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THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN NOTTINGHAM

1880-1918

.....

A Thesis

Presented to

the Arts Faculty of

the Open University

.....

in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

.....

by

Peter Harold Wyncoll B.A.

May 1982

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

This study of the Labour Movement in Nottingham 1880-1918 sets out to examine the development in size, self confidence and influence of the working class institutions built by the men and women workers of Nottingham in a period when Socialism in all its variegated forms was becoming the established philosophy of the British working class.

Attention is given to the manner in which the Nottingham workers responded to the specific threats and challenges of the period. The main concern of the thesis, however, is to try to understand how it was that although in 1873 the vangard of the local labour movement could earn for Nottingham the description of "advanced" or "banner town", its developed mass movement was in 1918 being described as "the despair of labour politicians".

Part of the explanation for this seeming paradox, it is suggested lies in demographic factors which, up until the First World War, gave control of the Trades Council to an alliance of aristocratic lace workers and newly urbanised colliers who for many years were politically dominated by Liberal coal owners. It is also argued that political "accidents" of personality and geographical factors which ensured that Parliamentary "two member" alliances could not be struck with the Liberals need to be taken into consideration.

Less certainly, the geological conditions of the Nottinghamshire coalfield which may have dampened the militancy of the mining community are pointed to as a possible retarding factor. Similarly, it is argued that the appeal of protectionism for some lace workers, and the a-political or anti-political attitudes of the exceptionally large female proletariat were together with the attitudes of the casual poor important special elements in the Nottingham situation which helped to explain its relative backwardness.

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I also wish to place on record my thanks to the many veterans of the Nottingham Labour Movement, who were prepared to allow me into their homes in order to share their memories of the early political and industrial movement in the town.

The General Secretary and the National Executive of the National Union of Public Employees also deserve special thanks for their kindness in allowing a period of leave of absence without which the thesis could not have been written. Particular thanks are due to my fellow Full Time Officers of N.U.P.E. in the East Midlands Division whose willingness to cover my normal work load during sabbatical leave was such a help.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.E.U.	Amalgamated Engineering Union.
A.S.E.	Amalgamated Society of Engineers.
A.S.L.E.F.	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen.
B.S.P.	British Socialist Party.
I.L.P.	Independent Labour Party.
L.N.E.R.	London and North Eastern Railway.
L.R.C.	Labour Representation Committee.
M.F.G.B.	Miners Federation of Great Britain.
M.P.	Member of Parliament.
N.A.C.	National Administrative Council.
N.C.L.C.	National Council of Labour Colleges.
N.M.A.	Nottinghamshire Miners' Association.
S.D.F.	Social Democratic Federation.
S.D.P.	Social Democratic Party.
S.L.P.	Socialist Labour Party.
T.U.C.	Trades Union Congress.

INTRODUCTION

Nottingham was first established eleven centuries ago by Danish settlers who built a township on the hilly ground just north of the broad Trent floodplain. Then as now, the town stands on a bluff which rises steeply from the river flats. Behind it, to the North, is the plateau formerly covered by the forest trees of Sherwood, which terminates at the Trent in a ridge. The older part of Nottingham is built on the steepest crag of this escarpment and between the foot of the cliff and the river there is a half-mile of what was level meadow land, through which runs the little River Leen, the Nottingham Canal and the line of the old Midland Railway. For an industrial centre Nottingham is favoured in its situation. The surrounding country is chiefly agricultural; it is sheltered on the North by low hills, whilst to the South lies the wide alluvial plain of the Trent and the wolds and valleys beyond.

From early days Nottingham has been noted for its manufactures. In the time of King John it made the famous cloth known as "Lincoln Green" and for some time it enjoyed a monopoly in the manufacture of dyed wool-stuffs. In the Seventeenth Century this industry declined and others were taken up, the most successful being tanning. Hand knitting of stockings was already a prominent industry, but it was not until weaving machines came into use that the trade assumed any great proportions. This was in the early Eighteenth Century, by which time the industry had centred on Nottingham. Some few years later, when the hose-making machines were improved and applied to the manufacture of lace, the town was already started on the road which was to lead in the Nineteenth Century to its pre-eminence in the lace and hosiery trades.

Like a dozen or more other English towns, Nottingham during the Nineteenth Century was transformed from a small county town into a great industrial City. During the Eighteenth Century its reputation had been that of one of the most attractive towns in the country, famous for its gardens and orchards. Defoe, writing in 1724-1727 described Nottingham as "one of the most pleasant and beautiful towns in England." ¹

As the town's major industries of hosiery and lace began their expansion, large numbers of workpeople were attracted into the town from the surrounding agricultural areas. Although this process was uneven because of periodic years of depression, the population of the town rose from 28,900 to 50,700 between the years 1801 - 1841. ²

In most towns this increase would have been accommodated simply by outward expansion. In Nottingham, however, this was not possible.

