right way." 81

Macdonald, however, was less impressed by the power of union leaders
to withstand the pressure from below:

"This Delilah of Syndicalism is seeking to cut the locks of
Labour; and Trade Unionism was becoming a mere piece of putty
in the hands of these parties." 82

It was certainly true that Macdonald and the labour leaders in
general referred to Syndicalism as the enemy, but the rank and file
as their ally: older leaders, who had perhaps not conceived of the
subtlety of such a distinction, were less careful. W.E.Harvey said,

80 Special Conference of the Labour Party, Glasgow, January 1914,
p.79.

81 44th Annual Trades Union Congress, Newcastle, September 1911,
p.227.

82 J.R.Macdonald, Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Glasgow,
January 1914, p.94.
"A wild howling mob would never settle anything, and a mob which does not listen to commonsense ought not to have anything settled for it. We have one down in Wales."\(^5\)

For a time, anger at the government's reaction to strike action counter-balanced union leaders' anxiety at the courses of action suggested by their own militants. Most, however, assumed that the unrest would die down and be contained within union activity: Brace said the miners would be uninfluenced by the Miners' Next Step because of the "innate common sense of the British working man."\(^4\)

That Syndicalism should seem to be the opposite of British State Socialism implies that already an etatist reformism, the institutional collectivism of the labour movement, might be a more reliable guardian of existing property relations than a workers' direct democracy, bent on destroying the institutions which had developed within the prevailing socio-economic order, and on curbing the dynamic of capitalism.

Lloyd George and Macdonald used much the same range of political metaphor to describe the action of Syndicalism on the body politic: Lloyd George, arguing that "The best policeman for the Syndicalist is the Socialist" went on to make a familiar enough organic elaboration, that

"The microbe of Socialism, which may be a very beneficient one, does at any rate keep guard upon the other, which is a very dangerous and perilous one."\(^5\)

\(^3\) W.E. Harvey, MP, MFGB Special Conference 1911 sup. cit., p.32.
\(^4\) House of Commons debates, 31.3.12, col. 2121.
\(^5\) House of Commons Debates, 19.iii.12, col. 1776. Lord Hugh Cecil interposed that he supposed in view of Lloyd George's statement that "The best policeman for the thief is a lunatic."
Macdonald echoed this two years later in the Commons:

"As a matter of fact, the syndicalists, who have been trying their level best to inoculate the Labour Party with their poisonous virus, have apparently succeeded in inoculating the Tory Party."

As a result,

"I find myself in the most extraordinary position of being and feeling a very large amount of good old-fashioned Toryism rising up in my blood in order to resist the alluring attractions of revolutionary syndicalism."

The organic view of society which denies organic, spontaneous unrest, the implicit appeal in both men to a non-revolutionary tradition, smacks of Le Bon's horror of crowds -

"In consequence of the purely destructive nature of their power crowds act like those microbes which hasten the dissolution of enfeebled or dead bodies."

Macdonald early declared his interest on the side of so-called order against so-called unrest: it marked a faith in existing institutions as a cordon sanitaire against ideas as well as people. It was at this point that Macdonald's affinity with the Liberals and the liberal bourgeoisie was clearest, and his distance from libertarian or revolutionary socialists greatest.

Strikes themselves were by no means the best indication of unrest. There was a physical and tactical limit to their employment and usefulness. The second ballot in the coal strike was a mixed index of endurance, militancy and impatience: in South Wales the

86 House of Commons Debates, 23.iii.14, cols. 96-7.
vote for continued strike action fell from 85 to 32% on the second ballot: in Scotland from 84 to 57%, the Federated Area 82 to 62%, Northumberland 75 to 56%, Durham 67 to 66% and the rest from 65 to 42%. Frequency, leadership and extent of strikes were the crucial factors. G.R. Carter might say of the South Wales coal strike in 1915 that it

"has served to bring into prominence the defects of the social and industrial system in a typical area where national prosperity and population have increased by leaps and bounds without any corresponding development of the social and personal factors of life."89

But as yet this was a warning, not a declaration of war. Strikes were welcomed as a sign of the coming "bridges" to repair the gaps in political culture. Aneurin Williams, for example, held that "Their poverty, indeed, does not make these people as discontented as it ought to."90 In such a schema, strikes were a healthy sign of rising levels of aspiration: the country in 1913-14 could, said Orton, well afford "the luxury of a little anarchy". After all, the "basis of labour solidarity is the trade, the living", itself the basis of "British constitutionalism", and into this

88 On the "normality" of strikes under capitalism, see V.I. Allen, Militant Trade Unions, passim. The strike ballot figures are quoted in D.H. Robertson, A Narrative of the Coal Strike, Economic Journal, September 1912, p.382.


constitutionalism fitted the British worker, "a conservative sort of animal" as Hodges called him. The strikes, however, were symptomatic of a bitterness against the "order" which defined and limited participation, whose coercive aspect produced anomie, estrangement from the produce of labour and the decisions which produced the productive processes themselves. These strikes were indeed the efforts "of wares to act like men", a critique of bourgeois liberalism, not a demand for it.

Fear of such activity on the grounds that it was premature or injudicious may well have determined the initial opposition to ideas in the unrest of the type of syndicalism. By 1914, however, the more familiar proportions had been restored: spontaneous movements had been included in trade unionism or disavowed. The Welsh demand for a minimum wage in coal became national policy, the young men compromised with the old (except Mabon), and it was the post 1913 decline of the coalfield which encouraged the maintenance and power of resistance of the militancy of 1910-12. In 1910, the Railway Review had written of the July strike in Gateshead and Newcastle,

"It is doubtful if in the whole history of industrial disputes there was ever so spontaneous an uprising, so sudden in its beginnings, so widespread in its ramifications, and so rapid in its infection. And all for what, in and by itself, seems so trivial a cause. From beginning to end the psychological factor


was evident. One newspaper described the strike as a study in 'the psychology of the crowd' and in many respects it resembles those outbursts of popular fury which we read of in ancient Rome or modern Paris. It was as sudden in its beginning as it was in its ending, and apparently as inexplicable. The ostensible cause was the dismissal of a shunter, but the real significance of the strike lay in its passionate protest against what the men believed to be a case of injustice, in which their honour as men who were called upon to defend an injured comrade was involved." 94

In 1911, of course, the whole union was involved, in a national programme, and the strike called off by the executive at the request of a minister for reasons of foreign policy - and again, by that much had the ideal of self-government receded, despite its astonishing escalation in thirteen months.

The new leaders of the Glasgow dockers in 1912

"did not know what the men really wanted, and they could not control the men so far as to induce them to accept an agreement which they did not like."95

This deserves to be a classic statement of the difficulty of presenting potentially cataclysmic demands through a traditional agency and in traditional terms which have not been designed for such high tension. Over a short period, this excitement might be acceptable enough: Tillett spoke of the NTWF concentrating its propaganda on the increased use of machinery, rise in profits and cost of living, which encouraged the rank and file:

"during our negotiations a spirit of revolt had seized even those of whom we had the least hope, and, as if by some great magic wave or electric telepathy that moved the minds of the

94 Quoted in G.W. Alcock, Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism (1922), pp.415-6.

95 Lord Askwith, op. cit., p.193.
people, unrest manifested itself by the stoppage of vessels, by a new demeanour of the men towards the managers and foremen, and the altered attitude of the latter towards the men. All these were portentous signs, symbolical of the revolutionary tendencies. The effect of this new spirit, almost unknown to the powers that be, invisible, too, to some of the cleverest pressmen, hardly believable to those in closest contact with the signs of the upheaval, all these were manifestations of the new growth.96

The closer the correspondance between upsurges of organization, theory and unrest - and there were causal and structural connections as well as conjunctural ones - the more likely is unrest to work in and through existing organizations: in this case Tillett was able to provide a new organization to accommodate immediate unrest at immiseration and the extension and concentration of ownership in the docks. But suspicion of "spontaneity" increased: Scanlon retails with contempt the reaction even of the CPGB to the Cook-Maxton campaign

"to rouse the workers to demand all they produced and not merely the odd coppers; and as this was apparently too advanced for the Communists, they would have to go on without them."

The attack on disruptive militants, though these were often far from the visionaries and "heroic" socialists who hoped for an unopposed transformation of organizations before 1914, had become an established part of official business:

"the work begun in 1923 was successfully completed by 1929; six years of unremitting effort saw Mr. Pollicit safely outside and the march to Socialism continued without interruption.97


97 Scanlon, op.cit.,pp.110 & 98. The case for expulsion is well summarised in V.L. Allen's Trade Union Leadership. Based on a study of Arthur Deakin (1957) - though the TGWU's unwillingness to purge its Communists led to a reinforcement of belief in political neutrality: Deakin said the union must never become "a forum for the Communist Party or for any other Party ..." p.275. The Union only voted to exclude Communists from lay and paid official positions in July 1949.
Alf Barton stressed the escalation of individual qualities from "spontaneity" ("a strike is not like an army of men drilled into acting at the word of command") to "sympathetic extension" and finally the "sympathy of the general public" - with mediation by organizations kept to a minimum. It was an over-simplification to suggest as Hyndman did that

"strikes, Syndicalism, Anarchy, are but varying forms of restless working-class ignorance, or despairing revolts against unendurable oppression."

For the unrest was directed not only against the inactivity and insufficiency of existing organizations, but at the worsening of conditions they permitted or produced.

Reaction to employers' organization and to the legal assault on unions after the late '90s encouraged political action and amalgamation on the part of the unions. Militant, or unofficial action, rather than an "anarchical protest", undertaken by men "more than usually aware of the essentially coercive nature of the rules", rested on the awareness that the rules were changing rapidly, and that the nature and extent of coercion and its justification were also changing. It is to be expected that under this pressure, attitudes towards the employers and conciliation should harden - though paradoxically, it is possible to write the history of the period of unrest almost wholly in terms of the efficient


development of conciliation machinery, protests against its working being seen more as initial difficulties than perception of an exploitive social relationship. 101

In this process, propagandist, informal and workshop groups were always vulnerable to attack both from employers and appeals by union leaders. By 1918 there is a hint of desparation and defiance in Murphy's Workers' Committee statement, close to Kropotkin, that

"We challenge them, we repudiate them, and by means of independent working-class education and independent working-class organization we mould our forces to challenge the rulers of the earth. We measure our progress towards our goal by the progress we make towards the independent mastery of the factories, workshops and farms, upon which the people's bread and liberties depend." 102

The fragmentation of the labour movement before and during the war had resulted in the survival of those strongest organizations which could discipline and persuade their members to accept, agreements and policies made in their name.

The report on industrial councils made it clear that voluntary associations were not to be represented by virtue of being voluntary: the "two sides" of industry recognised less a class struggle than a necessary administrative convenience.

"It is intended that the Councils shall be composed only of representatives of Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, and that new organizations should be admitted only with the approval of the particular side of the Council of which the organization would form a part." 103

102 J.T. Murphy, Compromise or Independence? An examination of the Whitley Report (Sheffield Workers' Committee, 1918), p.12.
103 Industrial Councils, (Whitley Report), Ministry of Labour, 1917, p.1
For their part, employers were concerned that, if they had to accept that it was hard to destroy union organisation, unions should so organise as to make the cost of labour steady and calculable. Sexton showed later how welcome this formalisation could be to union leaders themselves:

"Thanks mainly to a new type of employer, personified by such men as Sir Alfred Booth and Lawrence Holt, the fight, though sharp, was short and conclusive. It resulted in the welding together of a vast number of men who had previously held aloof from all trade union organization."¹⁴

This reactive process inescapably follows the growth of industrial combination - not only in symmetry of structure, but of motive.

"We may thus expect, in no very remote future, to see the iron industry governed by loose federations of great powers, each large firm belonging to a number of associations according to the variety of its products; and there is the final possibility that these may unite into a general union on the lines of the German Stahlwerksverband. Over the great bulk of our industries horizontal amalgamation is the representative form of permanent combination, and our survey has shown that there is hardly any description of trade to which it is unsuited."¹⁵

Symmetry of organization made distributive bargaining the institutional device whereby the authority and monopoly of management skills and decision possessed by the employers and their representatives could to some extent be first balanced, and later permit the digestion of unions and proletariat by capitalism.

Possession of such entrepreneurial qualities explained, and explains, in the words of Phelps Brown "why capitalists and managers generally


hire workers, and not the other way round." In view of this so-called triumph of initiative, the conflict of interest, even, and the drive to organization seem irrelevant. When Applegarth called for an end to "Amalgamated this, Associated that, and Equitable the other", proposing all should "band together in one giant organization called the United Workers", in Phelps Brown's world such a union could either be powerless, or it would diminish both production and initiative.

Union leaders' attitudes to employers and conciliation before 1914 presented three aspects. First, there was a widespread belief that employers' attitudes were opposed to community interests:

"They did not seem to show any deep concern for this nation during that dispute (the 1912 coal strike), but resented, I think, quite as much as some of the miners' leaders did, the interference of the Government in the dispute."

Syndicalism, "individualism run mad", was the workers' version of such selfishness - that is, it was a form of sectional selfishness. It might be useful in alarming the "wealthy classes and commercial classes", making them fear they might "wake up, figuratively speaking, with their commercial throats cut."

But although Syndicalists might be sincere, men who "earnestly believed that the

106 Phelps Brown op. cit., p.351.

107 R. Postgate, The Builders' History (1923), p.375. "Powerless", that is, in terms of encroachment on those management prerogatives which stem from, and enforce, management's special skills.

108 Smillie at the MFGB Annual Conference, 1912, October, Swansea, p.9-10.

109 ibid. p.11.
trades unionists have not been able to make sufficient progress", 110 there was, as it were, a just social price for labour. It might indeed be possible to fix such a "social just price" by legislation: but more immediately, organization could secure it from the capitalists, with the aid of the liberals in the "free market".

Second, there was a suspicion that an attack on the mechanism of the free market and the union independence associated with it might in fact succeed.

"I wonder sometimes whether the affair in Dublin is only part of a greater movement which has for its purpose the crushing or the attempt to crush the trade union movement entirely, or if not to crush it out, then at least to tell the workers of this country what particular kind of trades unionism will be allowed to live."111

Growing disbelief in the efficacy of the free market, the setting up of organizations like the Labour Party to redress the built-in partiality of market mechanisms, did not, however, destroy the desire to retain a union autonomy which retained the spirit if not the substances of liberal democracy.

Finally, before 1914, it seemed that the employers were not only breaking the rules in industry, and attacking the right to organize, but that the unions might be forced to defend themselves militarily.

110 ibid. p.13
111 ibid. p.13
"Again I say we have no desire, though our Federation may be strong, we have no desire to fight for the love of fighting or for the sake of fighting. There is no leader in this room wishes to encourage that idea. God knows it is a terrible thing to our people, and especially to those who are responsible leaders, but I think that even in the smallest district it is necessary that we should prepare for eventualities."

Where the unions saw their progress only as a mark of the increasing social improvement and discipline of their members, organization as an attempt to bring economic order to capitalist anarchy, they could not conceive why employers should seek to restore anarchy, competition between equals to bring immiseration to both competitors. They did not accept the Syndicalist analysis, nor proceed to an analysis of novel features in capitalism employing traditional forms, but they did accept that the normal rules of evolution seemed to have been suspended. Many then welcomed the war as proof that social division was replaced by loyalty to a common culture - whilst others, as Smillie himself, saw war as evidence of the anarchy, waste, and social dichotomy he so deplored, raised to a higher power.

This fear of the extinction of political and trade union liberty, a fear that British Imperialism was approaching Czarism - increasingly the police were referred to as Cossacks - was widespread in the labour movement. "Why", asked Crowsley, "are you prosecuting me for distributing leaflets which preached what Tolstoy preached all his life in Russia undisturbed?" Belief in a social equity

112 ibid. p.13

113 That is, competition between workers.

114 F. Crowsley, arrested for printing and distributing "Don't Shoot" leaflets to the troops, quoted in the House of Commons, 25.iii.12, ccl. 78.
transcending class interest, belief that this was in fact the essence of Socialism, encouraged a determination to act as if in fact this equity, a constant in social evolution, could be found in all social relationships. All evidence to the contrary should not shake this faith.

The Webbs spoke of the inconsistency of condemning the "tyranny" of the employers' workshop rules' and seeing "no harm in a strong union relentlessly enforcing its will on the capitalists, without deigning to consult with them beforehand."115 Belief in social evolution had, in fact, an ethical, rather than a scientific basis: greater discipline, greater order in organization (insofar as this was compatible with union autonomy), - these were the marks of evolution. But, inconsistently, with more than a little sentimentality, the organization and discipline were moral, and not subject to the same process of evolutionary change as the natural world.

Tom Mann had condemned conciliation in 1899, saying boards were "palliatives for evils produced by a Capitalist system which was itself marked out for destruction..."116 A breakdown theory, however embryonic, would have damaged the faith, whether derived


116 E. Melbourne, The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham, (1923), p.303. (Mann made this point at a Miners' Gala).
from Christian ethics or Spencerian, that a Socialist morale and rationale, could be achieved in capitalist society. The employers themselves spoke in comparable ethical terms: Smillie quoted without disapproval Lord Rhondda's contention that "I will fight the miners as hard as I can when I think I am right, but my quarrel is not with the women and the children." The Miners' Next Step produced an important rebuttal of such disingenuousness - "We don't audit their books, and we have no way of judging their assertions."

The period of the unrest did encourage the aggression which union leaders normally had to restrain, and produced aggressive language - in a defensive position - from the leaders. "All over the civilised world the capitalists have waged relentless war on the organised workers, and strikes and lockouts have been the order of the day." The "loyal and well-disciplined army" which the leaders required, however, was itself to represent a counter-threat to the order threatened by the capitalists, and their aim was to restore order rather than overthrow the political system which, even as they acted, appeared on the whole to represent the aggressors rather than the wronged.

The self-justification of British trade unions is legendary and antedates the existence of a public opinion likely to be convinced.

118 The Miners' Next Step, op. cit., p.7.
of the justice of a cause by the presentation of a detailed economic case. Strikes themselves can be seen as countervailing in economic terms - not only in terms of the loss to strikers, but of the incidental gain to employers - coal strikes "were a source of indirect benefit not only to the collieries, but also, and to a greater extent, to contractors and middlemen." Under some economic conditions, then, perhaps the only victories to be won by strikers, were moral ones - or demonstrations of the freedom not to work which the capitalist market permitted.

The early arguments for conciliation were similar to Mabon's:

"I am perfectly convinced that the only salvation for capital and labour is whole-hearted cooperation between the two sides in forming boards of conciliation and arbitration throughout the country, which would bring peace and prosperity to the industry, without encroaching upon the freedom of either side."

Success in conciliation thus became linked with the degree of organisation each side could achieve - and before 1914 there appears a reactive alternation between periods of organisation and the setting up of new agreements, slow disillusion with the agreement, and a fresh period of organisation. Kenney quoted a shunter who said "Conciliation! It's hopeless". "Until we get real recognition there will be no satisfaction and the union will never have the

120 This self-justification is also, and more significantly, a desire for political and moral consistency.


122 E.W. Evans, Mabon, op. cit., p.11.
power they ought to have." At such periods of militancy and reappraisal there was a questioning of the principles underlying forms of organisation: Kenney himself rejected TUC, Labour Party, and Post Office as types of organisation representing the workers' interests, and proposed a guild system.

On the other hand, observers were as much concerned with the simple qualities of such periods of rethinking, as with analyses of the forces making for the change.

"It was a bigger thing, somehow, and although the material condition of the men concerned was not vastly changed, nor their immediate demands much less modest, there seemed to be greater spontaneity, a broader conception of the ultimate objects of the working-class struggle, a reaching forward to higher ideals, and a stronger feeling of solidarity and of all that solidarity implies than ever before." 124

The balancing of interests through the balancing of organisations represented - at least in theory - an advance on the old, where

"The military were keeping order, and the colliers were asking support for the strikers. I must say it struck me that both sets of men were heartily sick of their task; and no wonder, for, to give things their proper names, we were confronted with coercion on one side and pauperism on the other." 125

Unions fighting for their continued existence, as it appeared before 1914, could hardly help regarding demands for self government, coupled with direct action, as disruptive: this outlook, however, was combined with a determination to achieve a social recognition of their function, a point at which inequitable conciliation

agreements could be replaced by just ones. To avoid such conciliation De Leon's case for a political party linked with the unions was that:

"It must either inspirit the union with the broad political purpose, and thus dominate it by warring on the Labor fakir and on the old guild notions that hamstring the Labor Movement, or it is itself dragged down to the selfish trade interests of the economic movement, and finally drawn down into the latter's subservience to the capitalist interests that ever fasten themselves to the selfish trade interests on which the labor fakir, or labor lieutenant of the capitalist class, thrives."126

In Britain, although the breaking of agreements could be seen as an aggression against social harmony, the context was of an attack against the unions, and the concept of equity in conciliation. These contradictory demands, the need to resist and the desire to conciliate, could in fact be pursued more easily in an autonomous association than in close connection with a political party which might point to the inconsistency inherent in such action - a puissant motive for encouraging loyalty in the members and discouraging sympathetic action with other unions, lest this Janus-like aspect be repudiated, exposed as a nonsense.

In Britain, then, there was a situation virtually the reverse of the German, where

"political Socialism had preceded organised Trade Unionism and always considered the latter its specialist industrial branch; a client relationship which the rich and growing Trade Unions found increasingly irksome."127


The Labour Party and its ILP leaders was not anxious to involve itself in the organisational chaos of the union movement and the haphazardness of its industrial action. Given that, of Macdonald and Hyndman, "A love of order is at the root of the activities of both men", the limited political horizons of older trade unionists and the divergence of their policies and beliefs had little to attract Socialist policy-makers. The Labour Party could hardly ignore the unrest in which, in its purely trade union aspect, it was deeply involved, but the Party possessed neither the unanimity nor the intellectual concern to influence its parent body. As Hyndman said in 1906, of the Labour MPs

"The others, even Keir Hardie, are of the emotional, ethical, goody-goody Socialist type. The Trade Union set, on the other hand, though standing for the independence of the Party, uphold very little else. Some of them, like Shackleton, are directly opposed even to the raising of the age of half-timers."

With the mildest of reformist attitudes, an independence which was in pledge to the Liberals, and little confidence in its own parliamentary performance, it is not surprising that the Labour Party resisted conversion to Syndicalism, even without the help of Macdonald's "good old-fashioned toryism".

In considering the impact of the unrest and its effects on union attitudes towards political action and reformism, however, there is a clearer reaction. In the first place, political action

129 Hyndman to Tom Mann, 29.iv.06 (Mann papers).
by the Labour Party seemed largely irrelevant to industrial action: the Labour Party had won its independence more from the unions than from the other parties by 1914. Reformism and coercion seemed bewilderingly to flow from the same source in the state which Macdonald proposed to make Socialist. Churchill might incidentally encourage union recruiting through the Insurance Bill, but he too was issuing ball ammunition for use against the railwaymen. If the SPD's election victories threatened German armaments programmes, might not Bismarckian social reform assure the Government of working-class acquiescence in its own military spending? Just as the government presented these two aspects - reform and coercion - simultaneously, so too it appeared to exercise two forms of control over working class activity and protest. One was the mysterious process whereby "The Parliamentary machine gripped the Labour men and in a year or so ground out their fire," - which was a mark of the powerlessness of Labour MPs, and also a reflection of their theoretical vagueness, often too of their sentimental egoism which made social acceptance seem a vicarious acceptance for their working-class electors. The second was the coercive power of the state: on the 1912 strike, Maccoby wrote that "It should, in short, have been treated as a conspiracy against the state" - the


discipline and organisation of the industrial workers was, it seemed, welcomed by the government until it resulted in a successful national stoppage. Britain appears a fine example of that type of ruling class of which Pareto said

"it is in the highest degree difficult to overthrow such a class when it successfully assimilates most of the individuals in the subject class who show those same talents, are adept in those same acts and might therefore become the leaders of such plebians as are disposed to use violence."\textsuperscript{134}

This is not the actual process, but it is understandable that many should conceive it to be an accurate description. Devotion to the parliamentary process was natural enough in professional negotiators, even had they not a deference to and an attachment for the men and the procedures which had administered democracy before the advent in Parliament of a working-class party. If Hyndman could describe the labour unrest as "compounded of ignorance, impatience and hysteria, resulting in an outburst of reactionary violence,"\textsuperscript{135} it is hardly surprising that less revolutionary socialists should be nonplussed by violence, turn in disillusion to pacifism, and of Lombroso's opinion that violence, criminal as it was, became

"absurd in practice; because all reforms should be introduced very gradually in order to escape the inevitable reaction which neutralises all previous efforts."\textsuperscript{136}

The impact of the unrest can indeed be seen as pushing union leaders towards a belief in reformist legislation in the traditional


\textsuperscript{135} In C. Tsuzuki, H.M. Hyndman and British Socialism (1961).