The land encircling Nottingham was in the control of aristocratic landowners like the Duke of Newcastle or Lord Middleton; or alternatively, by the Burgesses and Corporation of the town itself. Both groups resisted strongly all pressure to allow building on their land, so that for the first half of the Nineteenth Century the town was forced to pack most of its population within the narrow limits of the old Borough.

Much of the new building which resulted was back-to-back housing which of necessity often included workshops for framework knitting or lace making. In this period Nottingham had 8,000 back-to-back houses, often built around completely enclosed courts. Since very little attention was given to sanitation or public health the Nottingham slums soon became notorious throughout the country, and a high proportion of them survived into the first decades of the Twentieth Century.

In 1845 Nottingham's common fields were at last enclosed so that the town was able to spread quickly to the North, South and West. Monotonous red brick terrace rows, interspersed with tall tenement factories, were speedily built as the hosiery and lace trades continued to

expand. By the middle of the 1870's the town had largely extended its boundaries over the undulating plateau to the North, as well as over the river plain in the South. In 1888 an Act of Parliament was passed which extended the Borough by an increase of 8,000 acres. This extension was one of the largest ever made by a municipality and it gathered into the Nottingham boundary the villages of Lenton, Radford, Basford, Bulwell and Sneinton.

By 1901 the town was established as a major industrial centre. Parts of the Northern district around Bulwell were still semi-rural, but most of the rest of Nottingham was now fully engaged in industrial activity of one kind or another. The thickly populated parts lying immediately North of the river bank made up a dense, poor neighbourhood, as did the housing in and about the old centre of the town. As might be expected it was these districts that produced the highest death rates.

The surface of the plateau on which Nottingham stands is thrown into elevations of varying heights and this hilly character contributes in some degree to the division between poorer and richer neighbourhoods. The working class population could be met with in nearly all parts of the town, although there were quite distinct quarters in which lived the middle class and wealthy sections of the population. Nottingham's successful merchants and manufacturers, for instance, built for themselves along the wooded avenues of the Park Estate and at Mapperley, mansions which would ensure their social isolation from the "hands" they employed in such large numbers.

During the sixty years with which this study deals Nottingham continued to expand at a great rate. In 1891 the population stood at 186,575; by the outbreak of the Second World War it was 283,003. Over these years the town struggled to respond to the increasing social and economic forces of urbanisation. Between 1881 and 1891 the population increased by almost 15 per cent and by the turn of the century 230,000 were living in what Queen Victoria, at a ceremony in 1897, had designated the City of Nottingham.

To house this rapidly expanding population 13,500 houses were built in the five years ending March 31st 1885, with no less than 3,302 being completed in 1883 alone. ³ In the Twentieth Century expansion continued apace. After the First World War Nottingham claimed to have built more houses per head of population than any other town in the country. In the years up to 1930 it developed in some thirty areas 9,371 houses, or one for every 78 people in the city. ⁴ Between 1930 and 1939 wholesale slum clearance was carried through and the building of carefully planned housing estates at a distance from the centre of the city presented a great contrast to the jerry-built development of much of the Nineteenth Century.

(2)

In 1880, when this study begins, most of Nottingham's population was employed in the staple industries of hosiery and lace. In 1881 there were over 500 firms engaged in various branches of the lace trade, whilst another 150 were involved in the manufacture of hosiery fabrics. Throughout the next sixty years, however, the lace and hosiery trades decline in importance to the local economy, as Nottingham industry was forced to respond to the pressures of international and national economic change through long-drawn-out processes of diversification.

The primer for much of the structural economic change at the end of the Nineteenth Century was the expansion of the Nottinghamshire coal field. Throughout the East Midlands the coal industry expanded at a rate unimaginable before the railway age. Most of the Nottinghamshire pits in this period were to the North of the City, but some were within the boundaries or just beyond them. As a result the collier was an important member of the local community; between the years 1881-1891 the number of coal miners living in Nottingham rose from 3,035 to 5,027 ⁵ whilst by 1930 there were over 50,000 living in the county.