\textsuperscript{136} Cesare Lombroso, Criminal Man (1911), p.305.
bargaining area:

"The ordinary Trade Unionist has got the National Minimum theory well fixed in his slow solid head - it has taken twenty years to mature - but there it stands at last, the substance of his political desire."\(^{137}\)

This important but devious reaction was reinforced by the recruitment of union leaders for government service in the war.

One must also make the point that the use of troops in strikes cast the government in the role of strike breaker, diminishing if not destroying the legitimacy it was normally accorded. Gosling in 1919 said

"with all the consequences that a general strike would entail, these consequences would be preferable to allowing the Government to use our troops as strike-breakers, to destroy all the moral power which has grown up through collective bargaining in the Trade Union movement."\(^{138}\)

So profound was the faith in liberal democracy that demonstrations of its coercive side encouraged violent expressions of disillusion.

"It is clear that the man who has the pluck to strike must have in mind the right to have firearms and the right to use them."\(^{139}\)

Nor was there any guarantee that the right to defend oneself should not become a weapon of aggression if reformism showed signs of slackening:

"If the Government is not prepared to give us something more than a promise, it may be necessary, in my opinion it will be necessary, that we have a revolution of force."\(^{140}\)

137 B. Webb, Diaries, Sept., 5, 1912.
138 NTWF Ninth Annual General Council Meeting, Swansea, June 1919, p.15.
139 Ben Tillett, 1913 TUC op. cit., p.70.
140 C. B. Stanton, ibid., p.71.
In the terms of the labour movement in Britain and the minor role physical resistance to superior force had played, and in terms of the undoubted resolve of the Government to act swiftly, with force if necessary, to prevent disruption, such language was in the nature of a rhetorical figure. Smillie demonstrated this in the 1913 TUC, when having said "I preach evolutionary revolution," he went on to say "it is our duty, legal or illegal, to train our people to defend themselves." The government had been given before 1914, an invaluable lesson in the lengths to which the labour movement would go if it felt itself attacked, in the support which the government would enjoy if it acted rapidly, and in the need to force sectional capitalist interests to yield rearguard positions to avoid a more blatant contest.

To say as Cole did, "The Labour Party reflects Trade Unionism and cannot surpass it", is to ignore the divergence between the two groups just visible before 1914. In power, the Labour Party was at times to frustrate Trade Union aspirations more effectively than a straight bourgeois government, at others to appeal to an ideal community feeling at once broader and less embodied than the union movement. Bevin said of the 1924 appeal

"I wish it had been a Tory Government, we would not have been frightened by their threats. We were bound to listen to the appeal of our own people."  

141 Robert Smillie, ibid., p.72.  
143 A.Hutt, Post-war History, op. cit., p.84.
Again, unions' approaches to political questions might push the Party further than it had proposed to go:

"Transcending questions of wages and hours, the railwaymen gave a new angle to the oft-repeated demand for the nationalisation of the railways, hardly annual of so many conferences. They made it clear that what they wanted was a voice in control." \(^{144}\)

As a Party associated with the Government, however, its divergence of function, if not of ideology, from the unions led the Labour Party to preserve an autonomy which it would have to use in bourgeois democracy as a successor-party. If,

"when a stoppage occurs on the railways, the Government is driven by its obligations to the community to play the role of strike-breaker" \(^{145}\),

the Labour Party's rejection of syndicalism might well become a justification of an attack on the unions.

"This abandonment of the laissez-faire policy of the Government in regard to industrial disputes may one day come to be recognised as the most important development in economic matters in this country in the last fifty years." \(^{146}\)

To avoid a disastrous civil war within the labour movement, the Labour Party was bound to hope that a conservative union leadership would not pursue a policy for interests which diverged too sharply from those of the parliamentary party - and that in return for the forbearance of such conservative unionism, the Labour Party would as

\(^{144}\) A. Hutt, British Trade Unionism (1962 edn.), p. 67.


\(^{146}\) C. Watney and J.A. Little, Industrial Warfare (1912), p. 235. On the deterioration of relations between Unions and Government (Labour) at various periods, see V.L. Allen's Militant Trade Unionism, passim.
far as possible maintain the legal immunity the unions had won from the liberals. There was a touch of wishful thinking in Barnes's statement that the class war, direct action, and revolutionary propaganda

"are all clearly out of date for a Party which has adopted Parliamentary and Constitutional means of improving the position of those for whom it speaks."147

The unrest showed both unions and party the potential danger of too close an alliance between parliamentary and economic labour: indeed, the tacit agreement to keep union and party programmes separate, thus denying the unity of workers' interests, was a more potent force than any inclination to make them complementary.

The problem of coercion was that although Macready could say,

"I never for a moment believed that the British working man would sink to the level of Irishmen or foreigners, by the use of lethal weapons against unarmed police",148

the contrary was by no means so certain. The reservoir of working class anti-parliamentarianism, and the communistic anarchism which was the theoretical form of workshop community, was out of reach of the Labour Party.

"The spirit that led the South Wales miner, the workers on the Clyde and later on the engineers, to challenge capitalist law and order in the shape of the Munitions and Defence of the Realm Acts, is the spirit that will carry the workers through to their final goal. This spirit should not, however, be wasted in struggles for trifling gains."149

147 G.N. Barnes, op. cit., p.301.


It was in the very nature of this spirit, that it should reject the solution of Hardie to "these recurring Labour troubles," that "the State must own the railways." The Labour Party and its constitutional hopes would surely destroy the movement whether or not it alleviated the grievance. The party must transform the notion of self-government and self-management, of continuing unrest as surely as the unions. Putting its faith in Parliament, the Labour Party in one important sense cut itself off not only from the rank and file, but from the union leadership, though this was only occasionally glimpsed after 1914.

State and employers

"would grant such amelioration not because trade unions were spontaneous associations which had earned it, but because they played a part in industry which both parties considered to be essential for the smooth running of industry - that is, for the continuance of profits and for the prevention of the misery and poverty resulting from industrial struggles which was to their minds both distressing and useless, and would in the last resort be costly to the State."152

Such a role minimised both the element of individual and collective struggle and striving in the unrest. Integration into an industrial


151 That is, by putting its trust in an institution regarded with profound suspicion both by rank and file militants - and by Union leaders, and by those who supported "reforms from below" as opposed to "legislation from above."

relations system must discourage a form of revolutionary unionism which depended on rapid political results - changes in property relations - for its justification. This, in its turn, was still precisely the kind of "amelioration" which Liberal reforms and wage increases could not produce.

Organisation itself had for a time replaced insurrection as a revolutionary slogan - Harvey made this point in 1917, that the revolution would come not "with Rifles or Military Insurrections, but with Organisation of the Industries." In turn, this organisation became itself a barrier to a mass left-wing movement. The last phase of union growth, of "eruption, extension, and enforcement", seemed to have been reached in the 1920s, with unofficial action sectional and local. At all stages, however, of the explosion before 1914, the element of "compromise", of petit bourgeois leadership was reinforced by that very success in industrial bargaining, which was, after all, an aim of trade unionism - many older trade unionists might say the only aim - despite the broader purposes laid down in the rule books. The attempt to divert "workers' demands from the realm of production to the realm of consumption" was itself promoted by the very gains which, from the producers' point of view, had been "owing" to them.

153 G. Harvey, Industrial Unionism and the Mining Industry, (Newcastle, 1917), p.188.


for several years. When the Seamen's Union existed only as a
deficit of £6.13s,\textsuperscript{156} or when Bill Holmes of the ILP could find a
flying column of 150 cyclists to unionise the countryside,\textsuperscript{157} the
levels of aspiration of new members could be suddenly raised, and
their effort thrown behind the union.

Later, observers represented this awareness of common interest,
the pledging of a class, or group, loyalty, as important only in
lost causes, significant only over short periods.

"Just as the workers in a militantly led strike sometimes keep
on fighting when their cause appears hopelessly lost, and thus
demonstrate to the world that the working class have unexpected
reserves of endurance and solidarity, so a wave of organisation
reminds the employers that they have to do with a whole class
and not with a few agitators or with an aristocracy of labour."\textsuperscript{158}

Mass action, however, led to mass unions, which often enough proved
neutralisers of the force and variety of the action: Askwith
suggested of the prairie fire in the Midlands in 1913 that

"It created order out of a very chaotic condition, the strike
perhaps proving a blessing in disguise, because it provided
methods of dealing with difficulties which proved of service
during the war."\textsuperscript{159}

Taming the urge to self-management based on small integrated
groups in a class confederation by mass organisation rapidly changed
the direction of the militant movement. The Miners' Next Step spoke
of learning "to conserve our strength and conduct(ing) our fights

\textsuperscript{156} Captain Edward Tupper, Seamens' Torch (1938), p.19.
\textsuperscript{157} Reg Groves, Sharpen the Sickle, (1949), p.129.
\textsuperscript{158} Horace B. Davis, The Theory of Union Growth, Quarterly Journal
of Economics, 1940-1, p.621.
\textsuperscript{159} Lord Askwith, op. cit., p.256.
on principles, not arithmetic." But this could simply mean using a different kind of arithmetic. This process was probably inevitable, since the worker's position of subordination - which is a position of some permanence and stability - was also, in liberal democracy and under the conditions of the "free market", insecure and unstable.

"A proletarian is a wage-earner (or salaried worker not in a permanent position) whose exclusive, or at least indispensable, source of income is found in the sale of his labour power in a shifting and insecure labour market." This tension in socialist and labour theory between the experience of subordination and that of insecurity, is the experiential foundation for the axes of revolution-reform, and political-economic action.

If there is truth in this, then the interesting question is to discover what forces make for concentration on one rather than the other. Clearly, such things as upward mobility, a technology demanding and training new skills, will encourage men to consider the possibility of securing themselves in the market, strengthening their position for take-off, as it were, and ensuring a platform for prevention of excessive downward mobility. Very seldom does one find the subordination - insecurity opposition clearly expressed, for one thing because their combination has historically characterised the position of the proletariat under British capitalism. One hears echoes of this in the Webbs:


161 Goetz A. Briefs, op. cit., p.24
"here the Syndicalist enters a caveat - the protest of the Idealist against what actually happens when services are nationalised and worked by officials having the same assumptions as the ordinary capitalist in respect of remuneration and status of the wage-earner." 162

That is, although the insecurity of the market place may have diminished, the subordination remains, and the Syndicalists' answer is to have the workers control the market which will provide for the emancipation of workers.

Cole too was concerned to provide a policy which would work equally on the problem of subordination and insecurity, with the formula of "A 'business government' with a revolutionary aim". 163

The problem is complicated by the fact that subordination is a symptom of insecurity and vice versa: but union action and reformist action in general has shown that the market can be rendered more secure for the proletariat - and that this very process may make the proletarian more and not less in a subordinate relation even to "his own" organisations.

Gustave le Bon makes a comparable point:

"If the worker makes three times today as he did a hundred years ago, and enjoys commodities then unknown to great nobles, he owes it entirely to the elect." 164

Or, on this model, the greater the material reward to the worker, the greater his "power-indebtedness" to non-proletarians - and, by Briefs's definition one must include opportunist officials in the

162 B. Webb Diaries, Sep. 5, 1912.
category of non-proletarians. So it is, then, that the most powerful organisations of the working class are, under bourgeois democracy, most cautiously used. The Triple Alliance, for instance, "closely circumscribed by its own constitution and very cautiously invoked by its own leaders", can be described as an organisation seeking economic amelioration while shrinking from an attack on those economic forces which perpetuate subordination. It did this partly because its leaders were opportunist leaders, interpreting the demands and mediating the interests of, the rank and file - and partly, and decisively, because it accepted the assumptions behind "subordination to capitalism" while rejecting those behind "insecurity under capitalism."

Theodore Rothstein maintained the roots of opportunism lay in the falling prices of primary products, and it may well be that such economic trends do reinforce existing trends in policy. But the foundations of such a policy antedate falling prices: Pratt put the case from the employers' side -

"The majority of employers will confess that a really well-conducted union, worked along temperate and reasonable lines, would be an excellent thing in many branches of our national industry, especially in facilitating arrangements to apply to the whole of any particular trade."  

Such a response by a trade union transcends and outlasts price movements: and trade union leaders themselves recognised the

166 In Ralph Fox, The Class Struggle in Britain in the Epoch of Imperialism, p.58.
irreversible processes consequent on organisation. "As soon as the French have an actual Trade Union organisation, they will cease discussing blindly the general strike, direct action, and sabotage" said Carl Legien at Stuttgart.\(^{168}\) Certainly the picture as not as clear as this suggests: organisation in Britain, the committees "so dear to the present-day working-classes"\(^{169}\) could seem to present a threat to employers and political system, and indeed did so, even under the leadership of "indifferent workmen without any stake in the locality."\(^{170}\) Employers who said they were "entirely blameless for what was occurring, and that the men should be coerced into submission by force"\(^{171}\) were an embarrassment to the government, their colleagues, and a permanent invitation to the aggressive instincts - and the opportunist policy, of the labour leaders. Nor was the alternative to opportunism a campaign of indiscriminate industrial warfare: one finds statements like Murphy's "Make the amalgamation of unions incidental, the amalgamation of the workers fundamental",\(^{172}\) a concentration on individual contribution rather than solidity of organisation. Harvey's Industrial Union "shall be built cell by cell (worker by worker)", and, he maintained "There are those who prate only about structure, and they are the danger to

169 Macready op. cit., p.141
170 ibid., p.142
171 ibid., p.143
172 J.T. Murphy, quoted in Orton, op. cit., p.96.
the miners who are at the parting of the roads." It was at this point, however, that the question changed its terms, and became one of the suitability of dual unionism, boring from within, permeation, and so on - the issue being largely resolved by Lenin and the Comintern in 1920 and the early years of the CPGB.

"By 1914, the more enlightened members of Britain's ruling orders had come to see the leaders of Labour both as opponents and allies." Rather, in the changing economic environment, two traditional aspects of working men had achieved a new status and significance. What Gaskell called "This atrocious system of violence" in the nineteenth century was still referred to in terms of the "illogical, instinctive gathering of force of the revolt of the governed", indeed, of "uneducated and morally undisciplined men" before 1914. By 1914, the spectre of anarchy and violence was being replaced, under cover of the old bogey, by a terror of revolutionary organisation. Jouhaux expressed it in such terms as

"Direct Action is opposed to the remuneration of personal effort characterised by permanent delegation by which the power of determining value and creative force for all progress and conquests is consigned to a small number" ... "Thanks to the centralisation by which it can organise and co-ordinate these fleeting outbreaks of passion and discontent, Syndicalism is able to substitute conscious and continuous action."^78

173 G.Harvey, Industrial Unionism & the Mining Industry (Edinburgh), pp.24-30.
175 P.Gaskell, Artisans and Machinery (1836), p.291.
176 Fabian Ware, The Worker & his Country, (1912), p.viii.
178 L.Jouhaux at 1913 TUC, p.258.
In other words, there was a sense in which Labour leaders were always allies of conservative and progressive members of the ruling orders - in that they stood as barriers to both organised and unorganised unrest. This "disruption" was the enemy of Trade Unionism as it was the essence of Syndicalism: this is brought out in the Enquiry in Yorkshire and the East Midlands, which said of the shop stewards, that they had been

"brought about primarily by the War legislation, but a feeling had evidently existed prior to the War that some closer touch and a greater measure of local control was needed than is possible under the existing Trade Union rules that impose Central Executive control."179

Within the unions themselves the belief in a common rule, and the certainty of rank and file militants and officials that the other party was being disloyal to this common rule, was enough on its own to make communication difficult, and, since both could anyway work at their own levels of the organisation, unnecessary. The syndicalist ideal in Britain was of centralisation, and militants more often than not worked for an accretion of power in the hands of officials which they were later to regret. Again, disputes over central or local control often had motives which were only tenuously connected with demands for self-government by the rank and file.180

The conflict between Syndicalists and Collectivists - indeed the "bitter hatred and contempt" which Clay found abroad ,181 found


181 Clay, op. cit., p.172.
the possessing classes solidly behind the "Collectivists" - not because a section of the working-class was dedicated to permanent revolution and cumulative destruction, but because they saw in such a suggestion, such a notion, a challenge not merely to their property but to the ideology on which they based social domination. Better by far that a socialistic state own property than that the producers have a title to their enterprise solely by virtue of their activity within it.

Indeed, for a period in the unrest, it looked as if the old order might not simply be besieged and possibly modified, but overthrown:

"In January, 1910, while there were at least 300,000 Transport Workers eligible to be members of a Union or Unions, less than 100,000 were organised. (These figures do not include Railwaymen or Tramwaymen). These men were animated by no single purpose; they had not been taught (except by an obscure revolutionary propaganda) their great unity of interest. They saw dimly and vaguely that machines were taking their place. They recognised that the army of unemployed, ever at the disposal of the employing class, was inexorably growing. They watched their old spirit of independence bow before the employers' will, and the men who were exceptionally well organised, and who were enjoying relatively good conditions, were reluctant to attempt an improvement because of the fear of unemployment or of a defeat. Then came the Federation, which appealed to their imagination. For this the workers had long waited, some thought in vain - 'Fewer unions and more unity.' "182

A similar tendency might have been discovered in Hobhouse: his self-determination was self-determination without the state. The vote itself became qualitative, and not quantitative for Hobhouse.

"The right of the individual to vote enables all the 'interests' to make themselves felt; and by interests we mean not merely the selfish desires of a class or combination, but all that touches the feeling, the imagination, the enthusiasm of any important group of voters." \(^{183}\)

Groups held together by common interest based on shared emotion - this if not so far from the separatist libertarian class-conscious self-directing workers' groups - anathema to state socialists and Liberals alike. This, in Hobhouse, is made the less startling because he conceived of such a community as being a possible and natural development from the existing state - but Hobhouse's is a kind of English Syndicalism without class-consciousness. The industrial democracy which would end

"the Labourist idea of the workers remaining brick and straw holding fixtures subject to the whims of a parasitical bureaucracy outside and above production" \(^{184}\)

was intended to end not only the squabbles of leaders of different grades, but delegation in general.

A case based on the thesis that if the class state were replaced by the bureaucratic state, then the subordination of the worker would merely be continued under different terms, with the voter encouraged to cast his vote for the new oppression as he had for the old - this did not permit of the customary argument by Lindsay and others:


"Men to be sure will resent decisions of the state which hurt, or which they think hurt, their interests. But this attitude will be influenced by the consideration whether the state is acting, however mistakenly, as the representative of the common interest or as an instrument of class interests. In other words, a state can undertake a far-reaching program of social reform and preserve democracy only if the character of its actions is such that it is absolved from the charge that it is acting as an instrument of sectional interests."\textsuperscript{185}

That part of the rank and file which contended before 1914 that state action, whatever its motive, diminished the free activity of its constituents, and that common interest in a class state could only be a tactical withdrawal to prepared positions, could not accept the Labour Party's explanation of a neutral state, or a class, or "class-mixed" state performing neutral acts - especially in view of its campaign against the unions.

There was indeed enough truth in Barnes's statement that where labour was most strongly "politically organised ... there has been the least disorder." Disorder and militancy, disorder and self-government, are not synonymous, however: when Barnes went on to say

"We do not want strikes of any sort; I was going to say we do not want them any more than anyone else, but we do not want them so much as anybody else,"\textsuperscript{186}

the desire to avoid suffering and distress demanded necessarily a policy of non-violence on both sides of industry. The conviction, however,


\textsuperscript{186} G.N.Barnes, House of Commons Debates, 22.8.11, cols. 2316 and 2319.
"that the creating force is the workmen of the world, and we do not stand for ourselves in this matter, but for the whole community", could not accept the surrender of the strike and the effect of its confrontation on workers and employers. When John Turner of the Shop Assistants proposed that

"our place is really outside, creating our own position, which shall undermine and finally topple over the institutions they (capitalist interests) now represent because we are not strong enough to make institutions of our own to take their place," he was not so much restating the Cégétiste anarchist case as registering a profound dissatisfaction, implicit, to be sure, with labour organisations.

Trade Unions, however opportunistic, would always attract radicals and militants - even if it were a case of seeing "avocations of peace pursued under conditions of war," - for the conditions of war were still in existence. The strike, however closely tied to apparently minor demands, was still a typically proletarian activity -

"I based the morale of the producers not on an aesthetic education transmitted by the middle class, but on the feelings developed by the struggles of the workers against the masters."

Sorel went on to praise the dichotomous aspect of social relationships opened up in strikes, which

"separate(s) the interests and the different ways of thinking of the two groups of wage-earners - the foremen, clerks, engineers, etc., as contrasted with the workmen who alone go on strike -


188 ibid., p.272.

much better than the daily circumstances of life do; it then becomes clear that the administrative group has a natural tendency to become a little aristocracy."  

In practice, however, the educative value of strikes was limited: after 1926, as Ben Turner said "From now on I preach nothing but Peace in Industry". It was not practicable to avoid petty bourgeois modes of thought by secession from bourgeois society: not only capitalism, but all scientifically based societies, "tend à produire une structure de la société qui va au devant de tels procédés de pensée" (empiricism). It is more realistic to suggest that the problem tackled by the "syndicalising" workers is closer to Macpherson's:

"How can the debasing society be changed by those who have themselves been debased by it ... The debased people are, by definition, incapable of reforming themselves en masse."  

The official answer was to centralise, develop a strong leadership, and maintain the independence and autonomy of unions in an illusory and ostrich-like attempt to persuade members that the autonomy and independence of unions corresponded to their own individual independence and autonomy.

In fact, pressures towards compromise and integration into the existing system of subordination were reinforced both by the structural development of the unions (maintaining a subordination of

190 G. Sorel, Reflections on Violence, (1916), pp. 39 and 143.  
191 Scanlon, op. cit., p. 105. (quoted previously).  
the rank and file), and the separation of leaders from the aspirations of the mass. So long as unions were protective, defensive and reactive, the escape of individual officials through union office from insecurity and subordination appeared as a miniature but indefinitely repeatable victory for the working class. This arithmetic - social acceptance and success of labour leaders, awards of increases by conciliation - was certainly opportunist and gradualist. Its reformism aided not only its members but their class opponents. There is an element here of actuarial trickery, however: the social peace and harmony achieved by the central leaders did not necessarily transform the lives of the rank and file. The coming to positions of authority of labour leaders did not necessarily increase the authority and responsibility of individual workers. No amount of social reforms could provide the unskilled worker with the security and status of the skilled, or the skilled with that of the administrator. A new labour aristocracy had emerged, more firmly in control than the late nineteenth century one - but with more influence on the capitalist system and concerned to satisfy more pseudo-interests.

The unrest showed that his aristocracy proposed to maintain a "representative hierarchy", excluding self-government and diminishing the role of spontaneous activity and organisation. After the war, Mellor wrote that

"Without a policy, without a coherent aim, ill-coordinated and frowned upon by the Constitutionalists, the movement for direct action is growing."194

194 W. Mellor, Direct Action, (1920), p.139.
This sounds less a hopeful announcement than a confession of multiple defeat: but there was yet in the post-war labour movement a touching belief that the guarantee of theoretical purity was impotence.

After four years of war

"even the British worker is beginning to realise his proletarian status. British tanks in George Square to terrorise the Clyde workers, British troops to break the power of a Belfast soviet - these were portents which it needed no Joseph to interpret."195

The ideal of liberal democracy - individual self-realisation and complete social harmony - was being replaced in rank and file movements, and the CPGB, by the nightmare of liberal economists - a capitalist collapse.

Chapter Eight

"This is the final, the decisive struggle ..."

In this chapter we analyse Tom Mann's contribution to the unrest. It is argued that he attempted to produce or articulate a global ideology embodying his own experience in the labour movement. This eclectic justification of militancy did correctly identify the interests of liberal democracy with the development of monopoly capitalism. However, Mann's use of theory condemned him to an aggressive tailism, depending in the last resort on the level of consciousness attained by particular groups of workers amongst whom he was organising. Thus he was constantly in a position of aggressive tailism in the most intense demonstrations of class struggle.

In addition, he did not conceive of the necessity for a workers' democracy and state to replace the bourgeois democracy and state. This led him to conflate government and state, (workers') democracy and freedom. His theory thus reflected the inadequacies and failings of the unrest itself, though for all that he was one of those who earliest grasped intuitively the part the trade union struggle was playing in creating class consciousness.

In considering the impact of the unrest on the Socialist left in Britain, two problems are clear. First is the shifting and incomplete basis of the Marxism of the Marxists. Marx's work was to set out a theory of commodity and capitalist production whose usefulness lay partly in presenting methodological tools of analysis, partly in "guiding threads" of hypothesis. However,

1 For an interpretation and analysis in these terms, see J. Witt-Hansen. Historical Materialism, vol.1. The Method, the Theories (Copenhagen, 1960), e.g. pp.109-110.
as analysts the British Marxists stood on the periphery of the international movement. The main effect of the lack of such a process which would enable theorists to anticipate developments, let alone direct them, was to encourage an opportunist immersion in mass activity, or administration, and, at the other extreme, sectarianism. It is not suggested that much theoretical activity alone would have produced a revolution, or even a mass Marxist party, but that a greater ease and understanding in the use of the Marxist dialectic might have made the growth of Marxist Socialism in Britain less a history of sects and of a rapid inflation and deflation of a popular movement.

This deficiency was seen at the time clearly enough, and can to some extent be explained with reference to the socialist nationalisms in the Second International, to the difficulty of obtaining a clear view of Marx's place in socialist theory and his special contributions to the destruction of old schools of socialism, and to the magnitude of the task facing a small Marxist group in Britain and the Empire.

Secondly, there are a number of hypotheses, presented as criticisms of the British left by Lenin and his colleagues in the earliest Comintern Congresses and documents of the NILU, drawing attention both to the tactical and theoretical weakness of the movement.

In the main, these were criticisms not of British socialists' perception of the trade unions' role in developing class consciousness, but of their failure to use a dialectical approach to the problem of

the state. Briefly, it may be said that militants before 1914 had conceived of complete freedom without the state emerging after the overthrow of the liberal bourgeois state - or even after the overthrow of specific liberal bourgeois governments. This democracy, whether of bourgeois or workers, seemed either itself to be freedom, or else freedom seemed unattainable with the erection of a workers' state democracy.

These confusions encouraged wild hopes for the immediate dissolution of the state after revolution, and discouraged the formation of a revolutionary party. They produced disillusion when this semi-anarchist vision receded - and when its impracticality became clear. Many in reaction rejected a proletarian democratic state and re-identified bourgeois democracy with freedom, though they were still unable to define as "freedom" the monopoly capitalism developed under the protection of the liberal democratic state. A smaller number, Mann among them, accepted Lenin's strictures set forth in State and Revolution and Left-Wing Communism: an infantile disorder.

The unrest itself showed how far distant a large part of the industrial proletariat was either from organisation, militant leadership, or socialist consciousness. Thus it presented itself as a challenge to the Marxists to supply these deficiencies - a challenge which did indeed have a response, but which, predictably, changed theory relatively little, and more surprisingly had little effect on propaganda and tactics. When Lenin said that "Anarchism
was often a sort of punishment for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement,∗
he was effectively pointing out that a movement against opportunism, against the detail if not the principle of conciliation could be dominated by those ideas of federalism, sectional autonomy and apolitical organisation which would leave the movement vulnerable, and in any case resembled, under radical guise, the ideas of the older trade unionists.

The anarchist society did indeed appear as more creative and integrative than any form of socialism with the state, but it was an indulgence to believe that it was immediately attainable. This belief in turn encouraged sporadic and unreflecting activity in which activity itself - rather than absence of restraint - seemed the substance of anarchism, and not only its only practicable, but its only desirable, form.

Of the period 1910-14, Lenin wrote that

"Bolshevism struggled against petty-bourgeois evolutionism, which smacks of, or borrows something from, anarchism, and which differs in all essentials from the conditions and requirements of the sustained proletarian struggle."†

There are, in fact, a number of "struggles" going on simultaneously, and on different time scales:

"Capitalism inevitably leaves to Socialism a heritage of old trade and craft distinctions among the workers created in the course of centuries, and trade unions which only very slowly and in the course of years can and will develop into broader, industrial unions having much less of the craft union about them."

4 ibid., p.17.
5 ibid., p.33.
Already in these two processes - of Bolsheviks against pettybourgeois, and the gradual withering of craft particularism - there is a complex model emerging.

If indeed there is no necessity for "new, fantastic forms of labour organisations," the movement must rely on an ability to spot "a national crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters", one in which, to ensure revolution "it is necessary that the exploiters should not be able to hire and rule in the old way." In fact, it is partly conscious action, partly the internal development of imperialism itself which will "bring the masses right up to the real, decisive, last and great revolutionary struggle."

In considering the career and political development of Tom Mann, one is brought up against considerations of the rates of development of theory and propaganda, the global scale of socialist development and monopoly capitalism by 1914, and problems concerning the influence of craft and petty-bourgeois thought. Mann moved from Henry George and Temperance to the CPGB by way of the SDF/SDP, the ILP and National Democratic League. On the way he passed through the Church of England, Syndicalism and the BSP. In Britain alone, he was connected at least with the ASE/AEU, the Workers' Union, Havelock Wilson's seamen, the National Union of Police and Prison

6 ibid., p.36
7 ibid., p.65
8 ibid., p.76. On the formative influences on Lenin in this period and the development of his thought see T.T.Hammond, Lenin on Trade Unions and Revolution, 1893-1917, (NY, 1957).
Officers, and the National Minority Movement. Mann in fact made the voyage from the Marxism of the SDF to that of the Comintern - albeit with some reluctance in discussion with Lenin, - and the influences on him were precisely those which *Left Wing Communism* condemned - the IWW, French Syndicalism and anarchism. In studying Mann's work, then, one is concerned both with Lenin's hypotheses on the direction of Socialist activity and his analysis of British shortcomings, as well as the general statements on the preconditions for a socialist revolution.

Despite the impetus of events which Mann claimed had determined changes in his theoretical approach - the Broken Hill strike, the reading of E.J.B. Allen's *Revolutionary Unionism*, and the trip to Paris to meet the leaders of the CGT in 1910 - one is immediately struck by the continuity of his ideas. Mann in fact tended to deal in common currency, to adopt a broad intellectual basis for the numbers this would attract rather than its immediate applicability to, or penetration of, a complex political situation. Apart from a reluctance to sacrifice any short-term gains, to attack or hurt individuals, or lose the support of any members of the working-class, Mann's ideas assumed importance more in terms of changing events and the changing relation between traditional ideas and new situations.

9 On Tom Mann, see the pamphlet by Dona Torr, *Tom Mann* (1936). Dona Torr, *Tom Mann and His Times*, vol. 1. (1956). Two further selections of Dona Torr's material were prepared by the "Our History" Group: *Tom Mann and His Times 1890-1892* (No. 26-27, Summer Autumn 1962) and *Tom Mann in Australasia 1902-1909* (No. 38, Summer 1965). By Tom Mann himself there are two autobiographical works, *Memoirs* (1923), and *From Single Tax to Syndicalism* (1913). Both of these books were prepared for publication by associates of Mann, who must bear some responsibility for any inaccuracies, while in the case of the earlier book a section was later repudiated by Mann on the grounds that he had not written it. (pp. 69-76).
than of developments in the ideas themselves. Loth to divide the movement, Mann was always reluctant to admit that differences of theory and divisions among leaders could conceal or reflect differences of objective and indeed incompatibility of aims.

In a sense, the 1889 Dock Strike with its ad hoc organisation and administration, the communard enthusiasm and social solidarity of the strike and the strike committee drew Mann throughout his life to spontaneous, populist movements, a heroism and improvisation springing from mass action which bridged differences in theory and broke down the frontiers of institutions. Though this might encourage "tailism" and opportunism, it meant that so long as working-class protest was directed towards such policies pursued by their leaders, and so long as there was an active movement and determination to restrict the customary rights of employers, Mann could justly claim to be in step with the workers as they attacked the sectionalism of their organisations and the exploitation of their masters. He was lost, however, when the class appeared divided, or to be developing away from the achievement of a socialist consciousness. Probably this is simply to say that a movement which took what was apparently the line of least resistance could not adhere to any rigorous socialist line. At the same time, however, such closeness to "the masses" - which concept itself presupposed certain kinds of communication flow from formally and informally organised groups - ensured that no socialist student of the grass-roots could fail to see the growth of class-consciousness.
We shall now consider some of the sources of class-consciousness (Marx's pure consciousness) and the ideological forms (or false consciousness) they had assumed during the nineteenth century. There had thus developed an eclectic, radical justification of militancy deeply penetrated by anarchist and idealist notions which was constantly revived and drawn on in new situations of unrest. However novel the unrest, the theory was always of yesterday's impossibilism.

The opposition to conciliation and suspicion of reformist legislation was in a sense one of the oldest attitudes of working-class radicalism. When Mann said in 1899 that conciliation boards were "palliatives for evils produced by a Capitalist system which was itself marked out for destruction", the significance lay in the fact that his later study of compulsory arbitration and conciliation in Australia had already been conditioned by such statements in Britain. It should also be pointed out that the attack on conciliation agreements after 1910 by Mann, far from representing a French importation was a continuation of an older policy. In Australia, Mann was kept "up to date" with English news by men like Hyndman - suggesting not that the basis of capitalist development was changing, but that British capitalism was dying of inanition:

"England is behind in almost every way and we are paying dearly now and we shall pay still more dearly in the near future, for the purblind, happy-go-lucky methods of decaying capitalism." "The collapse of British rule in India would mean revolution at home to a certainty."11


11 Hyndman to Tom Mann, 25.2.05, (Tom Mann papers).
Collapse of capitalism through stagnation - or by political defeat and military defeat overseas - this seems to have encouraged some hopes that the weakest link in the chain was Britain itself.

In 1907, Hyndman published in the Melbourne "Socialist" an article on trusts - that "To try to prevent Trusts is sheer ignorance and foolish reaction", "More power to the trusts, therefore, as tending to hasten on the social revolution." The interesting point here is that despite Mann's exposure to French and American propaganda, despite experience of Labour politics in Australia and New Zealand, the imminence of collapse in Britain, the continuing evolution of weaknesses in capitalism, was constantly set before Mann. Confidence in the coming success of a broad-based mass movement after rapid transformation within the capitalist form of society was the basis of Mann's prevision and his theory. Mass organisation of workers was for Mann always to be the vehicle of Socialism and the basis of the future stateless society. The voluntary association, rather than the party programme, the Executive's timetable, was always the favoured organ.

This grass-roots syndicalism long continued to dominate Mann's thinking, - in 1924 he hoped "we shall have the pleasure of witnessing the trade union movement generally travel rapidly in the
direction of COMPLETE WORKERS' CONTROL of all industry."\(^{13}\) Clearly it was possible to adhere to the RILU and Party policy and retain much which was syndicalist in language. Tom Mann seems also to have retained the spirit.

"His observations years ago had made him a Syndicalist, and he had applauded and supported the work of the French Syndicalists. But he had not hesitated to change his line of action when circumstances demanded that he should in the best interests of the revolutionary struggle of the workers."\(^{14}\)

Clearly change of line and change of theory are well-separated: what is important is the direction of the flow of information about the revolutionary struggle - whether this comes from British experience, or a Comintern interpretation, or an international survey of such a struggle.\(^{15}\)

13 Tom Mann himself dated his conversion to Industrial Unionism, or Industrial Syndicalism from his reading of E.J.B. Allen's Revolutionary Unionism! (1909), itself a work relying heavily on TWW sources, but looking both to Roller's anarchism and the First International. The quotation is from All Power, May 1924 (RILU). On the use of "workers' control" as the slogan for an intermediate stage of the socialist revolution, see Leon Trotsky Three Articles on Workers' Control of Production (SIM, 193-): Trotsky claimed that as a slogan "it possesses an enormous significance independent of the degree to which it will actually be realised, if realised at all,"(p.15): by this stage, far from being revolutionary, the aim was simply to win over "the more conservative strata of the proletariat, and neutralise(s) certain groups of the petty-bourgeoisie, especially the technical, administrative, commercial and banking staffs," p.15.

14 J.T. Murphy, RILU First World Congress Report, 1921, p.15. Tom Mann's resistance to Lenin in 1920-21 and his subsequent explanations that all of Syndicalism was contained in Communism, Communism itself being a change of description rather than a change of theory or recognition of error, implies that Tom Mann himself was aware of the continuity in his development.

15 On the difficulties and inconsistencies involved in Comintern policy in Britain, see Jack Jones, Unfinished Journey (1937), Margaret McCarthy, Generation in Revolt (1953) and Douglas Hyde, I Believed (1950).
Mann himself was "a British Nationalist" in that he retained a special confidence in the British workers, and in that it was unwise to draw attention to foreign sources of ideas: E.J.B. Allen triumphantly concluded in The Syndicalist "So, after all, sabotage is English". Indeed, for Mann the use of foreign methods and examples had a two-fold usefulness: Mann could draw attention both to the internationalism of the working-class movement, and to the centrality and specificity of the development of the British movement. This tactic was additionally justified in Britain by the instant reaction of supporters of the employers to foreign movements. For instance, soon after Mann's arrival in England in 1910, the Despatch ran a cartoon "Enter General Strike" -

"'General Strike' comes to take over the command of the trade union forces. He may, however, find a new general on the other side - namely, General Lock-out, assisted by the non-unionist 'friendlies'."

The process here was one of "borrowing back" from France, or the BSI or wherever, of ideas once current, and refurbishing these to describe existing conditions. The basic changes in theoretical

16 Newcastle Evening News, 25.10.93 (Tom Mann Papers). This was a comment at the time of Tom Mann's announcement that he was considering ordination in the Church of England - the best press reception he was to have for a statement for years. The move itself was considered radical enough - the Yorkshire Evening Post (5.10.93) commented "Yet we have had coloured bishops; why not a Labour Bishop?"

17 The Syndicalist, vol. i. No. 9, October, 1912.

18 Daily Despatch 16.9.10. For all the talk of Syndicalism being a foreign importation, and much as this fear of foreign socialist agitators (often allied with racialism and anti-semitism) was intended to encourage a feeling of disgust in British workers at anything smacking of alien origin - employers were quick themselves to think up "foreign" reactions to strikes and revolution.
penetration if they exist at all are barely perceptible. In 1935 Mann said:

"I declare the time has now arrived when the workers of Britain should take definite action to replace Capitalism by Communism by peaceful means if possible but by FORCE IF NECESSARY. The British Empire rests on the basis of systematic thieving, and the Police and the Army and all the Fighting forces of the Capitalist State exist to compel the Workers to submit themselves to this universal robbery."

The question which arises from such statements is why Mann should have remained in a Marxist party when so many of his contemporaries had forsaken the left, and why Mann, who had always had some contempt for theory, especially when it divided the workers, should see in the CPGB the inheritor of the BSP and trade union left.

Mann was unusual in that, beginning with a craft union and skilled job, he became rapidly alienated from "aristocratic" attitudes and the hierarchy of labour and division of the working-class these justified.

"It is the case that I had a full measure of personal pride at Britain's industrial achievements, and I was keen on the advancement of machinery but mentally muddled as to its alround effects until I joined the SDF".

Mann achieved disalienation not by achieving position or esteem, but by constant political and trade union organisation: the avoidance of permanent commitment to a parliamentary or professional role or objective enabled him to select those parts of the movement remaining closest to rank and file militancy, least likely to compromise, and to find that a change of objective encouraged a change of attitudes to

19 Tom Mann, 30.9.33, Typescript statement.

20 Tom Mann to Dona Torr, 26.5.37 (Tom Mann Papers). On Tom Mann's work in the ASE in the 1890s, see G.N.Barnes, From Workshop to War Cabinet, (1924).
those of an occupational stratum in another class.

This "free-lancing" meant that Mann was forever starting in situations where organisation was in a primitive state, situations of low articulation and high aspiration, a high degree of exploitation and estrangement from remedial state action. In fact, it seems as if Tom Mann simply stayed with a theory and a part of the movement which others forsook. The "directness" of action which he urged required a confidence and unanimity of leaders and rank and file - he accounted for the failure of the General Strike for which he had been working for at least fifteen years "firstly, the wrong leaders were at the head of it, and, secondly, the workers did not fold arms at the same time."21 Solidarity and determined leaders had been Mann's proposals for over forty years in working-class action.

One may make a similar point about Mann's sympathy for anarchism. Anarchists were active in the early 1880s - Kropotkin was speaking at the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club in 1882 - and the Rose Street Social Democratic Working Men's Club was active in 1878.22 Mann in 1896 identified himself "with those who hold that an intelligent community should be their own government, if they require a government at all ...", and yet he saw no difficulty of calling

22 Handbills, Tom Mann Papers. The implication that emigré groups and later on socialist immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe did carry and preserve anarchist and socialist ideas is born out by recent work on Jewish groups, with close contacts with Anarchist bodies - as in Leeds - and trade unionists, and Russian exiles. The German socialists, like Bernstein and Kautsky seem to have been less close to the British movement, though Bernstein was impressed by the Fabians.
at the same time for "the nationalisation of the railways and waterways of our country."\(^\text{23}\) Workers' control became, and remained, the simplest, and most direct, way of combining nationalisation with self-"government".

Thus we see Mann from the 1890s confused as to the relation between state and proletarian state, democracy and freedom, his confusion deriving from anarchism. Again, we see Mann concerned above all to organise and lead-from-below a mass movement - minimising it is true the role of theory but stressing the possibility of achieving class-consciousness through organisation.

Mann bears the intellectual marks of his early reading and his activity clearly enough. The ILP pamphlet he wrote in 1895, in which he asked

"Who, having had A RUN DOWN THE CLYDE, has not blushed with shame, in part because of the shocking stench, and in part at the dirty incompetence of those responsible for making of the Clyde a main sewer for Glasgow and other towns,"\(^\text{24}\)

made a direct reference to the passage in Fors Clavigera on Glasgow. We find Mann poised between Kropotkin and Kautsky - with an admixture of Christian Socialism and Ruskin. Mann was in one sense always a Syndicalist, basing his Socialism on organisation through working-class bodies which would administer directly and humanely without coercion or exclusionism. This survived the Russian Revolution:

\(^\text{23}\) Tom Mann, The Socialists' Programme (Speech at North Aberdeen, 25.4.96), pp.7 and 14. Mann's "nationalisation" could perhaps best be rendered as "communalisation".

\(^\text{24}\) The Programme of the ILP and the Unemployed (Clarion Pamphlet No. 6, 1895), p.5.
the "essence of Syndicalism" was, Mann said, "the universal establishment of Workers' Councils, and the universal formation of Shops' Committees." 25

Mann's reputation for volatility - "A fury of emotionalism would impel him to blind endeavour to which he would give heroic sacrifice" - is the style and even the programme of the man:

"Sound at heart, self-sacrificing and courageous, he has never deserted the flag, even if he has sometimes attempted to plant it in impossible places."

It is not then clear which "flag" this can be, for Tillett went on to claim that "his uncertainty of aim, bordering on the erratic, was, and is still, a tragedy." 26 In fact, it seems more likely that consistency, rather than changeability, marked Mann's ideas - the organisations changed, the ideas more slowly and less radically.

Ryan described Connolly in 1908 in similar terms:

"All was explicit or implicit in the programme and teaching of 1896, when he founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party. The object of the party is simply restated, but in more detail, as Industrial Unionism, at later stages of his career." 27

26 Ben Tillett, Memories and Reflection (1931). The charges that Tom Mann lacked the patience and stability to consolidate organisation have been exaggerated. Certainly he disliked administration, and was not a skillful negotiator: but his loyalty to organisations and people with whom he was associated was legendary, and what he lacked of the clerkly virtues he compensated for by abilities equally important in organisation, concern for the welfare of the members, kindliness and probity.

27 W.P.Ryan, The Irish Labour Movement (Dublin, 1919), p.163. For a rather more forced attempt to interpret Connolly's thought as always "orthodox" and consistent, see C.Desmond Greaves, The Life and Times of James Connolly (1961). On Connolly's historical-descriptive account of the development of industrial unionism (golden age - Trade Union amelioration - Industrial Unionism, the revolutionary stage), see Ryan, op. cit., p.168.
It may well be a criticism of Mann's analysis that it failed to penetrate the morphology of capitalism, and sought to change in mechanical terms the description of the remedy (Industrial Unionism, Syndicalism, General Strike, sabotage) instead. As Menger said, Hyndman's movement marked "the revival of socialist ideas originated by earlier English theorists", 28 - old ideas and aims are enshrined in new organisations. The Trade Unions, for instance, might be given by Mann the ethical task of "the perfection of human nature, and insistence on the right of culture for all instead of for the few, and teaching men to appreciate the refinements of life." 29 Here in 1891 is an echo of what the CGT was to propose ten years later.

Similarly, during the "unrest" Kenny could say that Mann "in advocating Industrial Unionism ... is simply following the line of least resistance." 30 His continuity, blending internationalism with a national vulgar Marxist socialism, established for Mann a tradition in which advice and direction from the Comintern simply replaced that from the BSI. "L'ouvrierisme et l'occidentalisme étroits demeurent les traits caractéristiques." 31 Haupt's description of the components of the Second International demonstrates two points at which Mann's internationalism diverged from the pre-1914 version:


29 Tom Mann, 1890-1892 op. cit., p.32. Reprinted from the Bradford Observer, 1891. Tom Mann even at this stage, though he still accepted some kind of state nationalisation was able to say "I do not concern myself much about Parliamentary parties." op. cit., p.32 (Yorkshire Factory Times, 28.6.91).


31 G. Haupt, op. cit., p.81
Mann had connections with the more anarchist elements in Western Europe, and with Socialist groups outside Europe. Again, his labourism was itself not strictly national: "the social revolution, that is, the General Strike, will be an international one" said Roller and Mann himself had seconded a Socialist League motion in 1886 for "simultaneous and forcible action" in support of communard action.

The General Strike could operate equally well in industrial and agrarian societies: again, significantly, it was an operation which would unite Socialists, Trade Unionists and Anarchists. Mann urged the unity of all in subordination or achieving awareness of subordination. "I must state that I am not, and do not expect to be, an Anarchist," but "Non-Parliamentarians they are, but Socialists all the same." Not only was this blend of anti-parliamentarism a reasoned reaction to frustrated parliamentary hopes, but was "the common currency of labour movements in many lands." It was a common factor not only in countries just beginning trade union activity, but in those countries like Australia where transport workers, isolated mining communities and agricultural workers were searching for a basis of unity to resist the pressure of international pressure.

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32 A. Roller, The Social General Strike (1912), p.11. Tom Mann did not believe there would be a universal general strike, but that international sympathetic action - already a feature of the Australasian movement - would increase, achieving greater co-ordination.


capitalism - a pressure equally menacing to small farmers as to the urban proletariat.