Once the mining industry had been expanded to provide the raw material from which came the energy needed to expand industry, engineering and other industries were able to develop. These years were the early ones of Boots, Players and Raleigh, three firms which in the years which follow become increasingly vital to the Nottingham economy. By 1930 the Raleigh Cycle Company employed over 4,300, Boots over 5,000 making pharmaceutical products and the tobacco factories of John Player, many thousands more. ⁶ Industrial developments of this size ensured that Nottingham's fame which, at the beginning of the period of this study, rested firmly on the conjunction in every Victorian window of the aspidistra and the lace curtain, had by 1939 come to rely at least in part on the major commodity needed to sustain what some have called the 'aspirin age'. ⁷

As the factories and warehouses needed by these new industries began to grow, so, of course, did the reputation and bank balances of the Victorian magnates whose energy and application were responsible for these developments. Very much from the same mould, this group of men tended to come from humble beginnings, rising to positions of wealth and influence during the course of long and hard working lives. Sir Jesse Boot, chemist; Sir Thomas Birkin, lace manufacturer; Sir Ernest Jardine, engineer; Sir Frank Bowden, bicycle maker and the Player brothers, creators of the modern tobacco industry, all these threw their energies into the industrial changes which were transforming Nottingham at the end of the Nineteenth Century and the beginning of the Twentieth.

Not surprisingly, this group of industrialists nearly all lived in the stately houses of the Park. This beautiful private estate, planned on concentric lines, with wooded terraces, drives, circuses and crescents, was one of England's most pleasant residential quarters. Sylvan yet built in the heart of the city, it contrasted vividly with what one Nottingham writer has described as the "working class villadom" of more

proletarian areas. ⁷ Nottingham had many such areas to which this description could be applied but none more fittingly than the area known as the Meadows. Towards the close of the Nineteenth Century this low lying area on the banks of the River Trent, which had been fields famous for their masses of yellow and purple crocuses, became available for development, with the result that row after row of terraced houses were thrown up, turning the name of the Meadows into a travesty. In contrast with the Park it was in areas like the Meadows and St. Ann's that the town's working class lived. Packed tightly together, they lived in Rows and Courts rather than Drives and Crescents and although, like the industrialists living in the Park, many of them gained their livelihood from industry, they had little else in common.

Physically, Nottingham changed very considerably over the period of this study. Sixty feet wide boulevards around the city were built throughout the 1880's. Suburban railway lines were built and an extensive tramway developed. The centre of the town also underwent considerable change. The Market Place remained at the hub, but the various markets which were once concentrated nearby, gradually moved to other sites to prevent congestion. At the end of the great Market Place stood the Civic Exchange, a Regency building holding the Council Chamber and the Mayor's Parlour. It stood over a basement known as the Shambles, a congeries of butchers' shops lit by gas flares and hung with carcasses. At the end of the 1920's, however, all this disappeared. The old Square was laid out as an ornamental approach to a magnificent new Council House. By this time the city had already become known as the "Queen of the Midlands", although, as J.B. Priestley pointed out in 1933, the town still had "some very rough quarters." ⁸

This then is the City which provides the background for this study of the Nottingham Labour Movement. A great City of commerce and industry which developed a Labour Movement which in the early years of the Nineteenth Century gave the word "Luddite" to the language, elected

England's only Chartist M.P. in 1847 and in the 1870's produced, as secretary of its branch of the First International, a man able to write a remarkable pamphlet about the Paris Commune which drew the admiration of Karl Marx. In the years 1880 to 1939 this early movement grew in both size and self confidence, against a backcloth which included the growth of Socialism as the developed philosophy of the working class movement; great industrial conflicts like those of 1911 and 1926 and all the hunger and poverty represented by mass unemployment, hunger marches and the means test. This study will examine the response of the Nottingham working class to these threats and challenges and try to understand why it was that, although in 1873 the International Herald was able to describe Nottingham as the "banner town", always at or near the front of reform movements,⁹ the town was, by 1918, seen by many as "the despair of Labour politicians."¹⁰

.....

INTRODUCTION

1. Defoe, Daniel A Tour Through England and Wales ed. G.D.H.Cole (1927).
2. Enumeration Abstract 1841 (412) pp. 229-230.
3. This boom was referred to as a period of 'abnormal development'.
Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and the Relief
of Distress, 1909 (Cd. 4499) XXXVII. 1., p. 482.
4. Souvenir, Nottingham Trades Union Congress (1930) p. 79.
5. Mineral Statistics 1869-1901.
6. Souvenir, Nottingham T.U.C. 1930.
7. This phrase is used by Isabel Leighton in The Aspirin Age (1949).
8. Priestley, J.B. English Journey (1934) p. 135.
9. International Herald March 15th, 1873.
10. Labour Leader December 18th, 1918.