Mann hoped that unions, as the AEU, would "bargain with the firms for a price for the whole job, and the union become responsible for supplying all labour, and paying all wages" - a suggestion by itself appropriate to movements of both high and low articulation.\(^{36}\)

"Syndicalists are trade unionists who have no confidence in the organised state and therefore aim at bringing about Social and Industrial changes by economic organisation, and the control of industry by those engaged in the various industries ..."\(^{37}\)

The exhaustion of the Shop Stewards Movement by 1921, and the destruction in the war of, for instance, the Jewish libertarian movement which had had close links with the Socialist League, a firm belief in the strike to destroy the sweating system and determination to make the necessary point to English unionists that Jewish workers would strike, did not isolate Mann as the shock to internationalism of the war itself.\(^{38}\) Mann had, after all, avoided in his travels the isolation in exile of many of the Russians who had come to England. He himself had been close to anarchist circles in London.

\(^{36}\) What We Want and Why, by Mrs. Snowden et al. (1922), p. 114. This was a common suggestion in France before the war - cf. Pierre -A. Carcanagues Le Mouvement Syndicaliste Reformiste en France (Paris), (1913), p. 102.

\(^{37}\) What the workers want, op. cit., p. 122.

\(^{38}\) R. Rocker, The London Years (1956). Rocker establishes the close links between Socialist League members (including Kitz, whose motion Mann had supported in 1886) and Jewish unionists, but "the Libertarian movement among the Jewish workers in Britain died not because its forces were spent. It fell victim of the First World War, when it had reached its peak." p. 35.
in the 1890s, and these anarchists had fostered the notion of a general strike, discussed it not only with Jewish immigrant revolutionaries, but with those SDFers in touch with Russian exiles planning direct action and debating such matters in their own parties.39 Hardly surprising, then, that the Marxism of the Germans and Austrians and the theoretical debates of the BSI and its critics came to Mann diffused, supplemented by a variety of national experiences, organisers and socialist elder statesmen.

Labour, co-operation and science were to be the basis of Mann's society, as for Joseph Lane:

"After the Church, the army more directly representative of the monarch's power, the mainstay of law and order, and after it, the centralised State uniting in itself all the reactionary forces required to enable it to govern, such are the natural products of authority" ... "the free association of groups of workers (call them Towns, Villages, Communes or what you will) holding the land and capital in common, working it on true co-operative principles, federated with each other for mutual assistance, every member working according to his ability and receiving according to his needs, man and woman being then equally free, would form connections through love alone."40

The ethical basis of Mann's socialism was such that the re-erection of proletarian dictatorship in Russia by the Bolsheviks did not appear to Mann to be necessary. So long as super- and infra-structure in Mann's schema had a relation only of economic exploitation and domination, he must be closer to the anarchists.


40 Joseph Lane, An Anti-Statist, Communist Manifesto. (International Revolutionary Library, No. 1, 1887) pp.3 and 14. On the early history of schemes of nationalisation in which this pamphlet is discussed, see E. Eldon Barry, Nationalisation in British Politics (1965).
than to parliamentary socialist gradualists. For Mann, crack the exploiting superstructure and one advanced to freedom - not to a workers' state.

Representative government for Mann as for Kropotkin was "fonctionnarisme à l'extrême": work was natural, wages exploitation. All revolutions started with the people, and relied on a "free agreement". The perfect society has no government, but only an administration, no laws but only obligations, no punishments, but means of correction: like Bakunin, Mann accepted Marx's critique of society, but not his methodology or the critique of the Gotha Programme. Many of his ideas come from pre-Marxist sources, or those so starkly and simply anti-state or anti-capitalist that they can be lumped together, or so have been, as anarchist. Mann, in refusing to recognise the historical and theoretical divisions between socialists and anarchists was neither less nor more vulgarly Marxist than many "orthodox" followers of Marx before 1914. Mann escaped, avoided, that withering of confidence which led many to the position where

42 ibid., p. 65 et seq.
43 Eugene Pyskuri, The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael A. Bakunin (Milwaukee, 1955) Bakunin to Weitling, quoted p. 30. The debt of Bakunin to Marx, and his desire to include the peasants in revolution because they were destructive and barbaric - and because "Peasants hate all governments, and only tolerate them from slyness" (p. 75) - shows how hard it was to determine what was Marxist and what pure self-indulgent invention in socialist theories even during Marx's lifetime.
"Parlare seriamente della rivoluzione come di un problema imminente appariva assurdo, o almeno poco comprensibile, non solamente ai revisionisti, ma anche ai marxisti 'ortodossi.'\textsuperscript{44}

Man, by concentrating on those areas of most rapid development or greatest stagnation - those areas of greatest discontinuity - was constantly bringing the masses \textit{right up to the real, decisive, last and great revolutionary struggle}\textsuperscript{45} - the strike, the first organisation, the workers' commune, the strike against employers backed by coercive state power.\textsuperscript{46}

So at least it seemed: however, to anticipate and analyse the development of capitalism, to turn the potential power of the working class into actual power, to develop a proletarian ideology proof against those rival ideologies denying the uniqueness and historicity of the industrial proletariat - this was an even harder task. The problems were brought out in Mann's theory of the state.

"The Syndicalist aimed at depriving the state of its power to tyrannise, and for the workers to secure their own freedom ...\textsuperscript{47}:

so long as the class character of the government was that of the employers, opposition to the state was inserted as part of trade union struggle. And "How very clever and how very dangerous our governing classes are!! Worse than open fighting", Hyndman described the philanthropy touched up with thoughts of reform of the Guildhall.

\textsuperscript{44} G.Haupt, Lenin, i bolscevichi e la Seconda Internazionale (1905-14) in Rivista Storica del Socialismo, No. 29, Sept.-Dec. 1966, p.19

\textsuperscript{45} Lenin, \textit{What is to be done?}, op. cit., p.76.

\textsuperscript{46} On the changing perceptions of authority, in terms of changing ideology and power structures, see R.Bendix, Work and Authority in Industry (NY 1956) and R.Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (1959).

\textsuperscript{47} Mann in Labour Monthly, October, 1922, From Syndicalism to Communism.
However, as the Labour Party rapidly slipped out of the hands of ex-manual workers and itself provided recruits to government service, and as the splits on the war were repaired by the exercise of constitution-framing, and demands for nonintervention in Russia, it became harder to argue for the complete destruction of the state to follow defeat of class enemies. During the unrest, official "conspiracy theories" of the movement were produced to justify speedy repression and stop the movement spreading, and this helped to maintain confusion between bourgeois state and proletarian state. This postulated a supra-class or neutral state.

"The authorities have now, we understand, received evidence establishing the fact that certain sections of the Communists, the Syndicalists, and the Anarchists share common aims and are working together for one common object, and, in fact, it may be said that the present Labour unrest is almost entirely due to a great conspiracy on the part of these agitators to promote dissatisfaction and resentment among the working-classes." 49

Inflexibility on the part of the government encouraged not only inflexibility of attitude, but of thought on the other side. 50

Just as Mann falls outside Lenin's strictures on opportunist anarcho-syndicalists more by consistency than grasp of theory, it can again be argued that his challenge to the "neutral state" was simply a defensive movement. Insofar as he led the movement and gave it some theorisation, he was showing the workers how soon a movement to deprive employers of their rights would bring their state to

48 Hyndman to Tom Mann, sup. cit.
49 Daily Telegraph, 20.3.12.
50 That is, basically oppositional attitudes might not preclude flexibility in negotiation, but they were more likely to do so if no concessions were offered.
their aid, and how quickly a united front of propertied interests could be formed, around the bourgeois state.

Press reaction showed strikers how their activity in a free market estranged them from the defenders of that market, and those who profited from it:

"Syndicalism is corrupting the citizenship of the working man, for it is persuading him that justice is a fraud and that law is a tyranny, that all property belongs to him, and that he has the right to enforce his interests by violence" ... "To foil these attempts will require firmness and courage in the Government and the Magistracy, and also in all good citizens" ... "it is of vital importance that the Army should be secured from the insidious advances and plausible doctrines of the able and unscrupulous men who are in charge of the movement." 51

The Syndicalists saw, rightly, that the Morning Post at least accepted the consequences of some Syndicalist leaven in a demand for union recognition, for example. The essential point was that the Syndicalists and Socialists themselves, if they were planning, or expecting, mass revolution, should not mistake trade union demands for conversion to revolution, or a cynical indifference to government for a demand to smash the bourgeois state, still less a practical attempt to abolish the State. It is probably true that soldiers who refused to fire on strikers would do so not because they were aware of the class struggle, but because they were so convinced of a unity of interests between the classes. So long as the government did not again shoot down strikers, the process was one of acquainting the propertied groups with the modesty, discipline and restraint of

51 The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 5, June 1912, quoting the Morning Post.
their workers, often in despair and under provocation. On the other hand, a show of force was clearly more desirable than counter-revolution, conciliation than the risk of expropriation. But it must be hard to count the relative costs of these alternatives, or indeed to perceive the nature of the alternative while it is still in reserve: in view of this, it is hard to say that the examples of government action and attitude could "educate" a mass of trade unionists in the essential features of the state. The plea of Grayson, "Don't shoot; if you must shoot, shoot high and you may hit an aeroplane" nicely illustrates the tentative oscillation between defence and offence of the militants. The drama of the trial of Mann over his "Don't Shoot" speech, with the judge quoting the manual of military law's definition of "enemy" to include all armed mutineers, armed rebels, armed rioters and pirates' under the 1797 act, obscured the fact that Mann had established a connection between the use of force against strikers and the legal basis of the maintenance of property rights. His anarcho-syndicalism, however, prevented him from an historical and dialectical analysis of that coercion he abstracted as "the state's".

52 The Syndicalist went as far as it dared in encouraging militant self-defence; after Tom Mann's imprisonment, the comment was "Now, as in the past, we say 'Don't Shoot'. But if the workers have weapons forced into their hands, let them use them in self-defence; those rifles not to be used against their mothers' sons of the proletariat, but against their exploiters; as an instrument of emancipation, and not a tool for subjection." The Syndicalist vol. i, No. 9, Oct. 1912.

53 Daily Sketch, 25.5.12.

54 Manchester Guardian, 10.5.12.
Mann's sentence did indeed add to the desire of union leaders to make it clear that they would resist to the full the use of troops against their members.\(^{55}\) There was no question, however, of this immediately leading on to the suggestions of men like J. Otto, who on Tower Hill had said in 1893:

"with 200 determined men the City of London could be blown to atoms, and there were thousands of his comrades prepared to be revolutionists today and not to-morrow."\(^{56}\)

Mann's own suggestion was that

"While the army is a caste apart from the rest of the nation, while it is nominally voluntary, we must carry on our 'Don't Shoot' propaganda. But when conscription comes, as it is doing fast, when men will be liable as reservists to be mobilised in order to break their own strikes, like the railwaymen in France were, we will have to change our attitude from a negative one, and call for Sabotage and Insurrection."\(^{57}\)

Mann's attack on militarism, the divergence from the socialist and populist causes of liberal democracy and nationalism was potentially vital propaganda. Indeed, the scale of these considerations was greater than the ISEL could work on. Mann was one of the few attempting to locate the interconnections between the maintenance of property relations within Britain in the growth of military-government-industrial complexes operating above and behind the parliamentary system. These perceptions were only partial, however, and one finds them in Mann only obliquely:

"Liberal Governments have shot men down in Labour disputes and Tory Governments have used the same means to coerce the workers."\(^{58}\)

\(^{55}\) These pre-war developments may account to some extent for the revulsion against intervention in Russia.

\(^{56}\) Tom Mann Papers.


\(^{58}\) ibid., p. 83.
Mann, like many he led, intuitively connected political and economic systems with the growth of a military-industrial complex apparently for use against British workers — but its use against Germany confused him, and drove him back to union organisation apparently without a syndicalist rationale. Contempt for the use of troops predominated in the trade union world:

"My advice to the soldiers of the British Army is not to shoot their unarmed comrades when on strike. That is vile dirty work which should be left to the people who order them to do so."59

On the whole, the feeling was that for either side to use force was immature, out of keeping both with the scale of demands and the responsibility and reformism of the movement. The left had been warned for years against the

"perversity of the idea that it is possible for a minority to carry on a war of violence against an overwhelming majority without being utterly crushed."60

There is something of a confusion in Mann's theory of the syndicalist state: it is probably true to say that he conceived of a proletarian society replacing an historical "state". Allen had put it

"We will build a 'State within a State', to teach their (Trade Unions') members to think every time they enter the yard, mill, or mine: 'This is the place where my fellow-workmen and I are robbed; this is the place that we keep going; this is the place that we ought to own and control'."61

59 R.T. Brownlie, quoted in the Daily Herald, 13.5.12.

60 Hammersmith Socialist Record, May 1892. The point should be made that apart from some insurrectionary surveys of gunsmiths - as witness the one noted by Bernstein - gun-running to Europe (described in Kendall, op. and loc. cit.), and some talk of violence, neither violence nor force was seriously advocated. The Syndicalist advertised air rifles but does not seem to have taken them seriously, - regarding the advocacy of violence or resistance as a more effective index of feeling than its employment would prove to be.

61 The Industrial Syndicalist, No. 5, Nov. 1910, p.12.
Mann's own reading in this period seems to have inclined more to Bergson and Nietzsche than either to Guild theorists of the state or the SPD Marxists, and probably encouraged him to concentrate more on the élan of the movement than its final form.

The Old Bailey Recorder described Syndicalism as a "diabolical system invented by somebody or other for the purpose of promoting a general strike, and apparently to establish a socialistic republic," but Mann's co-operative commonwealth was hardly in this sense a republic. The forward impetus of the movement relied heavily on voluntary action, on the pressure of grievance, and it was in this respect that it most resembled the activities of the CGT, its "violente campagne anti-militariste et antibelliciste dirigée surtout contre la loi de 3 ans." Like the CGT, its attempt to abolish the state led to failures even to secure legal reforms. Opposed to the bourgeois state, it could not legitimate its successor, a proletarian state. In practice, such a movement was likely to become increasingly reformist, diffuse, and vague as to objectives. In the last resort, legal reforms cannot be obtained

"qu'au moyen de décisions législatives, pour des raisons d'ordre social (retraites ouvrières), économique (journée de dix heures) ou de fait (situation des salariés d'État)"

that is, even success in achieving reforms by militancy tends to encourage a concentration on legality, a belief in this instance


64 P-A. Carcanagues, op. cit., p.64.
that the government would back collective contracts allowing the
trade union to pay its members and supervise their work, while the
employers performed the functions of management in all other areas.
In other words, a movement aiming to destroy the state must be
inclined to mistake the class character of the state for its essential
functions - Niederhaltung.

The hollowness of such a programme, arising from its central
utopianism, was to be found in statements like Roller's proposal that
after the general strike

"There will be enough to do for years to remove the memories of
tyranny, the gaols, forts, and the still existing prisons. All
the Roman gallows (for the cross is nothing else) will have to
be torn from the palaces and churches." 65

This Quixotry was translated by Kropotkin in terms of life and death
alternatives:

"Either the State will be destroyed and a new life will begin
in thousands of centres, in the principle of an energetic
initiative of the individual, of groups, and of free agreement;
or else the State must crush the individual and local life, it
must bring with it its wars and internal struggles for the
possession of power, its surface-revolutions which only change
one tyrant for another, and inevitably, at the end of this
evolution - death." 66

These statements of alienation and the apolitical activities they
produced, were fundamentally ethical, 67 displays of the withholding

65 A. Roller, op. cit., p.18.

66 Peter Kropotkin, The State: its historic role. (Freedom Pamphlet
No. 11, 1898), p.42.

67 As for instance Kropotkin's exhortation that "tromper, mentir, intriguer, ruser, c'est t'avilir, te rapétisser, te reconnaître faible d'avance, c'est faire comme d'esclave du harem qui se sent inférieur à son maître." (in La Morale Anarchiste, Paris, 1907, p.32).
of legitimisation and even authentication from the bourgeois state, but also implying a withdrawal from socialism. Shaw proposed this was "Unsocialism carried as near to its logical completeness as any sane man dare carry it." ... "I fully admit and vehemently urge that the State at present is simply a huge machine for robbing and slave-driving the poor by brute force" ... "It is easy to say, Abolish the State; but the State will sell you up, lock you up, blow you up, knock you down, bludgeon, shoot, stab, hang - in short, abolish you, if you lift a hand against it. Fortunately, there is, as we have seen, a fine impartiality about the policeman and the soldier, who are the cutting edge of the State power."68

There is probably a difference between Mann's desire to reproduce the social conditions proposed by the anarchists after the destruction of the liberal democratic state in the social revolution, and the centralisation he sought in the industrial union. But Mann stands ambiguously on the centralising pole of the anarchists and the federalist pole of socialism. Often, indeed, this proposed occupational autonomy begins to look suspiciously like the opportune configurations already produced by British trade union amalgamation. Mann's anarchist connections give to his thought on the state a touch of the powerlessness which must arise in all non-historicist ideologies.69

The unrest, then, seemed to Mann to show that the state and its coercive power, was the enemy of the workers rather than bourgeoisie and monopoly capitalism. The workers thus did not need a state. To an extent, this reflected his experience in Australia, New Zealand, and France. In an article in 1922 he wrote "Learn from America, 68 G.B. Shaw, The Impossibilities of Anarchism (Fabian Tract No. 45, 1893), p.11 et. seq.

69 See S.R. Hartog, op. cit., p.77, on the idea of a surplus of 150 half days work a year by free and direct methods, taken over by Tom Mann.
and equally, or more so, from Russia": belief in the imminence of revolution in Australasia and France was no longer possible. Hyndman had written to him in 1909 that

"no part of Australia is ripe for a revolution just yet and it is not only useless but dangerous to 'bluff' when you know if your hand is called you must lose completely."71

In one sense Mann's organising work to produce a revolution always produced this hint of wistfulness mingled with the achievement.

The abolition of any state, let alone the state, far eluded him.

Pollitt summarised Mann's achievement

"If millions in Britain to-day know phrases such as 'The Boss Class', or 'the need for solidarity and militancy' or 'unity can move the world' it is due to Tom Mann, who made them familiar themes in factory and home."72

But, in the last resort, the building of labour organisations, justifying labourist and pure and simple trade unionism with socialist slogans seemed hope of revolution endlessly deferred - hence the importance of 1917, when a revolution occurred not prematurely but "at last" for Mann. Mann's revolutionism in the end proved stronger than his anarchism.

In 1916 Mann wrote to Kropotkin musing

"Will the Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and Romanoffs be much as they were? Will there be any sensible readjustment of relations re the Balkan States? or will such statists as Briand be in the ascendancy?"

The possibility that the old system which had swallowed the progressive movement of prewar should survive was itself a mockery.

70 Tom Mann in Labour Monthly, loc. cit.

71 Hyndman to Tom Mann 13.8.09, (Tom Mann Papers).

72 Pollitt to Dona Torr, op. cit., p.21.
and critique of the antimilitarism and internationalism Mann had tried to instil into the British unrest, and read into it.

"At present nothing reaches me from France of a hopeful character. Yet it is not possible the movement I know existed three years ago can have effervesced?"  

The mass defection to nationalism and class collaboration in which Mann reluctantly joined seemed the greatest of many setbacks, the final blow to hope of ending the state at once.

Mann's acquaintance with IWW ideas had begun in Australia, promising a broad base, direct organisation, constant activity, and with "the industry as the unit and not the single trade", an expedient basis of unionism.  

He was

"in keen sympathy with the IWW which at that time was growing vigorously in the USA and also with Syndicalism then growing rapidly in Italy and France."  

The links with the French movement, starting at least in the early 1890s, were supplemented by subsequent contacts with Jaurès, Lafargue, Guesde, Brousse and Allemane. His links with the IWW came not only from Australia, but through immigrants and E.J.B.Allen's pamphlet on revolutionary unionism. Allen, like Mann an old ILP member, was himself close to the IWW, and had founded in England both the Advocates of Industrial Unionism and the Industrialist League.  

73 Tom Mann to Kropotkin, 19.10.16 (Tom Mann Papers).
74 Unidentified article, c1910 (Tom Mann Papers): his connection with the IWW dates from the middle of 1907.
75 Tom Mann to Dona Torr, 26.6.36. Typescript. (Tom Mann Papers).
76 Melbourne Socialist. 2.6.06. He was a friend of Vaillant, the Paris Deputy.
77 The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 8, Sept. 1912.
This eclecticism reinforced by a contempt for, and a distance from, the main centres of debate and argument on these tactics implied that the movement was global, the conditions it described universal. This was a gross oversimplification - but it enabled Mann to some extent to extend the conditions and connections he perceived, and to discover similarities of condition which the more doctrinaire missed.

Mann attempted always to speed up development, to improvise: Labour politics were "futile"78 in Australasia, while to Mann there was no valid reason why the IWW should not, as WZ Foster proposed, "bore from within" the AF of L.79

"There is in Britain a healthy sentiment against the idea of Compulsory Arbitration, like that which obtains in New Zealand and Australia, but it is very little better to have Board of Trade officials increasingly roaming around, ever anxious to secure peace, sweet peace, at any price to the workers."80

To the unrest, then, Mann brought attitudes formed in Britain, reinforced and heightened by his own experience in Australasia and the propaganda of the IWW. These attitudes were centred on the individual worker, at his workplace, his relations to his fellows and his employers. Always he was concerned with a style of proletarian theory which related the worker to his function in the capitalist system: as Haywood said "A man who isn't worth sevenpence half-penny an hour ought to give up and go to heaven, but not until

78 From Single Tax to Syndicalism, op. cit., p.92.

79 E.g., in George Hardie's MS Autobiography, p.32. Mann was friendly with Charles Marck, of the French Dockers, and later of the CGT, and thus in touch with the start of Pelloutier's work in the CGT.

80 The Industrial Syndicalist, No. 4, October, 1910, p.8.
he has tried with his mates to obtain tolerable conditions".\footnote{81 ibid., p.20.}

Consequently, the driving force of revolution must be the activity and quality of workers - hence perhaps Mann's admiration for the "vivacious French".\footnote{82 Tom Mann, The International Labour Movement (Clarion, 1897), p.18. 1897 was the year of Tom Mann's expulsion from France.} This was close to the Cégetiste theory of insistent "upon particular methods of obtaining reforms and upon a particular kind of reforms".\footnote{83 Louis Levine, The Labor Movement in France. A study in Revolutionary Syndicalism (NY 1912), p.109, (of the Lyons Congress of 1901).} Was it, in fact, better "to have committees than mobs" when the functions and objectives of committees must differ from those of purely conscious - or unconscious - mobs, and mediate the demands of the workers?\footnote{84 Quoted in H.D.Lloyd, A country without strikes. A visit to the compulsory Arbitration Court of New Zealand (NY 1900), p.62.}

Despite the federalism and pragmatism of the revolutionary CGT, its opposition to "parties and political schools of thought" marked a realisation that the problem they posed themselves was not of reform or revolution, so much as self-government or a re-structuring or evaporation of institutions after reform. Hence was derived the CGT's concentration on the smaller units of organisation - "decentralized free workshops, coordinated through local unions, Bourses, and - in some loose ill-defined way - the national unions and the General Confederation of Labour."\footnote{85 Val. R. Lorwin, The French Labor Movement (Harvard, 1954), p.24 et. seq.}
Not only did this reflect an individualism deeply suspicious of outside leadership - as itself diminishing spontaneity - but the belief that a strike for higher wages, say, if it were successful, always had objectives, solidarity and aspirations higher and more determined than the resistance of any employer, and of greater intrinsic worth than any cash reward.

The increasing distance between workers and their employers increased this sense of "separateness" of the proletarian community - employers centralised their offices geographically, managers and administrators moved to suburbs further from the workers and their workplaces. The increased social gradation and administration produced a feeling both of outside direction and of isolation. In Australia, this produced a "socialism without doctrines", its object is to secure instruments by which workers may control industry. It seeks tools rather than proclaims theories, and does not try to harmonise practical attainments with a preconceived ideal of society."86

The pressure to uniformity itself produces little theory, but a mass action, even if this is motivated by a desire for lost independence:

"where all those engaged in an occupation receive about equal pay, the desire for improvement embodies itself in an effort to raise the wages of the entire group, and thus starts a class agitation."87

Government control itself might be equally irksome - especially when the objectives and attitudes of private employers were built into the system. In Australasia the market pressures were heaviest

87 ibid., p.52.
on workers in primary and tertiary industries - legislation had aided the large wool kings and squatters, but the agrarian workers, and the expanding industries, mining and transport in particular, found statutory conciliation unsatisfactory. In another sense, however, pressures on Australasian employers and hence the influences on the government, developed abroad. The "profits from rising prices, from Government assistance, from industry and commerce, all went to inflate land values"\(^\text{88}\) - beliefs that rising prices were permitted by the government increased dissatisfaction with legislation which could be manipulated in the interests of their employers.

"Connolly, the Marxian Socialist, the convinced industrial unionist, the devoted Labour leader, said to his daughter Nora on the eve of his execution: 'The Socialists will never understand why I am here. They all forget I am an Irishman'."\(^\text{89}\)

Mutatis mutandis, the need for an analysis of international capitalism and a subsequent international workers' movement could not eliminate the often stronger and more pressing national, local, communal objectives of socialists - nor absolve them from organising for struggles other than the international movement. The Second International itself was fighting against centripetal forces. Socialism was heterodox enough to maintain the form of organisation and aspiration but direct its pronouncements to the lowest common degree of participation and political consciousness of its federative bodies. However, the struggle for national self-determination sweeping up the advanced class was directly confronting bourgeois nationalism. Yet in 1905, Mann was maintaining that religion was

\(^{88}\) Tom Mann in Australasia, sup. cit., p.10.

\(^{89}\) W.P. Ryan, op. cit., p.248.
the basis of socialism - to which the Queensland "Worker" tartly advertised: Wanted.
A Saviour.
No Gods need apply. 90

Such questions of religion, nationalism, and in Britain the advisability of an ethical or scientific basis for socialism required years of debate; yet often it seemed that socialism was but a corrective for the excesses of established systems - most revolutionary among the least protected, but also appearing to be strongest when least effective - organisations reaching a high degree of cohesion at precisely those points when their opponents were most active and assured, and indeed when the development of capitalism had temporarily transcended the potential of its enemies.

In America, Brooks noted that

"The IWW taps labor strata not only lower than those of the trade union, but still lower than those from which Socialism generally gets recruits. It appeals to youth, to the most detached and irresponsible, to those free to follow a life of adventure." 91

As organisation caught up with the expanding frontiers of capital it seemed as if the new morale and the new organisation would anticipate any attempt at conciliation or fresh technical or labour policy of the employers. But the experience of Verviers was typical: here, a speed-up was described by Dechesne as

90 A. St. Ledger, Australian Socialism. An historical sketch of its origin and development (1909), p.236.

"l'intensité du travail est anormale, disproportionnée à l'énergie vitale d'un homme. Ce labour exténuant de bête liée et vaquant à deux machines, dans la trépidation énervante, sans une minute de répit, n'est pas un travail, mais un châtiment: le châtiment de ne pas avoir aidé les autres, pour conquérir ensemble de meilleurs conditions d'existence."92

Mann, despite his mobility and his readiness to adopt new forms of organisation, found these three problems: first, that technical development, introduced by decision-makers over whom the workers had no control, was always tending and intended to supercede the existing defences of the workers. Second, the mobility of capital, its "social liquidity", gave its possessors a greater flexibility than the sellers of labour power. The most elementary system of labour relations could operate, consciously or unconsciously, on those sentiments and considerations which socialists had been trying to suppress - or could at least utilise and encourage those nonmilitants on both sides. Finally, the spontaneity which gave rise to an urge towards organisation itself implied a low level of political consciousness - and failing leaders with anticipatory theory, or a general crisis, early enthusiasm could not be indefinitely sustained, free from compromise and institutional pressure. In Britain these three processes were obscured by the undergrowth of sects and societies, old-established industrial enterprises with a tradition of union organisation - consequently in Britain there was less alarm on the part of the government and employers at new organisations than at individual leaders - Mann, Tillett, Larkin

92 Laurent Dechesne, L'Avènement du Régime Syndical à Verviers. (Paris,1908) p.125. For instance, despite an active newspaper boom after 1900, in 1906 only 2 of the 24 unions in Verviers were affiliated to the Parti Ouvrier, pp.84-5.
in particular.

No doubt Mann was impressed by the volatility of the CGT. But "Cette grande terreur du bourgeois était numériquement faible, ses effectifs étaient instables, elle était politiquement isolée dans la nation, suspecte aux paysans"93. However, this still appeared to be refined into a fighting body. Such appearance was misleading: Carcanagues found in the reply to a questionnaire on reformist syndicalism that neither reform nor revolution were unconditional aims.

"Je vous dirai sincèrement que je crus pendant longtemps encore la grève générale utopique, mais qu'il faut, toujours et quand même, laisser croire qu'il suffirait d'un seul mot pour la faire éclater."94

Voysse of the Ruche Rouge de Tulle proposed that "réformiste ne signifie pas antirévolutionnaire."95

At these points, however, the verbal distinctions make it clear that it is revolution which is being jettisoned. Keufer, of the Fédération du Livre, said he was opposed to a war of aggression but not an antimilitarist.96 What was the point, asked André, of promising to prospective trade unionists a general strike, thus effectively closing "l'accès des syndicats à la grande masse de ces travailleurs"97? What Niel called "évolutionnisme rectifié" - a guided gradualism - was in fact certain to transfer the struggle to

93 D.Ligou, op. cit., p.459.
94 P.-A.Carcanagues, p.163.
95 ibid., p.158.
96 ibid., p.142.
97 ibid., pp.28-9.
a non-revolutionary front. St. John in America seemed to relish the loose structure and disunity to be demonstrated in the midst of greater struggles. We would not have it otherwise. The internal strife will no doubt be present in the future as in the past. The employing class are fully aware that the most effective way of lessening the power of the revolutionary labor organisation is to keep it busy with internal wrangles."

As in the CGT, intra-union discussion - or dissension - and the securing of unanimity within the organisation itself became a major political objective. Often in the CGT "revolutionary" was no more than a term applied to those mainly concerned with internal problems.

Mann himself had no wish to see one organisation achieved in order to find it divided on grounds of theory or programme. This at least honestly recognised the weakness of theory in a federal movement. The Australian IWW warned the British SLP about Mann's eclecticism: "you fellows must explain what it means to me" he was reported to have said in 1907 to the industrial unionists.

"Mr. Mann's work for revolutionary unionism for the IWW in Australia, is simply non-extant, save in the heated imagination of his dupes."

It was possible to see unions impotent because of the vigour and deadlock of their internal debate. On the other hand, other unanimous unions were breaking the strikes of other unions equally united.


100 The Socialist (Edinburgh (SLP) ), April, 1910.

101 ibid., June, 1911.
In Australasia, Mann's problems seem to have been those of the isolation of the workers from the international movement, an impulse to unite founded on a fear of competition from cheap labour. This, of course, would produce a new sectionalism and exclusiveness. This fear at least dominated Mann's thinking at first, when the possibility of legislative reforms and Labour politics seemed bright:

"With others I have often urged the necessity for transforming as much of the battling for better conditions as possible from the sphere of the factory and workshop to the ballot box of the citizen, the sphere of political activity affording a much wider scope for action than the union area, and the State machinery being by far the most effective and practically all-powerful for certain work."  

Even so, - and this forthright defence of political action was exceptional -, "The Unions are still more effective than any other machinery the workers possess". The next few months saw Mann stressing once more "ownership by the whole people" - the

"Raw Material and the Machinery of Production to become the property of the public, and industry to be regulated by experts in the common interest."

The more optimistic Mann felt, the more he relished the directness and immediacy of mass action: the more he saw of delegation, the translation of grass roots socialism or populism into "neutral" administration and regulation, of the awakened political creativity


104 ibid., p.179.

105 Tom Mann's "Socialism" Melbourne, 1905, ibid. p.179. This pamphlet is a fine example of Tom Mann's eclecticism which so irritated the SLP in Britain: National Co-operation, Socialism, Social-Democracy, Collectivism "all of which mean the same thing." p.179.
turned to apathetic union membership, the more important militancy seemed. The weakness of idealism, opportunism, comes out in the blundered theory of the movement: attacks on the state, not the bourgeois state, discussion of organisation, not organisation for revolution, attacks on leadership, not opportunist and reformist leaders, support for public, not socialist, ownership.

The new Australian unions "mass rather than industrial organisations", contained within themselves a clash between moderate parliamentary and craft attitudes and more militant unskilled workers. Mann had to balance three aims - concentration on labour politics was important - but Labour politicians were "not necessarily Socialists". Thus as "our Labourism always includes Socialism", political action was always suspect but always potentially important. Then, to direct a strike it might be necessary to restrict the spontaneity to save the union and this might have the effect of

107 ibid., pp.56-7.
108 In an attempt to transcend the rapidity of development of capitalism, the IWW paid Howard Scott to analyse both industry and the IWW in terms of the energy units expended in production (John S.Gambs, The Decline of the IWW, NY 1932 pp.157-9), and Scott's analysis, that overproduction was the best way to develop a crisis, (rather than sabotage), had a deep influence on IWW leaders. In the end, however, that same technical development wounded the IWW, perhaps fatally: "Ford may, quite unintentionally, be the end of the IWW. Not Henry Ford, but Lizzie. For harvest-by-Ford has all but displaced the old gangs of hobos who bummed their way on a freight, joined the Wobbilies and made the harvesting of the great western crops the most picturesque labor operation in America." p.186 Gambs notes the shipwreck of IWW theory, members believing themselves "secure in denying Russian facts by the invocation of a Sorel-Kautsky-De Leon-Raywood brand of Marxian theory." p.199. One could make a similar synthetic Marxist mongrel of influences on Tom Mann - who was even marginally connected with Zionism (Rocker,op. cit. p.85 et.seq.). The IWW-CGT connection is established in Brissenden, The IWW A Study of American Syndicalism (NY,1919): IWW men seem to have read Fougel, Lagardelle - even Sorel. Mann's advocacy during his visit to America of boring from within roused support for W.Z.Foster's (CGT-inspired) line.
encouraging the gradualist strategists. Finally, if Mann was to work through existing unions, he was forced to spend much of his time not as a free-lance revolutionary, but as a normal union organiser. Mass action, political action, trade union organisation - these objectives conflicted - sometimes in such a way as to negate Mann's activity.

In New South Wales, the aftermath of the Broken Hill dispute encouraged the Labour Party, stopped the swing to industrial action, destroyed a federation of three districts, divided leaders and rank and file, and, finally, the government was more openly partisan than before. Mann did not produce these effects he would have deplored - but in neither the IWW nor CGT, nor in the Australasian experience had there emerged an approach to organisation, let alone a theory of capitalist development, which could base a progressive movement on working-class grievance and experience - and at the same time outflank the employers, the government, and their rationale.

When Lagardelle said he proposed

"une politique de classe, ni socialiste parlementaire, ni anarchiste anti-parlementaire, mais syndicaliste, une politique propre au prolétariat, lequel devenu maître de ses destinées, à su dire enfin: Moi seul, c'est assez."

the problem remained that class could be mass, socialism populism.

The experience and theory of Mann, the CGT and the IWW, had been shaped before 1910. Questions of organisation and of political


versus industrial action had been discussed to exhaustion for years before 1910. If indeed one axis of the unrest in Britain is of direction/delegation as opposed to direct self-government, no sophisticated socialist theory is needed to base a popular movement against the use of parliament on popular distrust and fatalism towards that institution. Mann himself seems to have regarded class state and class parliament as synonymous. He warned the workers against

"any of the Courts or Councils or other Jeremy Didler schemes to prevent the workers from fighting for and securing their economic freedom"111:

in fact, parliament was seen as the organisation whose special purpose was to exercise this deceit.

Hyndman was perhaps more sophisticated or more devious than Mann in his analysis of parliamentary pressures

"Ramsay Macdonald has got a firm hold upon Keir Hardie and is inducing him to do and say many things which I am quite sure Keir Hardie himself would never do or say without that mischievous Scotch middle-class influence which Ramsay Macdonald and Bruce Glasier, both Scotchmen themselves exert upon him."112

Reference to the "nondescript crowd who have arrived there by the help of the Unions"113 was a frequent one even from those still interested in parliamentary gains. Part of Mann's objection to parliamentary action was personal, part objectively descriptive:

"this unfettered attitude is more to my taste than that which attaches to those who - as Candidates or Members, have so many 111 Tom Mann, The Labourers' Minimum Wage, March 1913, p.11.
112 Hyndman to Tom Mann, 25.2.05.
113 SDP Burnley Branch Secretary to Tom Mann, 8.7.10.
sections to consider and conciliate, and propitiate, that 99% of them soon lose such virility as they previously possessed. From awareness of these institutional pressures, Mann slowly moved to downright hostility, but the process was slow: in prison at the age of 77 he wrote:

"From now on I shall refuse to be identified with any petition to Parliament, but treat them for what they are a determinedly hostile body in bitter opposition to the Workers, and the institution itself not only useless but mischievous and must be destroyed."  

Mann had seen Burns "defect" - Burns's "downfall is sad and we have not seen the worst of him, even yet" said Hyndman, and the Labour party's "jumble-up of Trade Unionists and half-pledged Socialists" coincided with what Mann was being told, and was seeing, in Australia at the time. Although the lessons drawn might differ, Mann and Hyndman were in agreement as to the forces arrayed against them -

"unarmed strikers, with the mercenary police and army at the disposal of their capitalist antagonists, Liberal and Tory, simply court defeat if they resort to violence." 

114 Tom Mann to Fred Hoey, Liverpool Labour Party, 12.9.18.

115 Tom Mann's prison notebook, 1933. Although Tom Mann was persuaded to stand for Parliament by the CPGB, he hated the constraints placed on him by the necessities of a campaign - his line was always that "My work is not of the parliamentary order but the industrial, and every time I have identified myself with the parliamentary side I notice that not withstanding unlimited explanations wrong conclusions are drawn as to the relative importance of such effort" (letter to East Lewisham Labour Party (disaffiliated), 9.8.27.

116 Hyndman to Tom Mann, 29.4.06

117 ibid.

was Hyndman's warning in 1913. Mann saw liberalism and toryism as capitalist stalking horses, and it does not seem that he considered making use of regional radicalism, or petty-bourgeois reformism in addition to occupational, union and class movements.

Lansbury was himself attracted to Syndicalism because of the justice of its criticism of parliament: "this Parliament - this Parliament that refused the miners 5s a day will do nothing of any worth", though Lansbury was less willing to sacrifice all parliamentary action. In his propaganda, Mann stressed that Syndicalism was a- rather than anti- parliamentary, though he and his supporters allowed firm conclusions to be drawn. Of the Osborne Judgment, Tufton wrote "is this not conclusive proof that the capitalists will never allow us to gain parliamentary supremacy?" Even in the 1890s, when Mann had accepted the Minority Report of the labour commission of 1891-4, calling for an 8 hour day in the mines, reform of sweated trades, and by implication a reform of housing where between 20 and 33% of people in large towns lived in one-roomed houses, and perhaps two million accepted some form of poor relief each year, he insisted on the legal immunity of unions, "anomalous as it may appear to lawyers." Legislation not only diminished the freedom of institutions, it extinguished the fire


120 Tufton (Walthamstow TC) in The Industrial Syndicalist, March 1911, No. 9, p.23.


122 ibid., p.28.
of legislators:

"A proportion of those comrades who, prior to being returned, were unquestionably revolutionary, are no longer so after a few years in Parliament."

This was probably of secondary importance to three other pressures on the party: first, the Marxist or vulgar Marxist base to British socialism was neither well-equipped for analysis and anticipation of events, nor were Marxists in Britain quick to perceive those divisions in the propertied classes, the plurality of "rules of the game" which could ensure tactical advance and organisation - after all, in 1913 Joynton-Hicks was declaring "Let your armies and batteries fire. Fire if you dare; fire and be damned." Secondly, dangerous and immature though spontaneous action was, and much as it showed the weakness of socialist leadership, no labour leader could ignore it. But spontaneity did not necessarily increase discontinuities in the traditional system: it could as well be used to defeat the Conservatives in 1905, help recruiting in the war, encourage revivalism, or take another path opened to it. The unions and the labour party were able to concentrate on tactical advantage, thus shaking the foundations of the quasi-impossibilism of the ILP and the ethical socialists, and leaving themselves open to the Fabian pressure which had been nugatory before 1914.

Finally, as the parties themselves absorbed the impact of discontent, conciliation and reform dulled the edge of purely class

123 The Industrial Syndicalist, No. 1, July 1910, p.6.

policies: Clay spoke of the "strange apathetic indifference" to the "great debt" owed to the middle class, the "Wave of democratic sentiment" which seemed to be challenging the monopoly of public service, and its rewards, possessed formerly by prosperous party politicians.125 This political movement to class conciliation was clearer than any mutual social mobility: J.A. Thomas's figures of the composition of the Commons before 1914 shows the Labour members sharply differentiated from all other parties by education, economic interest and occupation. 126

Syndicalists and their sympathisers in Britain were trying to prevent a reliance on centralised government and central action, given the class character of that government. Anarchism apart, this was a rationalisation of weakness vis-à-vis the bourgeois state. The possibility of "revolutionary parliamentarianism" was always an empty hope, 127 and it is fair to say that the conservative revolt on Ulster gave little room for confidence that the "bourgeoisie will allow itself to be expropriated without a struggle." 128 The Socialist Federation of Australasia had proposed that indeed parliaments were "capitalist machines." 129 One finds a similar

128 E. Malatesta in Umanita Nuova 9.9.21, quoted in Errico Malatesta, His Life and Ideas, ed. Vernon Richards (1965).
129 Statement of 29.6.07.
theory, that the expansion of liberal democracy into mass or popular democracy must necessarily prolong class domination in the old or a worse fashion, in Michels: the SPD dare not advocate the general strike

"parce que la grève générale est une idée essentiellement ouvrière et qu'il a peur d'éloigner de lui les classes populaires qui aspirent à la démocratie."\(^{130}\)

Thus, not only did "revolutionary parliamentarianism" seem a contradiction in terms, but to practise it would mean immediately fighting the parliamentary Labour Party. Again, the parliamentary system seemed paradoxically a part of the class state, a vehicle for populist democracy - and even in some ways neutral: just as

"There is no division, not even the adumbration of division, there is no line, not even the vaguest dotted line, which marks off, in psychology, names, inherited traditions, or practice of daily life, a wage-earner who votes for Jones from a wage-earner who votes for Smith"\(^{131}\) -

if this were allowed then parliament did not meaningfully divide the workers, and the energy expended in voting and campaigning over meaningless distinctions might be compensated by the hollowness of public justifications of state action produced in parliament.

Here again, there was a profound ambiguity in attitudes to parliament: uncertainty as to the tactical use of parliament led to a rejection of parliamentary representation or even desire to establish proletarian democracy with the state. This trend to negativism, rather than impossibilism, reflected a similar tendency within the Labour Party itself - coming together


"simply as an expression of political class consciousness; ... it had to learn its economics in the only way in which they could be learnt, by experience of the futility of the economic empiricism with which it started out"\textsuperscript{132}.

Such a lengthy period of re-education from the "naive and childish doctrine" of anti-parliamentarianism\textsuperscript{133} was not, however, to be allowed to militants before 1914.

The transfer of parliamentary power Mann regarded as a mere game: but the amalgamation of unions itself was not itself to replace state or parliamentary power. There were state functions to be performed, though the process was never clearly expressed. Only the coercive aspect of state power would end under socialism. Even the OBU propaganda of 1920 spoke of "production with highest efficiency, and distribution of the product with the truest equity"\textsuperscript{134}, but the union itself was to be one of boiler makers, foundry men, engineers and steel workers. Some of this vagueness on future community organisation may stem from the former position of Trade unionists in the SDF, as well as Mann's own rejection of the state. It was possible to find Marxist texts which would imply that the primacy of infrastructural change should encourage only work on the infrastructure - but this was a somewhat sophistic distinction between two kinds of political action - in unions and party - misnamed "economic" and "political".

\textsuperscript{132} Fred Henderson, The Labour Unrest What it is and what it portends. (n.d.), p.123.

\textsuperscript{133} The Communist International, Documents vol. i, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{134} Tom Mann, Required Now! One Big Union of Boiler Makers, Foundry Men, Engineers and Steel Workers. (1920).
As Hyndman said:

"so long as it is our own fault - the fault of the workers themselves, I mean - that our political institutions are so reactionary as they are, it is useless to talk about economics invariably taking the lead of politics, and thereupon to argue in favour of letting politics alone."\(^{135}\)

It was sensible enough to make the unions firmly organised and disciplined as a step in the socialist education of members, but no automatic guarantee that such organisation would carry significant weight in the political system. Maclean too made the point that unionisation alone did not revolutionise union members:

"I presume you'll agree that theoretically, but perhaps not practically in view of the conservativeness and timidity of the workers, who certainly haven't responded very quickly to your appeals since 1910, or the advances of combines and the FBI on the other side. Still, I think you should take up the OBU position as a necessary advance on the Congress Committee established last year at Cardiff."\(^{136}\)

It is interesting that Mann himself preferred to build up industrial unions, holding it "a fact that industrial organisation should precede political organisation"\(^{137}\) - but once more leaving vague the question of co-ordination. "We are ourselves non-parliamentarians; but we do not worry over the fact that many attach

\(^{135}\) Daily Herald 25.9.13. Tom Mann's own relations with the BSP are a good illustration of the confusion of the orientation of the socialist parties in Britain in 1910. Tom Mann rejoined the SDP in 1910 but resigned in 1911 "because I differed materially re the State upon it whilst I was definitely a Syndicalist" (to Dona Torr, 19.3.36). In fact the SDF/SDP contained a number of active and prominent Trade Union members (Tom Quelch listed 13 in a letter to Dona Torr (26.5.36)), and the BSP which Mann rejoined during the war was, like the ILP, "rapidly being honeycombed with Syndicalism, whatever that may mean" (Herbert Burrows to Lansbury, 27.11.12 (Lansbury Papers)) before the war.

\(^{136}\) John Maclean (from prison) to Tom Mann, 9.8.22 (Tom Mann Papers).

\(^{137}\) In the ASE Journal November 1908: Tom Mann also repudiated compulsory arbitration in this article.
importance to the political action which we have discarded: such statements are bewildering. This is neither the CGT position, nor the De Leonist.

Many militant workers had intuitively none of the fears of a workers government such as Mann seemed to imply: the checkweighman of the New Cwmgorse Lodge wrote to Mann that centralisation of existing unions into one national union was possible, and these unions

"acting in concert under the control and direction of one central Council of trained and trusted leaders can and ought to effect wonders in the conditions and relations of workmen, the wealth they produce and its enjoyment. They could determine the course of legislature and control governments."\(^{139}\)

Though Mann was "thoroughly convinced that the economic struggle would ultimately be conducted through the Trade Unions ..."\(^{140}\), the problem of confronting the organised power of the bourgeoisie in the state was not faced squarely. It was never clear what in practice the form of distribution would be when

"the industrially organised workers will themselves undertake the entire responsibility of running the industries in the interest of all who work, and are entitled to enjoy the results of Labour."\(^{141}\)

In fact, over and above the growth of ideas of federation, or from

138 The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 1, January 1912.
139 Jno J.James, Checkweighman, to Tom Mann, 27.7.10, (Tom Mann Papers).
140 From Single Tax to Syndicalism, sup. cit., p.65.
141 The Industrial Syndicalist, No. 10, April 1911, p.2.
1890 at least, of amalgamation of unions, the very vagueness of
the post-1910 movement's theory showed how far from the PLP and
their own union leaders the rank and file unionists felt they were.

Mann said

"the time has gone by when reactionary officials are to be
allowed to impede working class advance; it is really a case
of 'get on and lead', or 'get out and follow': and the sooner
this is fully realised the better for all concerned."