PART ONE

THE OLD ORDER BEGINS TO BREAK UP

1880-1893

THE TRADE UNION MOOD

Writing in 1876 Edward Carpenter who was lodging in Nottingham whilst lecturing on "The Failure of the Present Commercial System" and "The Possible Reconstruction of the Future", claimed that he "rather enjoyed the brighter air of Nottingham and the brighter spirit of the people after Leeds."¹ A few years later, William Morris, who was visiting the town, wrote: "strange to say that while other places have been depressed, Nottingham has fairly flourished these last few years; albeit it lives on producing a perfectly useless luxury: machine lace. Tis a finely situated town, and the great old market place is a rarity in England, but it is spreading all over the valley and up the hills in a ghastly fashion."² These two socialist propagandists were to have a good deal of influence on the hearts and minds of the most progressive of Nottingham's trade unionists, but in 1880, at the start of this study, there was little evidence of any great degree of radical thinking amongst them.

The mood and attitudes of most trade union members at the beginning of this study was deeply conservative. In Nottingham they were well summed up at the 1883 Trades Union Congress which took place in the town. Thomas Smith, a member of the local branch of the Lithographic Printers, was elected President and during his opening address he told the Congress:

"We have seen our local industries grow to prodigious proportions and I believe the reason for our recent period of exceptionally good trade has been mainly due to the strength and moderation of our local trade unions...the laws of Trade Unions elevated the character of the workmen by cultivating habits of industry, sobriety and providence."³

Although most of Smith's address was full of the kind of labourist rhetoric which claimed that "the twin elements of England's greatness were the unity and better understanding between capital and labour"; it did contain one brief but significant note of dissatisfaction with the economic

system when Smith expressed the view that although the nation had nearly perfected the means of producing wealth, it had "yet to learn how it is to be equitably distributed."

This comment was, however, almost a lone straw in the wind for in the same year the Nottingham Association of Organised Trades boasted that its annual dinner had been attended by Henry Broadhurst, a Lib-Lab. M.P., supported by "several gentlemen of position in the town."⁴ The desire for recognition and status which is here being demonstrated was a central feature of the psyche of many trade unionists and, as might be expected, was often an important factor in holding up political progress. In November 1885, for instance, at a specially convened meeting of the Trades Council, a major disagreement ensued on the question of support for John Burns, the S.D.F. candidate for West Nottingham in the General Election. Aaron Stewart, of the Nottingham Miners' Association, complained that Burns, in addressing his constituents, had stated that he had the support of the trade unionists of the district. In the row which followed Mr. Samson, a delegate, emphatically denied that Burns had ever said he had the support of trade unionists in any of his addresses. Osborne of the Hosiery Workers, then claimed that Burns had announced that he was backed by the trade unionists of the country "which very much appeared to include the Nottingham trade unionists ... in his opinion they should in no way interfere in the present election."⁵ Subsequently, as if to underline the anti-political nature of many union members, the Trades Council passed a resolution "that this body is not in any way supporting Mr. Burns or any other candidate." In fact, however, Robinson, the Trades Council President and several others amongst the Trades Council leadership, were active Liberal Party members.

The "no politics" arguments which they used on this and other occasions need to be seen as part of the tactics employed by "respectable" trade unionists who sensed that they were about to be seriously challenged by a generation of new, young, socialistic union members. Underpinning the "no politics" argument of the leading trade unionists in the town was

the labourist philosophy which, in Professor Saville's view, was :

"the theory and practice of class collaboration; it was a tradition which in theory (always) and in practice (mostly) emphasised the unity of capital and labour, and the importance of conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes." 6

The truth of this judgement was often well demonstrated in Nottingham. In February 1886, for instance, the Trades Council wrote to Gladstone, the Prime Minister, in order to thank him for the appointment of Henry Broadhurst as an Under Secretary of State and in the same year it was reported that the Nottingham hosiery workers were attempting to reorganise their trade union "with a view to a more friendly relationship with the employers." 7 This is, of course, a reference to the habit of arbitration which, under the influence of A.J. Mundella, a Nottingham hosiery manufacturer, had been such a feature of the town's lace and hosiery trades during the late 1860's and 1870's. 8

The desire of the Nottingham hosiery workers for "friendly relations" with the employers during the 1880's was reinforced by the very depressed state of their trade. In this period a growing number of small manufacturers in the country areas were undercutting the town manufacturers. Constant changes in machinery and fashion also served to undermine trade union rates and regulation. The problem of women taking work traditionally reserved for men at lower rates made things worse and was referred to by John Burns after a visit to Nottingham, who wrote in his diary of "women and girls busy at work displacing their husbands, brothers and sweethearts." 9 Certainly the establishment of uniform piece-work lists was no easy task against a background in which no permanent Employers' Association existed, with whom to negotiate. It should be remembered, however, that although there was no permanent collective bargaining system, the employers were well enough organised to stamp hard on any incipient trade unionism in the country areas.