Two points are being made here: that pressures towards unity are
breaking down the once-functional organisational distinctions between
the workers, and that leaders had so lost the sympathy of their
members that a mutual estrangement existed which could only be
removed by changing the relationship of leaders to workers - that is,
it required more than a superficial change of programme or policy.

Union neutrality, it might be thought, would arise from Mann's plan
as from Lib-Lab union leaders: but as Zinoviev made clear, trade
unions through their influence over the workers, cannot be neutral.

The larger the union, the more extensive the control over the members,
and each wave of unionisation had shown the significance in action

142 There was, for instance, a body called the National and Inter-
national General Federation of Trade and Labour Unions (Liverpool)
with 300 members which asked Tom Mann in July 1910 to help them
organise to amalgamate all unions: thus in fact the distinctions
between federation and amalgamation were not preserved, any more
than between industrial unionism and syndicalism (Tom Mann Papers).
This body was founded in the late 1890s, when Tom Mann himself was
urging "a complete federation of trades" (The International Labour
Movement, (Clarion Office, 1897, p.18)) - by which he may well have
meant amalgamation himself (cf. Tom Mann and Tillett "The 'New'
Trades Unionism", 1890, p.6).

143 The Industrial Syndicalist, No. 8, Feb. 1911, p.4.

144 July 1921, Zinoviev theses, The Communist International, Documents
vol. 1, sup. cit., p.275.
to leaders and rank and file of this control. At the same time, the "manhood, self-reliance and mutual help by association" were virtues which were required in the proletarian democracy - transcending the labour aristocracy as the new democracy transcended the old.\textsuperscript{145}

The unrest convinced the politicians that they must retain their mass union base: it showed the socialists too that the movement gained little by Mann's theoretical vagueness and dislike of "political" action. Above all, it demonstrated that "spontaneity" was a poor foundation for a permanent movement, that under British conditions, the forces making for conciliation were stronger over a long period than unrest over a short one. Mann's prescription for organisation was itself full of discrepancies:

"Mann was a vigorous speaker and a fine propagandist. He was very much interested in the syndicalist movement and was attempting to federate the transport workers along the lines which he thought the syndicalist movement of France followed. However, syndicalism was not what Mann really wanted. Industrial Unionism was nearer to what he was striving for."\textsuperscript{146}

In some ways, refusal to insist on a particular form of organisation was realistic, and a short cut to solidarity; as Bowman said, "terrible is the wrath of the sheep"\textsuperscript{147} - and Mann's use of ideas current throughout the socialist movement, even if they were

\textsuperscript{145} In Tom Mann and his Times, 1890-92, sup. cit., p.13.

\textsuperscript{146} W. Haywood, Bill Haywood's Book (n.d.), pp.235-6.

\textsuperscript{147} Introduction to G. Hervé, My Country Right or Wrong (Leur Patrie) (1910). One may also point out that Tom Mann's concentration on the need for trade union backing to any part of working-class action was shared by, for instance, Keir Hardie in the founding of the ILP (cf. A.E.P. Duffy, Differing politics and personal rivalries in the origins of the Independent Labour Party. Victorian Studies, Sept. 1962, p.64).
"the general principles of the IWW, more or less distorted to suit his work as a trade union organiser, a convenient theme for speech-making" 148 

was none the less in the short term effective improvisation. Again, there is a limit to the usefulness of describing why what did not happen did not happen: in the last resort, to say "we want the masses to make the revolution for the masses", and to forecast that "the 'syndicalist regime' would soon become the same lie, the same tyranny which the so-called 'dictatorship of the proletariat' has become" is as academic in the Italy of 1922 as it is to warn Mann posthumously of the dangers of the cult of spontaneity, the need for theory and analysis and so on. 149

One may make two points here, however: first, that Mann in his most definitive statement of his position, in 1922, adhered to a description of union "types" which relied for its rationale on the half-considered assumption that workplace experience was after all inadequate to change social and political attitudes. In other words, pure consciousness was not politically effective consciousness. He proposed the Standpatters - "the John Bull type", Politicians who "favour the Amalgamation of Sectional Unions and are loyal to Union decisions, but their hopes for real social changes rest on a government which they hope will one day be worthy of, and equal to the task of, carrying measures calculated to remove social and economic grievances, and usher in a Socialist State", finally the Industrialists

148 The Socialist (Edinburgh, SLP), April, 1910.

149 E.Malatesta, op. cit., pp.115 and 129.
"influential in the workshops, therefore they are in close relations with the Shops Committees, Works' Committees, and Shop Steward Movement. Not exclusively so, by any means, as the Works' Committees should be, and generally are, genuinely representative of all sections."\(^{150}\)

Beneath all this, however, is the basis of a syndicalist cure:

"for the men to manage themselves, and to manage the shop."\(^{151}\) Such an appeal draws all levels of political sophistication, - indeed, few would openly admit that they did not wish such direct responsibility for themselves and their environment. But the analysis for transforming the potential to the actual is lacking: this anarcho-Marxism begins to look like a cult of failure relieved by impossibilism.

Above all, it was based on a belief that the coming of socialism would be the work not of a vanguard party, but of a broad section of the working class organised and spontaneous, orderly yet acting without outside command. Mann, closest to the rank and file in the unrest, for that reason did not forsake the potential revolutionary movement, but was most firmly bound to the development of movements which, because they were reactive, could ultimately be contained by the culture against which they rebelled.\(^{152}\) Mann's anarchism itself


151 ibid., p.113.

152 The point was not, of course, whether Mann's picture of a workers' society was attractive, but whether it was a viable programme. Insofar as Hyndman's indictment of the unions at the turn of the century - they "have developed into an aristocracy of labour ... they have acted as a buffer between the mass of the workers and the employing class ... they have blocked the path of revolutionary progress ... they have relied too much upon strikes and isolated trade union action, instead of devoting themselves to capturing the political power ..." - was becoming almost daily less true and telling, Tom Mann's acceptance of the new trends was natural and important enough. So long as leaders - as Mann - relied on spontaneity, however, it was hard to see how unions themselves could ever seize the initiative.(in Socialism, Trade Unionism and Political Action (intended for Iskra No.1 (1900) Marx Memorial Library Bull. Oct-Dec, 1966, p.16.)
was a mark of the difficulty of breaking free from liberal democratic modes without building up new idealism - the end of the state and coercion.

Mann's own programme was "reformist" in the sense that he managed to escape from an early Malthusianism and a theory of the iron law of wages to propose reforms - achievable by direct action - not on the face of it incompatible with the maintenance of capitalism. In 1913, for instance, he proposed a minimum wage of 25/- a week for labourers, pointing out that six people living on 21/- a week would have around a penny a meal each to spend on food. Coupled with this was a restatement of his belief that socialism would be useless without leisure, that leisure could easily be achieved under socialism - and that capitalism could not and would not accept such a relatively modest demand. "Ere long the six-hour work day will be general, also the five-day working week, and a minimum of £150 a year."\[153\] In America the same year he was putting forward an idea to be found too in Kropotkin - of a six-month working year.\[154\] The idea of a progressive shortening of the working day, primarily to six hours, had been his suggestion in Australia, and continued during and after the war.\[155\] In 1917 it was combined with demands for demobilisation

153 The Labourers' Minimum Wage, sup. cit., pp.5 and 13. See too J. Ellis Barker, The Labour Revolt and its meaning, in the Nineteenth Century (and after) Sept. 1911, who summed up the revolutionary and "reformist" elements in Tom Mann "he intends not only to bring about a revolution but promises also to abolish poverty by the limitation of the hours of work." p.454.

154 Organised Labour, 1.11.13.

155 Secretary of the Operative Bakers Union of Victoria, letter to Dona Torr (1936), (Tom Mann Papers).
and shops' committees. In 1920 the six hour day appeared again as an alternative if the employers should refuse to take responsibility for unemployment and include in basic rates war wages and bonuses when offering payment by results.

Mann returned to the example of the relation between wages and price of meals in 1925 - when the example this time illustrated a policy for general strikes:

"a series of short stoppages is what is required. Certainly nothing longer than three days, and therefore there will be no question of strike pay for unions."

Mann thus determined that even the general strike should not divide the unions, or expose their leaders' hostility to militancy.

Clearly, for Mann these reformist demands were challenges to a capitalism which must be judged by the worker for its ability to sustain the workers who were compelled to submit to its industrial discipline and the "rules" of its economics. Interestingly enough, Mann seemed to have reduced the pledge he demanded of capital's productive power: the minimum wage he demanded in 1913 was five shillings less than in 1894! In fact, Mann's "reforms" seemed to recede, to be more perfunctorily requested as they became less likely to be conceded. It was as easy and as practical to call for a general strike - "Let us stay at home at play with the kids."

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156 Nov. 1917, Manchester leaflet.
157 Tom Mann, Payment by Results (1920).
158 Tom Mann, Power through the General Strike, May 1923, p.6.
159 Leeds Mercury, 10.4.94.
160 Tom Mann, Power through the General Strike, op. cit., p.7.
than to claim a £5 wage for a thirty hour week. Mann's social revolution was a mild, almost playful affair:

"When the capitalists get tired of running industries, the workers will cheerfully invite them to abdicate, and through and by their industrial organisations, will run the industries themselves in the interests of the whole community. We therefore most certainly favour strikes ..."

Capitalism would collapse from the effect of continuing social friction - and the fortress of capitalism was the workshop, the main political and social problem the "Organization of work itself by the organised workers", workers organised on an industrial base.

The simplicity, the positivist common sense of this response, however, might appeal to the workers but be either naive or faux naïf.

"Direct action, direct action, that's the thing ... Twenty-four hours of a policy of folded arms, and that would do the trick."

Mann's revolution, like his reforms, made a direct appeal to workers whose powerlessness was a consequence not only of the capitalist system, but of the organisation of unreconciled elements within it.

Mann's militancy was more straightforward than his theory. IWW and CGT methods, industrial unions working "in unison" with local Trades Councils, in a system of non-antagonistic social relations, all had a firm historical base in the 1890s. The 1896 strike was a crucial lesson on the need for solidarity, and a warning that skilled men were not immune to an erosion of their relative security - hence

161 The Federationist, September 1917.
162 The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 1, Jan. 1912.
163 The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 8, Sept. 1912.
the need to search for allies on a wider referential basis. Again, the amalgamation movement dates from the generation before 1914, just as does the eight-hour movement. Mann was impressed by the fact that gasworkers "are really receiving more pay for eight hours work than they previously received for twelve." In this way, Mann could make out a case for the structural nature of the problems. The political content of reform was, after all, easily seen when the only serious attempt to take up Mann's six-hour day challenge was Lord Leverhulme's, whose acceptance of the six-hour day would follow the destruction of socialism and anarchism, and

"would also solve the question of the education of the boy and girl on their first leaving school: it would also solve the question of their physical training; it would solve the question of military training, so that we could have a trained citizen army; and it would solve the question of the outlook on life of our workers." Such a price for social peace would be light indeed - but social peace was a sine qua non.

Mann, however, had never believed that the technical and financial basis of capitalism would permit such amelioration without the emasculation of the workers' movement Leverhulme proposed - and thus the loss of the workers' defences. In the commission of 1891-4, Mann had made the point that men could not produce in eight hours what it had taken then nine previously, "While the speed of the

165 From Single Tax to Syndicalism, passim.
166 Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, The "New" Trades Unionism, sup. cit. p.7.
machinery and the capacity of the machinery remain the same", 168 and in any case an increase of production would probably lead to overproduction and surplus population. Mann's escape from Malthusianism seems to have existed only in proportion as socialism was attained. One may in fact see that although on the theoretical level Mann rejected Malthusian and Lassallean hypotheses, he was aware that under a capitalist system such effects appeared to occur, whether or not the basic problems were those of under-consumption and under-use of resources.

The construction of a proletarian nation was always more important as an immediate task than the precise form of measures proposed. Militancy usually won out over idealism. As Ablett suggested in 1909,

"the time has now arrived when the working class should enter the educational world to work out its own problems for itself." 169 It was also possible, however, that the desire for autonomy, for specifically proletarian action uninfluenced by "advanced democrats", might lead to the "obviously anarchist idea: to wreck the organisation in order to rouse the masses to solve the problem". 170 This at least was the interpretation given to syndicalist propaganda by union leaders: it could easily follow from Mann's own theories - and perhaps that is why, intuitively, he avoided discussion of them. That itself would be a major contribution to the unrest. In fact,

168 Quoted in John Rae, Eight Hours for Work (1894), p.110.
this concentration on education and self-consciously proletarian action marked a stage in the developing awareness of potential power in a situation of actual deprivation. However much, and over-much Mann might rely on spontaneity and be disappointed by the pendulum action of popular enthusiasms between socialism and imperialism, nationalism and social reform, instead of perceiving the organic connections between these apparently polar opposites, the transcending of spontaneity was a clear priority for many.

Kenney instanced the fact that

"During the railway strike last year the chief agitators in the most militant districts were ex-Ruskin students, who are now GLC propagandists. One of them was an organiser in Liverpool. The principal strike advocate in the Chesterfield district, on the Midland, was a college man who, long before the strike occurred had criticised the 1907 Conciliation Scheme, strongly denouncing the whole policy of conciliation as being a handicap to the workers ... The present lecturer on Industrial History and Economics at the Labour College was a brakesman on the Barry Railway Company five years ago, and resigned his post in order to avail himself of a two years' course at Ruskin."171

Education itself opened a world the existing system had denied: if undertaken by the workers and their allies themselves, it would not allow and encourage the integration of the most able of the working class in upwardly mobile occupations, or non-manual groups.

Again, educated workers could study Marx, industrial history, labour economics, which conventional courses would ignore or gloss

171 Kenney, op. cit., p. 692. Alan B. Spitzer (in International Review of Social History, 1965) examines in his article "Anarchy and culture: F. P. Pelloutier and the dilemma of revolutionary syndicalism", this same problem of deploring simultaneously interference with spontaneity and the limitations of pure consciousness, the unresponsiveness of the workers - "Le soufflet reçu, il le lave par l'absinthe; l'incertitude du lendemain, il l'oublie au café-concert; la virilité des insurrections, il la porte au lunapar." p. 387.
over: Marxism was peculiarly the intellectual property of class-conscious workers. Such men were in a sense "outside" influences on working class discontents of the Hugaborough-type workers - but they represented neither official nor non-manual attitudes. For them, not violence but activity "restaure la structure des classes": 172 and as Malatesta said of the general strike, if it was to be met by violence, why not call such strikes revolutions - since the strike and the insurrection differed only in method? 173 The presence of these "young men in a hurry" during the labour unrest, and their subsequent union and political careers ensured some persistence at least of the syndicalist "mass line". Despite his connection with the older generation of leaders, Mann was closer to these men, in parties and unions both as regards his cosmopolitan and eclectic Marxism and his "impossibilist reformism". The Liverpool "commune" of 1911, 174 those few days when it seemed that the strike committee was establishing itself as a production committee, a centre of revolt against central government, and by the law of security and stability, a legitimate government, a transitional form of state, well demonstrated Mann's relation with the discontent. His aim seems to have been to associate himself from the start with militant action, official or unofficial. His first meeting after


his return from France was one of the Newcastle Socialist Society, chaired by the shunter Ned Scott who had led the recent North-Eastern strike. He sought, however, both to carry on syndicalist propaganda - his arrest was necessary, he told his wife, "to force the pace", and to reassure trade unionists and their leaders that at bottom unionism and syndicalism were the same:

"this Syndicalism that you have been told is so dreadful is simply concentrated industrial action on the part of the working class, at last giving practical demonstration that they know where their root difficulties lie and how to cure them".

This was revolutionary syndicalism presented in the language of Economism. Accordingly, the movement had a wide base of heterogeneous support: radical liberal MPs, anarchists, Labour MPs, trade unionists, GLC students and so on. It was not only a good point of propaganda to suggest that Mann should be joined in prison by Carson and Craig but a mark of the profound divisions as to where lay the focus of the class struggle. Opponents of liberal democracy, of the Liberal government, of state socialism, of the state, saw in the trade unions an explosive device which could be used to justify or promote their own attacks.

175 Tom Mann to his wife, 27.3.12 (Tom Mann Papers).

176 Weekly Citizen 11.5.12.

Social brutalism, however, was a pattern imposed on a series of disparate movements by those who scented violence as a characteristic odour of the Zeitgeist. The "beauty of inchoate industrialism",\textsuperscript{178} Bergsonism - the anticonstitutional and direct action movements, noisemakers and futurists - clearly there are interconnections, a sense of common style and common pressures in these movements. But there is a difference between movements which are contemporary, and functional and organic relations between movements. In Liverpool, as the strike spread up from the waterfront, in a few weeks "the country is threatened with an industrial upheaval without precedent in its history"\textsuperscript{179} apparently with its epicentre in Liverpool. Not only did class lines, blurred by other distinction, clarify themselves in the city (as Warner and Low found in Yankee City,\textsuperscript{180} where there was little background of militancy), but the government's show of force threatened a counter-revolution, against a revolution up to that point hardly intended. Williams might make the verbal declaration "War is declared; the men are being called out"\textsuperscript{181} but verbal defiance was met by material response - artillery sent to the stations. In view of this to compare the workers' movement to Bergsonism in action is absurd.

With the fortification of Willesden Junction, warships in the Mersey, and the disarming of the Liverpool Territorials, a lively

\textsuperscript{178} Daily Sketch, 21.3.12.
\textsuperscript{179} Daily Despatch, 14.8.11.
\textsuperscript{181} Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury, 18.8.11.
strike movement inevitably ran into the full coercive power of the state - and the liberal democratic state by maintaining services, protecting the status quo of property relations was seen to be on the side of the employers. The strike committee had inescapably to bid for the legitimation of its activities against the government as a strike-breaker. Liverpool became a Commune - not a state but a transitional form which by example showed the possibility of transcending liberal democracy. The example of its failure, however, demonstrated the vulnerability of such forms, their basic weaknesses. The Post Office as well as private companies requested the strike committee's permission to move mail and goods: 182 as the Liverpool Courier pointed out, "the strike was a revolt from all authority" (that is, authority unfavourable to complete and successful strike action), but authority was replaced by the

"law of the de facto Provisional Government which the strikers presumed to set up." ... "After the Strike Committee has been allowed to override the law, it is not difficult to imagine a claim to enlist the law on its side." 183

The more complete a strike, the easier it is for the strike committee to keep order: and the more complete the strike the more complete the legitimation of the strike committee's authority. It was not enough to write after the Lime Street riot

"As a means to lessen the rough and hooligan element of our large cities, conscription is eminently desirable. The training would benefit and teach this class the merit of discipline and order." 184

182 Letter 14.8.11, (Tom Mann Papers).
183 Liverpool Courier, 15.9.11.
184 Liverpool Courier, 14.3.11.
For not only was rioting a feature of pre-strike Liverpool, but the strike committee itself kept order under a weight of police and military provocation, potential and actual. It was, in fact, a question of "whose discipline, whose order?"

Nor was it true that sympathy with the underpaid was such that unions "can well afford to follow the strictly legal and regular methods by which the old trade unionism has won its successes in the past." For one thing, it was a mere popular legend that old trade unionism had been characterised by legal and regular methods, or that it had been encouraged to be so: again, how could a national union strike without disrupting normal services - the longer the strike continued, the higher the officials, and then the politicians likely to be involved. Mann's own strike aims were stated as "We are going to abolish poverty" - but in practice his job was only to provide the striking sections with coherent demands and persuade the workers to return to work when these were met. The lesson of education in forms of the state had to be taught by Lenin in 1920. The revolution men feared was far from the thoughts of the strike committee, and the regulation of production attempted was on a minor scale. Tillett himself emphasised that the main tasks were of organisation - "The movement was a spontaneous uprush from below. There was no


186 Manchester Guardian 14.8.11.

organization in the ordinary sense..." and it would be a mistake to develop a total stoppage: "those who talk so lightly of paralysing everything have no responsibility." Hardie nicely demonstrated the difference in opportunist interpretations of the unrest by urging

"The only course to be taken at Liverpool ... is to paralyse everything. Let every working man drop work and sit tight, using no violence, making no demonstration; simply let him refuse to do a hand's turn for anyone."

Hardie's revival of grass roots militancy encouraged an explicitly revanchist statement from the Chief Constable: "If we had Russian methods", he said "we could do many things which are impossible here."

Liberal bourgeois democracy was becoming aware of the constraint of its own rules.

The calling-off of the strike by the railway leaders because of the Agadir crisis showed the limitations of a regional, non-political movement. The different interpretations given by the leaders to the mood of militancy, however, showed the educational advantages and disadvantages of a heterodox labour movement:

"A little jack-in-office named Pointer, a whip of the Labour Party, said quite frankly that Mr. Mann was a crank who was best locked up."189

Mann's attempt not to split the movement further was itself based on the realisation that "It is these Union men, and not the capitalists, who beat the other Unionists."190

Mann claimed so many things for his Syndicalism - that it was everything from industrial unionism to pure-and-simple unionism -

188 ibid.
189 The New Age, 4.7.12.
190 The Industrial Syndicalist, No. 1 July 1910, p.12.
that it often appears only to mean "militancy" -

"The three days stoppage from work on the part of the North Eastern Railwaymen, in spite of the fact that they were covered by an agreement ..., gave a comforting indication that the Syndicalist spirit is already appearing, and entitles one to hope that it will, under suitable conditions, assert itself."\(^{191}\)

Haywood mildly criticised the lack of rigour and unity of the syndicalists; they "simply coordinated the different trades and crafts, as is done in the building trades of America" - and it was the workers themselves who improvised what the syndicalists could later describe as Syndicalism.\(^{192}\) Haywood spoke in Tonypandy on the eve of the 1910 strike, and claimed that after hearing his talk

"When the strike started they pulled out the engine drivers, the pump men, the pony drivers and stable tenders underground, and the mine owners were in a real dilemma."\(^{193}\)

Revolutionary theory, indeed, seems to have played as small a part in prompting this early activity as it did in pushing Mann towards consistency in these years.\(^{194}\)

When one says that Mann's achievements between 1910-14 were represented as the more remarkable in view of the difficulty of arousing enthusiasm for militant action and solidarity, and that this alone is enough to excuse opportunism, it can be argued that Mann

191 The Industrial Syndicalist, No. 3, September 1910, p.9.
192 W. Haywood, op. cit., p.237.
193 ibid., p.236.
194 Tom Mann claimed that he combined IWW and CGT methods, yet on landing in May 1910 said "I come back unattached, entirely unconnected with any organisations. I have no plans beyond this, that I advocate that kind of unionism known as Industrial Unionism" (The Socialist, June 1911).
did not create or mould the unrest. The statements of men like Tupper, Mann's colleague in the seamen's union,

"In 1911, in that coal town (Tonypandy), I saw starved men with the tears of the utterly damned streaming from their eyes - and sticks of explosive clutched in their shaking hands"195, describe pure class consciousness at work. As Haywood's quotation above shows, only a trigger, a pretext, was needed to set off chain reactions. Mann's contribution was that of detonator to sweating gelignite.

It is probably more just to say that Mann's propaganda popularised, vulgarised even, a number of arguments on the nature of parliamentary power, the effect of changes in the economic system on the political and vice versa 196 - and that this propaganda alarmed the employers, disabusing them of any hopes they might have that conciliation, piece work, combination and so on, could avoid reactions arising from the inequity of their social relationship or political activity to challenge the exercise of their property rights.

By giving even a deficient theoretical explanation of unrest, and encouraging opinion leaders in the rank and file to think in terms of industrial action, he pointed out once more that

"any party which put its hopes in electoral victory rather than a revolutionary crisis would soon lose any socialist flavour it might have had."197


196 His "abolition of poverty" seems likely to have derived from Kropotkin's Conquest of Bread (1906) - "When there are no longer any destitute there will no longer be any rich to exploit them". p.51, et. seq.

Above all, the syndicalists, "mostly ordinary, decent, law-abiding, hard-working people, with a social conscience", were made aware that no revolution could be made by the demoralised and the deferential. In this sense, the syndicalist spirit was that of the Irish workers who

"frequently begin to strike without saying or knowing what they want, and if they do formulate some demands, and get some part of what they allege is wanted, are apt to change and say they want something else." ¹⁹⁹

Spontaneity thus develops into a consciousness that social subordination cannot be cured by the kind of victory which strikes offer: and these "strikes without end" were in many ways the syndicalist ideal type.

The liberal democracy in which Mann, by joining the National Democratic League before leaving for Australia, put some reluctant trust, was perceptibly changing and had changed between 1900 and 1910. The revolt of the nonconformist and lower middle class elements against what Dona Torr called the "stupid, brutal, vulgar, rich upper classes" - characterised by the advent of Lloyd George, was an important influence in producing "communitarian" politics, just as the unrest encouraged the closing of ranks of those who feared the economic emancipation of labour. The two tendencies were themselves in part reaction to the difficulties encountered by new groups attempting to share in traditional middle class privileges. This general pressure and consequent difficulties of adjustment helps to

¹⁹⁸ R. Rocker op. cit., p.41.
¹⁹⁹ Lord Askwith, Industrial Problems and Disputes (1920), p.110.
account for

"the new elements of violence expressed in the constant breaking up of meetings addressed by men like Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and even Hyndman, the general growth of phrases like 'thinking imperially', 'the new imperialism' the wave of jingoism, the music hall songs, e.g. Kruger's Dinner Party, the new word 'mafeking'\textsuperscript{200}

and so on. The dynamic forces developing towards monopoly capitalism were scarcely perceived.

In this atmosphere, Mann's determination to keep to as simple a programme as possible, and one which did not seek to associate itself with other groups' struggle for access to power, emerges clearly. Mann was well informed of the economic needs of workers as distinct from the desire for social recognition. Cresswell sent in details of the Gateshead Patternmakers' immiseration - unemployment rising from 4.2\% on average 1879-89, to 5.5\% and 7.2\% in the next two decades - showing a rise in 1908 from 11.2\% to 39.2\% in May.\textsuperscript{201}

Mann kept a letter to John Burns from an unemployed baker with details of a 101\frac{1}{2} hour working week.\textsuperscript{202} He wrote to his wife in 1914 from South Africa,

"It is a queer comment on Society when neither by Capitalism, Government, Trade Unionism or Cooperation can people be afforded an opportunity to settle on the land.\textsuperscript{203}

\textsuperscript{200} Dona Torr (Tom Mann Papers), pp.7-8.

\textsuperscript{201} E. Cresswell to Tom Mann 7.8.10 (Tom Mann Papers).

\textsuperscript{202} Archibald Medway to John Burns 10.5.10 (Tom Mann Papers).

\textsuperscript{203} Tom Mann to his wife, 19.5.14, from South Africa (Tom Mann Papers).

The simple remedies are not necessarily simplistic, though in fact Tom Mann was no theorist of imperialism, and it was his simplicity which made him the opponent of so much which other labour leaders - simple in another way, or wishful thinkers perhaps - supported: parliament, bipartisanship, (especially on colonial matters), electoral arrangements - a range of matters involving subservience to the "rules of the game".
The simplicity of Mann's comprehensive remedies was also what stopped him considering collaboration with any groups other than those which expressed their working-class solidarity by solid action — the strike being the best example. Such was the "deadening psychological atmosphere — the Victorian repression, the unctuous Liberalism and nonconformity, the raw poverty of ideas, and slumdom, the gin palaces and chapels etc. — in which the workers dwelt in the 90s and 1900s"

that a political class-consciousness which had sprung from these adversities was likely, at branch level at least, to reject a policy based ultimately on compromise. 204

The grassroots' activists seem to have had different expectations of the labour movement from those of its parliamentary leaders, especially as regard the role of consciously-acting masses. The "huge bureaucracy" being produced by legislation, that mediation which would produce "a feeling of dependency amongst great masses of the people" was being explicitly questioned and opposed by the opinion leaders of the working-class community. Dislike of those who "come to look on our movement as a job-hunting agency for the smooth-tongued young shavers (I don't say Shavians) whose superior opportunities for education have made them prominent," 205

204 Tom Quelch to Dona Torr, 26.5.36.

205 Lansbury in the Daily Herald, 13.1.13. It is at any time hard to produce quantitative evidence of activists' political leanings at branch level: one's belief that activists before 1914 were well to the left of the leaders may be over-influenced by the correspondence files which have survived of the SDF/SDF and BSP and the ILP, and relatively isolated accounts of grass roots revolt by men like Follitt, and work on possibly atypical branches like Andrew Rothstein's on the Hackney and Kingland (Dalston) Branch (Our History, No.19, Autumn 1960). One is in fact dealing with samples so tiny or so enormous that in both cases one is forced to intuitive identification of variables. Lansbury's statement is important because it implies a particular, unflattering view of "Fabian" entrants, and perception of the influence on policy of such changes in the social background in the new recruits.
expresses a clear belief that within the movement Fabian policies, motives, and social superiority or déclassé attitudes pointed to a basic division as to objectives. Though the complaint might still be in terms of opposition to "bureaucracy", "leaders", the class position and ideology of those complaining made this effectively an attack on liberal democratic bureaucracy and leadership.

In the absence of quantitative evidence on the background and policies of new recruits to the organised movement, one may make two observations: First the attitude that "We have to get into the minds of people that they don't need governors," may well point to deep divisions among the "left" activists themselves. Second, if for many Socialism meant

"that the workers must manage industry for themselves, and that, although the recently much-discussed Guild-Socialism is very attractive, Parliament should be a real National Assembly, representing all productive and distributive and social services, met to discuss ways and means of organising the resources of the country in the best possible fashion," 206

this emphasis on self-government would clearly not appear an insuperable intellectual barrier to the most etatist Shavian. That is, static analysis may help to resolve temporarily differences in objective and method - but it will tend to revert to its most opportunist form, carrying away many in this reversion, since to suggest the workers' state will be a classless state encourages workers to seek such a condition within liberal democracy.

The group round Mann was anxious to connect technical change with evidence of immiseration: urging the lesson that a new 1889 was

needed, Mann wrote that

"nevertheless as regards the conditions of employment, the make-up of the gangs, the persistent rush, corresponding to the 'speed and feed' movement in the engineering shops, and the taking-on of men and payment of men for as little as two hours instead of a minimum of four hours as fixed by the conditions of settlement of the strike, in all these important matters, the conditions of the pre-strike days obtain at present." 207

It would perhaps be an exaggeration to talk of a mass movement among those groups interested in syndicalist or Marxist analyses of the development of forces of production - but the widespread character of the interest in the ASRS, the gasworkers, dockers, shipping unions, engineers and machine workers, Welsh miners is well-established. 208

Not only the similarity of conditions, but the similarity of justification, helped extend the movement: when Moore-Bell said of the cotton ring that it promoted

"the rigging of production and the rigging of the market in the interests of the masters, and never so much as a single reference to the fact that the workers have any interests whatever" 209

he was touching on two points. First, that amalgamation and standardisation "only pave(s) the way to a great centralisation of management and concentration of control" 210 - not only making possible horizontal and vertical extension of unionism, but also making it correspondingly harder for this organisation to revolutionise the conditions of employment.

Secondly, functions of size, intensification of work and the structure of management and their attitudes could be perpetuated in

207 The Industrial Syndicalist, No.2, August 1910, p.5.
208 The Industrial Syndicalist, Nos.4 & 6 (October & December 1910).
209 The Industrial Syndicalist, No.10, April 1911, p.21.
210 The Industrial Syndicalist, No.8, February 1911, p.25.
liberal bourgeois state-directed industry. Nationalisation, even if won by political pressure on the part of the workers, might be politically disadvantageous in the workplace.

"Syndicalists do not demand the nationalisation which means the capitalisation of the railways, but the entire control and management of them in the common interest by themselves"211: the coming of the trust and the standardisation that would involve might lead to the closing of the system of subordination in which "State Bossing worse than Company Bossing"212 became the slogan. There is here the start of a perception that the class character of the state determined the direction of coercion in society.

In 1889, Mann had pointed to the "tendency of modern capitalism ... towards the concentration of business in the hands of great capitalists, or corporations of capitalists, and to the elimination of their feeble competitors..."213 and this prophecy had become conventional wisdom by 1910. The dislike of state socialism was more than a mildly anarchist protest against any authority and the subordination it implied - it was a realisation that the "class liberalism" of syndicalism concentrated on the emancipation of the worker not only from capitalism, but from the coercive nature of the productive forces evolved under capitalism, and the perpetuation of those forms of coercive authority characteristic of capitalist industrial production continuing under nominal state socialism. State control itself was proof of the dispensability of the individual capitalist, but true Socialism "implies co-operative control by the workers of the machinery of 211 The Industrial Syndicalist, No.11, May 1911, p.2.
212 ibid., p.23.
production; in the absence of such control we have nought but State capitalism, as the Post Office at present."^214

Mann could claim that the socialism of the 1880s and 1890s had stressed the educative and transforming side of social reorganisation: the criticism of the Co-operative movement in 1892, that "Even yet it is dividend, dividend that is demanded, thereby exhibiting the pure capitalistic qualities"^215 could equally well apply to the state under reformist socialism and unreformed capitalism. And although a nostalgia for the cooperative workshop appears in Mann's later work, it did so in proportion as the problem of industrial scale and industrial struggle increased. As for the reification of the worker whose employers

"Quite magnificently ... have set to work to standardize the human side of their industry; and to deal with the living factor as cunningly as with steel beams and finance"^216 - it was to counter these developments that Mann's ethical, self-improving socialism achieved a new and pointed relevance, especially when Socialist and Labour politicians were moving out of local working-class politics and into liberal bourgeois national politics.

Mann saw his kinship with the French socialists and intellectuals like Berth, centreing the work of self-improvement on the self-improving workers themselves and ignoring the ostensible differences


^215 Tom Mann and his Times 1890-92, op. cit., p.37.

^216 J.G. Brooks op. cit., p.20. Long-term agreements, and the gradualism of wage courts, official arbitrators and so on, were seen as attempts to reduce the cost of labour power as far as possible to a fixed cost - this was "standardised reification".
over organisation, political action and so forth.

In

"combining instruction with apprenticeship, that is, in founding the school upon life, so as to bring the mind at an early age in touch with reality to give as soon as possible the sense of responsibility and initiative", 217

proletarian realities would encourage proletarian self-sufficiency and broaden intellectual horizons to the limits of the class.

"Trade lines have been swallowed up in a common servitude of all workers to the machines which they tend" 218 - and this very enslavement could become a means of emancipation.

"This system offers only a perpetual struggle for slight relief within wage slavery. It is blind to the possibility of establishing an industrial democracy, wherein there shall be no wage slavery, but where the workers will own the tools which they operate, and the product of which they alone will enjoy." 219

The formative period of socialist participation in government, in industry-wide collective bargaining and unionism before 1914 might indeed have approached its problems more from the direction of Mann and Haywood than of Lenin. As Ridker wrote on the special circumstances which conjoin to produce differences of response:

"Why is it that the response to poverty does not consistently operate to intensity economic activities? Obviously this is one crucial response, but withdrawal, emigration, riot and revolution have also resulted." 220


218 W. Haywood, op. cit., p.175.

219 ibid., p.176.

220 R.G. Ridker, Discontent & Economic Growth. Economic Development and Cultural Change (Oct. 1962) p.1. If one substitutes "growth targets" for unrest, his suggestion that "If a government had complete control over all the net benefits involved, it should encourage a high level of unrest, by stimulating aspirations or reducing the present and expected level of living, and then channel the discontent into productive activities "(p.15) this becomes close to a neo-capitalist model for old capitalist countries. See too R.V. Hagley, Sir James Steuart & the Aspiration Effect (Economica, Feb. 1961).
"In comparison with the rigidity of the miners' organisation, we find the mentality of their leaders less disposed to what I would call the give and take of compromise than the leaders in the railway and transport organisation."²²¹

But of course, the very rigidity of the organisation accounted for the "rigidity" of the miners' leaders, reflecting the organisation of the industry, the attitudes of the employers they faced. Similarly, however, though it might seem that

"Specifically the IWW is the result of highly centralised American capitalism. This particular form and substance of capitalism is spreading rapidly all over the world. And as shadow follows the body, so the IWW should and will follow capitalism to the farthest reaches of the earth,"²²²

the IWW itself suffered from the consequences of its very timeliness.

Like the American immigrants with their distance from older forms of organisation and their difficulties in forming any permanent organisation - problems which helped the IWW to grow and, as their integration into the prevailing system proceeded, helping to kill it - the Jewish immigrants in Britain formed a similar group:

"a man apart from the British workman. He worked longer hours and his seasons were irregular. He did not regard himself as one endowed with a fixed station in life, and this partially explains his adaptability to the vicissitudes of his fortunes."²²³

It also helps to explain the quality and uniqueness of those socialists and anarchists among the Jewish communities in London, Leeds and Glasgow especially: the "reserve army" of Jewish workers probably did account for the smallness of this socialist minority as Jacob Lestschinsky said. Events between 1910 and 1914 showed, however,

²²¹ What we want and why, sup. cit., p.40.
²²² Gambs, sup. cit., p.95.
that in fact there was a unity of interest and experience between the two groups of English and Jewish workers.²²⁴

There was, then, as it were a race to accommodate the unrest within the system before the system itself was destroyed. Whatever the interest of individual MPs, they were aware of the advantages of a democracy which "mêle les classes: d'où l'extrême confusion de la vie politique". If parliament and parties were to the slightest extent - in a class sense - the "agrégat d'éléments hétérogènes"²²⁵, it was certain that the containment of class divisions within the traditional system had benefits for both sides. Few coal owners wished for a counter-revolution to maintain the profits of the railway directors, and so long as they retained their capital after reform, they might have to change their interests somewhat, but not fight for their class. In any case, the mobility of capital which they prized itself necessarily involved a measure of social mobility - and in that sense the more rapid social change was, the greater the justification of the capitalist mode of production in inducing social evolution.

MPs might well be grateful for even Henderson's indictment of their work -

"The Labour Unrest is the social reform legislation of recent years returned to its authors with 'Inadequate' written across it."²²⁶

²²⁴ ibid., pp.140-1. On the links between the British and Jewish movements, and the prevalence of anti-political ideas, see p.127 et.seq.

²²⁵ Challaye, op. cit., p.13.

²²⁶ Fred Henderson, op. cit., p.134.
This opened the way for endless second chances: however defective the concept of a "National Crutch and Bandage Department" was, it meant the new unrest could be explained in terms of established practice - a stage in the general history of reform and the quelling of dissatisfaction.

Above all, democracy and the community could be presented as an interest both containing and exceeding the interests of the workers. The claim itself was easier to make with a Labour Party in parliament. The theorists of the state, from those concerned with legal personality to the notional pluralism derived from this, could use this "community interest" - stripped of its class connotations a valid enough proposal from the simple majoritarian argument onward - to counter claims to workers' decision making in industry. The Webbs had always stressed "community versus class" interests:

"It is, and must be, the community of citizens and consumers, whether in Co-operative Society, Municipality or State, that decides what it wishes to have produced, and when and where, of what kind and quality, and in what quantity."228

This was indeed a major weakness of the syndicalist case - unless a "pure competition" model be suggested for production and distribution.

But the argument itself could be used against all strikes causing inconvenience to the public, and all activities by sections, which

227 ibid., p.147.

were not in the immediate interests of the community. This point came out in the Leeds Municipal Strike of 1913, where the corporation represented the interests of the ratepayers, and in these terms had a mandate to break the strike. Sadler, the Vice Chancellor of Leeds University, made out such a case that would make it virtually impossible to strike effectively in any service industry, whether privately or publicly owned - a particularly important consideration when public and service employment tends to set the general level of local wages. If such strikes succeeded, it would show

"that the services of a particular group of workpeople were indispensable to the continued well-being of the city. The belief that the community had not the resources of skill and strength among its own members from which to draw, and that therefore the withdrawal of the employees from the city services would force the community into compelling its representatives to concede all that the strikers asked was an illusion and a dangerous illusion, which the experience of Leeds during December and January has done something to dispel."\(^{229}\)

Thus the community might be distinguished by its strike-breaking role - while it was the Government which would intervene in a lock-out conducted "with cynical indifference to the interests of the whole community."\(^{230}\) The long-term interests of the rate-payers might well favour a policy in which cheapness, profit and the hope of growth and consequent prosperity was abandoned for one of high wages, stagnation and redistribution of wealth, on the grounds that the price paid for accumulation of capital for re-investment was excessive and the benefits uncertain.


230 ibid., p.151.
Certainly, the use of Sadler's argument made every strike of council labourers a revolutionary threat in miniature, and it became almost impossible for men in the parks and streetlighting departments to strike without local papers suggesting that no public money should be given to the university to teach syndicalist economics, and statements to the effect that the city authorities were being brought to their knees by such action. Yet some industries could not be carried on by the community: miners, for instance

"are not averse to striking on slight pretext. They like to 'play' at intervals, and then return to scrabble harder in the pits, whence they can direct their thoughts with some contempt to the people who have to pass all their hours on the surface."232 Here, the very danger and difficulty of their occupation allowed them to continue a policy of solidarism, even when new means of transport and new fuels deprived the strikes of their larger effect. If the miners stand at one end of the axis of syndicalist strikes, they stand at the end of "high articulation": the transport workers at the other end, tended to show

"extraordinary changes in the demands made, in the allegations of breaches of faith put forward by both sides, and in the attempted methods of settlement":233 it is sensible to suggest, indeed, that these extremes represented the "industrial unionist" and the "syndicalist" poles of the unrest.

In these circumstances, nationalisation appeared to force the workers to submit to the claims of a community notoriously un-

231 ibid., p.148
232 Askwith, op. cit., p.201.
233 ibid., p.220.
sympathetic to the militancy of sections of the proletariat.

"By itself, nationalisation, therefore, has failed to make a substantial contribution to the socialist objective of achieving a more equalitarian distribution of income."²³⁴

or, one might add, to the establishment of a modular in industry or of a workers' state. Mann, by his notoriety, had these ideas widely discussed after 1910: one suspects that Mann was a synonym for the proletariat in its less accommodating aspects. His emphasis on directness, however, was what he shared with Pouget: that it must be

"une manifestation spontanée ou réfléchie, mais sans intervention d'agent extérieur, de la conscience et de la volonté ouvrière, — et ce indépendamment de son intensité."²³⁵

Start the movement, was Mann's idea, and the current released will run through the proletarian circuit, overleaping any apparent discontinuities.

Mann faced four main problems: the effect of the war on the militant movement, the influence of existing working-class organisations on activists and new members, the power of liberal democracy and its modes, and the difficulty of maintaining the impetus of an active

²³⁴ Adolf Sturmthal, Nationalization and Workers' Control in Britain and France (Journal of Political Economy, Feb. 1953), p.44.

²³⁵ E. Pouget, La Confédération du Travail (Paris 1908), p.56. On the relation of this proletarian thought to the liberal intellectuals' consciousness of exhaustion, see Koenraad W.Swart, The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth Century France (The Hague, 1964) — and Sartre's comments on Camus quoted in M-A Burnier, Les Existentialistes et la Politique (Paris 1966) — wherein it is clear that the intellectual attitudes of French theorists have a peculiar resonance in French working-class politics — "Si nous sommes fatigués, Camus, allons nous reposer, puisque nous en avons les moyens: mais n'espérons pas faire trembler le monde en lui faisant mesurer notre lassitude." p.88.
and successful movement without aiming at a control of the working-class. This he probably would not achieve. He could try to preserve grievances for later use, which would be unethical and in any case assume a tactical and theoretical mastery of the situation which Mann did not have.

Something of all these points may be seen in the effect of the war on Mann. The sailors' "Union was not Anti-War and our concern as organisers was to see that UNION MEN ONLY should be taken on; on one occasion a Government Official was seeking a crew and came to us to help him get a crew and as an organiser I did help him by calling upon the Union men (to) band together one hundred per cent and take the jobs that were going and keep non union men out."\(^{236}\)

This well illustrates the difficulties of free-lancing, and of keeping so close to the workers that all independence of action was lost. Mann's return to political work was indeed a return through the trade union concerns of his own union: "Think what they would of Parliament - he was not concerned about that" he said in mid-1916, calling on the ASE members to take the lead in deciding what they wanted their own union structure to be - or at least those 20% of intelligent members in whose stability Mann could retain his faith since 1914.\(^{237}\) He was particularly concerned at the weakness of unions vis-à-vis government action: "Are We Trade Unionists? Why, Yes - IF the State Permits."\(^{238}\) This war-time experience, however, did not shake Mann's faith that the workers would not, should not, form a State.

236 Tom Mann to Dona Torr, 1934 (Tom Mann Papers).

237 The Pioneer (Woolwich), June 1916.

238 The Trade Unionist (ed. E.L.Pratt), October 1916.
The re-awakening of trade unionism in the latter part of the war should not be dated too late: in October 1916 Mann told Kropotkin:

"There is a great deal of activity and everything of a radical character is not as dead as the press would have one believe."

Naturally, however, an agitator of Mann's eminence was more severely restricted even than the militant shop stewards:

"In a sense it is necessary for me to lie fallow for a time, as if I were to speak out as I feel the occasion demands, I should soon be in gaol, and there would be poor comfort in that; ..."239

Mann's experience as a leader of pursuing a policy which seemed the negation of his work a few months previously was not unique. The syndicalist Purcell wrote to Mann in 1921,

"I am up to my eyes in the vile business of urging the giving of ground in the shape of reduced wages, and unfortunately there is a ready response."240

The work in Liverpool during the war was of a similar agonising and contradictory nature.

"To have refused at that time to have been willing to help in getting crews would have been contrary to the wishes and interest of the Union, but I frankly admit I had qualms about it and determined to think the matter out and take action even if no one else did, later as the result of determination to have no part or lot in this I gave up the job."241

The shop stewards movement was itself a vindication of Mann's preaching to the grass roots, and in a way it no longer required or relied upon a national figure like Mann. Likewise, its theory seems to have come from much the same sources as Mann's, with all the

239 Mann to Kropotkin 19.10.16 (Tom Mann Papers). Tom Mann produced peace proposals in the first months of 1917.

240 A.A.Purcell to Tom Mann 2.6.21. (Tom Mann Papers).

241 Tom Mann to Dona Torr 17.7.34 (Tom Mann Papers).
weakness and confusion that implied - and more. The need to abandon Mann's approach and return to the grass roots, the shop stewards, was put forward by Tridon.

"They (the pre-war militants) flopped so easily because their democracy, their revolutionary convictions were skin deep, they had been converted in a sensational, emotional way, they were sentimental revolutionists. And they were out of touch with the solid, stolid conservative masses, which count after all."²⁴³

One tradition of revolutionary activity that was founded on spontaneity and economism was dying in the war, damaged beyond repair perhaps by a war fought by national proletariats who a few months previously had been expecting something more like an international revolution.

Tridon blamed revolutionary idealism for the collapse:

"I wrote recently to Wilshire that we should strike the words socialism, syndicalism, revolution from every piece of revolutionary literature ..."

This feeling that the socialists "want however 100% or nothing and get the nothing every time" demonstrates the keenness of the hopes for the unrest and the extent of their disappointment. Tridon was so disillusioned that having described the AF of L as "rotten with narrowness, prejudice, autocracy, exclusivism" he could go on

"but after all I think they may some day get the worker somewhere ... slowly ... The war has shown we had gone too fast."²⁴⁴

Lenin seems to have resigned himself and the British Party to Marxism in Britain playing a marginal or subdued role, if a vital one, of harassing the government and encouraging the revolutions of

²⁴² cf. Pribičević, op. cit.
²⁴³ André Tridon to Tom Mann (n.d.), (Tom Mann Papers).
²⁴⁴ ibid.
others rather than making one of its own.

"Revolution does not depend on propaganda. If the conditions of revolution are not there, no sort of propaganda will either hasten or impede it."245

Likewise the scaling down of the role of the trade unions was itself a comment on syndicalism:

"a broader and more universal organisation than the party, reaching greater masses; in relation to the party they play to some extent the role of periphery in relation to the centre."246

This was damning both to efforts to create class consciousness in and through the unions and to the "spontaneity" and rapid learning of the unionised masses. Like the VF of M, dying "with the blade of conservatism plunged deep into its heart",247 British trade unionists had, as it were, been told that their perception of capitalism was too simple, that direct reaction itself was doomed to short bursts of activity which could never by simple revulsion from capitalism destroy industrial, political and social systems.

It is of course arguable that to date the collapse of economism and spontaneity before the war is too dismissive. Robert Williams related the serious decline directly to post-war strikes:

245 Lenin to Arthur Ransome, quoted in J.T. Murphy, Russia on the March, (1941), p.19.

246 July 1921, Zinoviev theses in The Communist International, vol. I Documents, op. cit., p.277. The decision to apply the standards of "What is to be Done" to the post-war British situation and the Comintern's subsequent criticism of the British Party for its failure to reach the masses demonstrate clearly a disbelief in the preparedness of British workers for cumulative strike action. Since Lenin had no great confidence in the efficiency of the TUC and the unions in a capitalist society as defences for the workers, the implication was that working-class politics oscillated between left and right infantilisms.

247 Haywood, op. cit., p.277.
"Labour's revolutionary outlook has changed materially since the partial or complete failure of great and potential revolutionary stoppages like those in the shipbuilding and engineering trade of 1919, in the railway industry in October of that same year, and in the mining industry at the end of 1920 and again in the spring of 1921. Labour's militancy or hesitancy is determined by the prevailing economic and political circumstances - the will to strike or to revolt has waned directly as a result of the increase in the ranks of the unemployed."

This, however, begs the question, which is one of the order of Ridker's on the level of aspiration. The response to unemployment may indeed be to work hard to keep one's job, and to submit to wage cuts in order to do so. But more important, it depends, in such a case, on the workers accepting the case of the employers and managers - accepting later the maintenance of the Gold Standard and deflation.

The question is, why should men forsake a hard-won solidarity and class-consciousness, having condemned the waste of unemployment, suffered deprivation in strikes in challenges to management rights which they now apparently accepted? One answer would be that the workers did not, that these qualities and class attitudes were not reversible, that for a mixture of conciliatory, tactical, misguided and precautionary reasons union leaders were confused by a unique economic crisis, reluctant to destroy the movement in a frontal attack on the government, or overthrow the government without having an alternative plan. But the pressures to conciliation were deeper than short-term movements in the economy.

For decades a body of socialist thought had prophesied breakdown - and however attractive the theory thus became to neo-Marxist

248 What we want and why, sup. cit., p. 40.
socialists, the strategic centres of the movement were not captured, nor was there another "unrest". Perhaps this was in part because "The war and Communism together drew off the great strength of the Syndicalist movement in Britain." 249

More likely, however, the current of ideas about producers' control of the prescriptive right of the proletariat one day to determine its way of work, was exhausted - and had always been based on false questions. It was not so much in 1945 that the Fabians won out over ideas of Guildry, as that they had done so in 1918 or before. 250

When Mann said that "We organise ourselves as the first step towards organising industry" he meant more than simply paying union dues, and accepting the common rule. This organisation bore little resemblance to the kind of commitment and crystallisation required by the CPGB, or the SLP previously, - but it had to be strong enough to prevent "those who compose them handing them over as it were to the enemy." 251 The administration of the mines for the miners implied, however, an occupational preoccupation of far less general scope than the political awareness needed in practice to secure this control of the workplace. Assuming for the moment that the movement was "a real movement of the masses", 253 the problem remained - how purely conscious was spontaneity. Were not tailism, economism,

249 Rocker, op. cit., p.37.
250 Sturmthal, op. cit., p.54.
251 Tom Mann to Kropotkin, 19.10.16.
252 The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 5, June, 1912.
253 The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 9, Oct. 1912 (Christian Cornelissen).
opportunism spontaneous? The crystallisation of movement into party would seem to be a recognition of class interests and unity on a higher plane than trade union organisation. And yet: "No need to spend time on that" was Mann’s comment on theory.\footnote{254}{H. Pollitt to Dona Torr, 21.12.40. Mann kept in his wallet definitions of communism and capitalism: - "I look at this to say: 'Now, Tom, get on with it. That is you, Tom Mann, and that is all there is of Tom Mann. Cut out the flummery.'"}

Theorising seemed to some syndicalists like robbing the movement of its soul - simply philosophising: as if to say that "pure action" was its own explanation and justification, and that theory was necessarily antithetical to working class action. E.J.B. Allen put it that

"The Syndicalists are the levellers, or, if you like, the \textit{sans culottes} of the coming Revolution".\footnote{255}{The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 6, July 1912.}

Presumably Allen did not mean there was a special virtue in being unsuccessful - but he did think there was special virtue in being of the rank and file, and that this precluded intellectualising.

This in itself was somewhat curious, because the movement had its theoretical models: the musky elitist Madame Sorgue declared

"With the French Syndicalists and with the Anarchists, like Elisée Reclus and Prince Kropotkin, I repudiate the idea of State collectivism."\footnote{256}{ibid.}

Nothing, indeed, could have been more intellectually embourgeoisé than a desire to keep the workers free from theory. Mann himself explicitly acknowledged his debt to Kropotkin:

\footnote{254}{H. Pollitt to Dona Torr, 21.12.40. Mann kept in his wallet definitions of communism and capitalism: - "I look at this to say: 'Now, Tom, get on with it. That is you, Tom Mann, and that is all there is of Tom Mann. Cut out the flummery.'"}

\footnote{255}{The Syndicalist, vol. i, No. 6, July 1912.}

\footnote{256}{ibid.}
"no very clear recollection, but we did talk about his hostility to the State, and this influenced me very much, and his 'Mutual Aid' was a very helpful book, and also his 'Conquest of Bread', and as I often met him and had many talks I grew to like him very much indeed". 257

One may say that such a mechanistic attitude derives from seeing politics as superstructural, and always lagging "behind the actual facts." 258 This does indeed reflect certain movements within capitalism: the infrastructure itself seems dominated by a mass of inert and unenterprising individual capitalists who appear simply to mask the development of capitalism. Workers also narrow their referential framework to avoid the full effect of alienation and deprivation. Yet the concentration of capital and the orientation to profit of the market preserves the special social character of labour power as a commodity which only has value when and while being used by an employer: formal agreements are static, binding workers for a period in which the guardians of capital "play the market" with the labour power they have bought. The oppositional class-conscious attitudes of workers constantly reappear to the surprise of their leaders and opponents who believe against this structural evidence that social peace or social quiescence has been achieved. The determination not to lose sight of this fundamental opposition marks

257 Tom Mann to Dona Torr 11.8.38 (Tom Mann Papers). That is, Tom Mann himself accepted that "socialism" had "scientific" and theoretical validity and did what he could to explore the literature on these aspects. He himself remained a propagandist but was suspicious of those who regarded theory and propaganda as mutually exclusive activities. He regarded class-consciousness as characterised by unity and this unity threatened by arguments about theory. Rather than question the level of consciousness attained, he took it for granted that the most formal organisational unity was, or could be, a basis for consciousness.

258 Ablett in The Industrial Syndicalist, No.6, December 1910, p.42.
the syndicalist movement, and accounts to some extent for its
distrust of those theorists divorced from the workers' daily struggle.

Watkins quoted Kautsky's remarks on the need to avoid reconciling
antagonisms with approval. Syndicalism in Britain tried to avoid by
its irreconcilable hostility to middle class modes of analysis the
danger and threat of approval, or at least understanding, of that class:

"unlike Marxism or Fabianism, (Syndicalism) cannot be espoused by
anyone afflicted by any trace of economic or sociological training.
There is no rationale for it."260

The whole aim of syndicalist doctrine was indeed to show that in
acquiring economic and sociological training, men were removing
themselves from the workplace situation and the workplace struggle -
and that they must be sent to acquire it through the labour of men who
had no such chance or choice - because they had no such chance or
choice. Syndicalism tells the bourgeois and the capitalist that there
is no need for their functions - that their activity is exploitation
and their existence parasitic. Economics and sociology are parasitic
activities - the advice of men on the river bank shouting misleading
instructions on how to swim to the drowning.

This sensitivity to manipulation - "To submit even for a year to
an elected person is to submit for that year to tyranny" - itself
an inducement to working-class self-awareness has its roots in
Marxism and Bakuninism.261 The end of classes would not allow the

259 The Industrial Syndicalist, No.11, May 1911, p.4. For an
application of such modes of analysis, see Robin Blackburn,
("Inequality and Exploitation"), NLR No.42, March-April 1967.

260 Schumpeter, quoted in Lorwin, op. cit., p.35.

whole people to rule—rather government would become simply a business matter, the administration of things, in Marx's scheme. Syndicalists, however, wished to preserve not only the heroic features of the class struggle, but the distinctions which, in capitalist society, gave rise to their special awareness of capability and identity of interest. This, not a proletarian state, would provide the organisational basis of society. Niel pointed to one defect of this attitude saying

"le grand mal, c'est que dans le travail il n'y a pas d'unité de mesure facilement déterminable." 262

In a Marxist model, the measure of work under capitalism would be simply the "mass of immediate labour time, the quantum of promised labour" 263—but the syndicalists were reluctant to see thus quantified the specificity of their occupation-experience.

If "craft autonomy locally, industrial autonomy internationally, and working-class unity generally" 264 was the aim, then clearly the main institutional links and the structure of roles and functions was to be concentrated on that area which Marx described under capitalism as being appropriated, the worker's "comprehension of nature and dominion over it through his existence as a social body." This alienation of the worker's "general productivity" affects his relation to society at all levels of consciousness 265: but whereas


263 In Marx on Machines (Sublation No. 1, Dec. 1966, U. of Leicester) from Foundations for a Critique of Political Economy.

264 Haywood, op. cit., p. 185.

265 Marx, op. cit., p. 15. Marx himself quotes as evidence for the lack of correlation between riches and leisure the passage from "The Source and the Remedy" (1821), "A nation can truly call itself rich when it works six hours a day rather than twelve", as evidence of the development of contradictions within large-scale industrial capitalism itself, leading to the collapse of its basis.
for Marx socialism meant the emancipation of the worker from capitalist industry into society, for the syndicalists it meant the emancipation of industry from the capitalists, and its expansion till "The industries (will) take the place of what are now existing states." 266

To Mann, this seemed a valid and natural interpretation of Marxism - a method of compressing the stages of development suggested by Marx. Compared with Lenin's growing conviction that such organisation and the mass action it posited were essentially static, idealist, opportunist, and ultimately countervailing, Mann's differences seem basic.

"Il Massenstreik, considerato dalla Luxemburg come l'espressione della spontaneità rivoluzionaria delle masse che con la loro carica antagonistica impediscono ogni tipo di cristallizzazione organizzativa del sindacato o del partito, è ricondotto dalla teoria leninista ad un significato puramente tattico" - and in fact Mann's reconciliation with Lenin was, one feels, only possible because of the failure of the strike movement to maintain impetus, and the success of the Russian revolution itself, which seemed to prove Lenin's correctness on the state and the party. 267

266 Haywood, op. cit., p.287.

267 Andrea Panaccione Sulla Seconda Internazionale: problemi e prospettive di ricerca. Rivista Storica del Socialismo, No.29, Sept-Dec. 1966, p.41. Thus one has two problems - one can trace Mann's socialism back through the anarchist-communists to Marx, and back through Marx to Ricardian socialists and so on. At the same time, Mann emerges as a man able to perceive the workings of the dialectic in social praxis - but only at the level of description. Secondly, what in Luxemburg's schema seemed, as to Mann, the correct reading and identification of dialectical development, seemed to Lenin merely tactical or conjunctural: the shock of the war and of the Russian Revolution shook the confidence of British Marxists that they could identify tendencies making for the "flying apart" of bases. Those socialist militants who had not, however, travelled the path of direct action, unconstitutionalism and anti-statism were likely to be impressed, if at all, only by the functional approach of the Bolsheviks, and to continue working through parliament, intervening between the worker and the "State" - in its coercive and class aspect - until they were hopelessly compromised, defensive, increasingly bound to gradualist and constitutional concepts which exorcised any revolutionary spirits.
Mann's protest at the imprisonment of anarchists, made during the first visit to Russia, itself showed the potential weakness of Mann's negative theory of the state- coupled as it was with a spontanic, rather than federalist, theory of social organisation. That is, if the workers' state put anarchists in prison, Mann's synthesis of anarchism and socialism was shown to be shattered. There was always more of the organiser about Mann than there was of the speculative theoriser: when Engels talked of the "grandchildren of the old Chartists ... entering the line of battle", Mann himself appears irresistibly in the role of a Thomas Cooper.

"And now the multitude shouted; and their looks told of vengeance - but I went on, for I felt as if I could die on the spot in fulfilling a great duty - the exposure of human wrong and consequent human suffering. My strength was great at that time, and my voice could be heard, like the peal of a trumpet, even to the verge of a crowd of thousands. How sincere I was, God knows! and it seemed impossible for me, with my belief of wrong, to act otherwise."270


269 Engels in Arbeiterzeitung (Vienna) 23.5.90, quoted in Tom Mann and his Times, 1890-92, p.11.

270 The life of Thomas Cooper, Written by Himself (1873 edn.) p.189. Hugo describes the argument on the feasibility of a "plebeian" withdrawal from Louis Napoleon - a simulation of a spontaneous movement, without organisation but with complete solidarity. "Faisons le vide autour de lui!" s'écriait Émile de Girardin. Proclamons la grève universelle. Que le marchand cesse de vendre, que le consommateur cesse d'acheter, que l'ouvrier cesse de travailler, que le boucher cesse de tuer, que le boulanger cesse de cuire, que tout chôme, jusqu'à l'Imprimerie Nationale, que Louis Bonaparte ne trouve pas un compositeur pour composer le Moniteur, pas un pressier pour le tirer, pas un colleur pour l'afficher! L'isolement, la solitude, le vide autour de cet homme! Que la nation se retire de lui. Tout pouvoir dont la nation se retire tombe comme un arbre dont la racine se séparera. Louis Bonaparte abandonné de tous dans son crime s'évanouira. Rien qu'en croisant les bras autour de lui, on le fera tomber. Au contraire, tirez-lui des coups de fusil, vous le consolidez. L'armée est ivre, le peuple est ahuri et ne se mêle de rien, la bourgeoisie a peur du président, du peuple, de vous, de tous! Pas de victoire possible. Vous allez... (see next page)
The problem in 1910 was much as it had been in 1895:

"Yet here, as in your country, once the workers know what they want, the state, the land, industry and everything else will be theirs."271

At the stage of transference from spontaneous to united political action, however, the fissiparous tendencies, the sectarianism, developed. Mann, one feels, was trying to let the impetus of mass action carry the movement to the second stage - the realisation of strategic objectives: but the tendencies to differences in objective remained.

In France, Guesde could say to the CGT "La Révolution sociale, je ne l'ai pas dans ma poche, - ni vous non plus" - how long would it be true in England too before the characteristic of syndicalism became that "il n'a personne derrière lui."272 For one thing, even in the CGT the desire for mass action was tempered by a rationalisation of the lack of unanimity.

"La foule qui vote est inconsciente de ses véritables intérêts; la majorité ignorante et lâche écrase les minorités clairvoyantes et audacieuses" -

270 (cont.) devant vous, en braves gens, vous risquez vos têtes, c'est bien; vous entraînez avec vous deux ou trois mille hommes intrépides dont le sang, mêlé au vôtre, coule déjà. C'est héroïque, soit. Ce n'est pas politique. Quant à moi, je n'imprimerai pas d'appel aux armes et je me refuse au combat. Organisons la grève universelle!


271 Engels to Schlüter, 1.1.95, in Marx and Engels on Britain, p.584 (1962, Moscow).

272 Jules Guesde etc., op. cit., p.42.
it was a possible step from universal servitude to a syndicalist
dirigisme. Yet the wartime experience showed that the location
of workers' struggles in the unions and workplaces ignored -
opposition to the war itself! The war severely shook faith in the
possibility of mass strikes by themselves creating a revolutionary
situation, though the intervention of the war did not at once destroy
confidence in such a solution as a gradual run-down of the movement
might have done. One cannot usefully suggest how long the process
whereby concessions to strikers were made, might continue.

"The governing classes, having discovered that social reform
within the existing order involved no hurt or loss to them, no
interference with the exploitation of labour, no attack upon
their mastery or diminution of their class privileges worth
mentioning, were pleasantly engaged in voting social reforms on
the one hand, and getting back in rents and prices what they were
paying for it in rates and taxes on the other; under the
comfortable delusion that because that sort of thimble-rig
apparently satisfied the Parliamentary Labour Party, it would
also serve to satisfy the working population behind the Labour
Party."274

A policy of strike action might indeed force industrialists on to the
defensive, possibly driving some out of business - though not
necessarily expropriating them. But employers had a formidable array
of disciplinary powers. The system could sacrifice large numbers of
the inert property-owners and still dominate the whole system - a few
"leaders" with increasing concentrations of capital and political
influence setting a target and producing a justification of the
system which might well suffice to maintain it even under conditions
of intensifying contradictions.

274 Fred Henderson, op. cit., p.132.
Again, the equation of profit with growth was a natural and traditional one in capitalist society: a high rate of capital accumulation, and even some direction of investment could actually increase inequality, further concentrate private wealth, and set society off on a race in which high wages seemed to offset the social costs of colonial exploitation, skimmed public services, armaments to defend a price system largely based on cheap raw materials acquired from areas politically and economically dominated by private capital. The strike might thus become a means of reinforcing the existing system: Askwith made the point that union leaders might

"proceed to the Minister of Transport, and, if his views do not suit them, periodically proceed to the Prime Minister, who has to choose between a sudden outlay of millions out of the public purse or a general railway strike."275

The immediate challenge for the capitalist would be to find a way to outstrip the wage increase - to preserve the profitability of his enterprise, ultimately by pressure on the workers themselves, by intensification of labour, or by pressure on the weaker workers - government employees, for instance, - or on social and public services. Modern capitalist societies continue to develop despite what is considered popularly to be a "high" level of strike activity.276

"The General Strike had as its aim to employ the disintegrating power of the working class, and besides this moral demonstration, to attack their adversaries on the material side, to attack them in their needs, and in their pleasures."277

275 Askwith, op. cit., p.117.

276 H.A. Turner has argued (The Trend of Strikes, Leeds 1963) that not only are strikes a normal and to-be-expected feature of industrial capitalist society, but that a much higher level would be acceptable and not unexpected. Outside a number of high-intensity strike areas, strikes "could perhaps quite tolerably be higher." p.20.

277 Emile Pataud and Emile Pouget, Syndicalism and the Co-operative Commonwealth (How we shall bring about the Revolution)(Foreword by Tom Mann, preface by Kropotkin)(Oxford 1913), p.23.
Such a strike, in which the "workers simply folded their arms, - that was all,"\(^{278}\) - and disposed of tyranny by acclamation - "No! No! - No Commune!" - "No more Parliamentarism!"\(^{279}\) had to be supplemented by a defence system of aerial torpedoes worked by Hertzian waves.\(^{280}\) Mann in Liverpool in 1911 had a general strike uniting leaders of different parties and unions, with a strong base of spontaneity, itself cutting across religious and occupational differences. Yet it was Mann himself who helped get men back to work, fearful that the strike would break or be broken, and the men worse off than before. It was these considerations "du côté pratique" which, while never shaking Mann's faith in revolutions of the masses, encouraged him to revise his revolutionary time-scale, move slowly away from spontaneity as the vital and legitimating element in working-class activity, and consider the approach of Lenin to problems of both pre- and post-revolutionary organisation of state and party.

\(^{278}\) ibid., p.26
\(^{279}\) ibid., p.89
\(^{280}\) ibid., pp.214-5.
CONCLUSION

Syndicalism and Marxism in Britain showed to varying degrees how saturated with ideas of "old schools of Socialism", with anarchism and economism orthodox Marxism had become before 1914. One may also see how active within the labour movement were explicitly counter-revolutionary and counter-proletarian ideologies, such as Fabianism.

In the case of Tom Mann, the collapse of the unrest, the humiliation of seeing the British proletariat fighting an Imperialist war, turned him towards the position urged by Lenin. However, it was not until after the war that Lenin dispelled some of the confusion on the State shared by Mann and other militants and ex-Syndicalists.

"The concepts 'freedom' and 'democracy' are usually considered as identical and are often used instead of each other. Very often the vulgar Marxists (with Kautsky, Plekhanov and Co. at their head) have precisely this conception. In fact, democracy excludes freedom. The dialectics (process) of development is: from absolutism to bourgeois democracy; from bourgeois democracy to proletarian; from proletarian to none at all."

In a sense, to base a proletarian movement on spontaneity was to root it, philosophically, in naturalism, pure consciousness. But to propose that historically and specifically the consciousness of the British proletariat was pure in 1910 was to turn Marxism into a philosophy of economism. Lenin went so far as to say

"There are no pure phenomena, nor can there be, either in nature or in society - this is exactly what Marxian dialectics teach us, for dialectics show that the very concept of purity indicates a certain narrowness, a one-sidedness of human knowledge, that cannot embrace an object in all its totality and complexity."

1 V.I.Lenin on the Critique of the Gotha Programme in Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme (1934 edn.) p.67.

Two points may be made in this connection: first, that Althusser's "Theorie" itself emerges as non-Marxist, non-Leninist "pure" theory. The Marxist critique of Syndicalism and Marxism comes not from "Theorie" but from Lenin himself. Secondly, to ignore the historical dialectics of state and consciousness produces either a form of left idealism so alienated that it can never be of service to the proletariat, or an opportunism and fatalism of such a kind that every betrayal of the proletariat is seen as a victory for socialism and socialist consciousness.

In Britain after 1910 there were clear signs of a rising working-class trade union consciousness, coinciding with and encouraged by a crisis in the dominant ideology and a strengthening of the global forces of monopoly capitalism. The crystallisation of this consciousness, however, was frustrated by forces within the labour movement and bourgeoisie. Crystallisation was essential in order to challenge the hegemony of the bourgeoisie —

"In its general sense, hegemony refers to the 'spontaneous' loyalty that any dominant social group obtains from the masses by virtue of its social and intellectual prestige and its supposedly superior function in the world of production."  

However, the forms of proletarian ideology produced before 1914 were just those which permitted the proletariat to sink back into trade union consciousness, to accept reformism and opportunism from the bourgeoisie and its own leaders. This permitted it to maintain its position of subordinate class and turned its attention away from the struggle against imperialism and monopoly capitalism. It should, however, also be noted first that counter-revolutionary preparations and the militarisation of policy were far advanced in Britain by 1914. Second,  

3 John M. Cammett, Antonio Gramsci and the origins of Italian Communism (Stanford, 1967) p.204.
the British proletariat faced a bourgeoisie actively reproducing liberal-democratic demands to forestall those same demands presented in revolutionary form by the proletariat.\(^4\) In addition, the role of domestic proletariat in an advanced imperialist country raised special problems of consciousness and praxis encouraging conciliation, the production of various forms of philistinism\(^5\) to conceal the antagonisms within society, and prevent the emergence of the British proletariat as advanced class.

The advance of monopoly capitalism under liberal democracy showed above all the need for higher forms of socialist consciousness and hegemony to transcend the positivist mechanics of the on-going system. It has shown too the widening gap between spontaneity and class consciousness.

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\(^4\) 'In contrast to the petty-bourgeois democrats, Marx regarded every democratic demand without exception not as an absolute, but as an historical expression of the struggle of the masses of the people, led by the bourgeoisie, against feudalism. There is not one of these demands which could not serve, and has not served, under certain circumstances, as an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers.' (Theses on the Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 22, Moscow 1964) p.149

\(^5\) 'What is a philistine? Lassalle used to ask, and he answered by quoting the words of the well-known poet: "An empty gut full of fear and hope; may God have pity on him."' The Collapse of the Second International, op.cit., p.192.
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