Faced with difficulties like these the hosiery workers, by the end of 1888, found themselves impelled towards agreeing that the Leicester



John Thorneloe was born in 1864 at Carlton, just beyond the Nottingham boundary. In 1898 he was appointed General Secretary of the Hosiery Workers and in 1899 became secretary of the Trades Council. In 1904 he was elected to the Board of Guardians, having become a J.P. in 1902.

Union, the Nottingham Rotary Union and the Ilkeston Union should come together in a Midland Counties Federation. Subsequently, a common fund with each society paying one penny per head per month was set up from which strike pay at five shillings a week was to be paid. Sam Bowers, the Nottingham leader, was made secretary, and encouraged by early growth, he and others soon began to talk of a common price list. After some initial success, however, the Federation found itself unable to make further progress in the country areas where many of the remote and poverty-stricken communities were prepared to accept wages far below the Nottingham rate.

The problems created by non unionism of this kind must have played a part in shaping the attitudes and opinions of the local trade union leadership. In March 1889 it was reported that, of the 1,500 tailors in the town, only 200 were organised. The same kind of figures were true of many other trades, helping to create an atmosphere in which active trade unionists must have been torn between the desire to appear respectable, moderate individuals and a wish to adopt the militant tactics of confrontation. On balance, however, most of the older generation of skilled trade unionists who dominated the Trades Council opted for respectable labourism. This was demonstrated at the 1889 Trade Union Congress when Corbett, a Nottingham representative of the Brickmakers Society, attacked a group of militants who were complaining about the activities of Henry Broadhurst. According to Corbett an attempt had been made to mislead the working men of the country:

"into thinking that the trade unionists of Nottingham were directly opposed to Mr. Broadhurst. That, however, he could assure the Congress was not according to fact... the Parliamentary Committee, its President and its Secretary had the full confidence of all trade unionists in Nottingham." 10

This spirited defence of Broadhurst could have been made by any one of a dozen of the older generation of Nottingham trade unionists. Not surprisingly, the local Liberal Party wrote to tell him that they had passed a resolution :

"congratulating our member Henry Broadhurst M.P. upon his signal refutation of the scandalous charges that have been made against his honour and integrity as a trade unionist..."

Another Nottingham correspondent wrote to say that he had :

"watched with much interest the course of matters which culminated at the Trade Union Congress yesterday and am delighted that you were so triumphantly vindicated..."¹²

In fact, Corbett was wrong to suggest that Broadhurst had the "full confidence of all trade unionists in Nottingham". There were some amongst the most progressive elements who saw through his technique of spicing his speeches with fulsome praise for his audience.¹³ Others amongst the town's mining population could not forgive his opposition to the Eight Hour Bill, whilst others must have resented his obvious taste for the company of influential Liberals.

In many ways Broadhurst was the archetypal Lib-Lab, standing with his back to the fire of aristocratic drawing rooms, basking in the compliments of rich and influential members of the local elite. Not surprisingly, there were many amongst the leadership of the Nottingham trade unions who would have liked to emulate him, if not on quite such a grand scale. Of this group many saw the trade unions as a means of individual social mobility, status and prestige in a society which provided only very limited opportunity for social advancement. These concerns were often in the background of Trades Council discussion which on the surface had a more straightforward objective. In April 1887 for instance, delegates agreed to write to the Lord Chancellor urging the appointment of working men on the Bench of Magistrates. In November of the same year a Trades Council deputation visited the Town Clerk in an attempt to get a share of the seats on the University College Committee. In March 1889 the delegates were involved in a long discussion on the "fitness" of a group of trade unionists who, it was proposed, should visit the Paris Exhibition at the expense of Morley, one of the Town's Liberal M.P.'s and in December 1892 they joined in fulsome praise of Hardstaff, the Trades Council President, who had just been appointed a Justice of the Peace.¹⁴

Not surprisingly, however, the labourist philosophy found itself under increasing challenge as economic and social change began to make its impact on late Victorian society. In 1890, for instance, a new organisation in opposition to the Lace Operative Society which dominated the Trades Council at this time set out its aims as being "to correct many abuses of the past and regain for the workmen some of the ground lost to them by the present ineffecient and costly Executive". According to this group, their officials had formed "a sort of ring, who wriggle and twist and argue and expostulate before the members to such an extent that they virtually 'rule the roost'."¹⁵ Behind these complaints lies a deeply held aversion for the bourgeois ideology which through the medium of a range of cultural institutions on the fringe of the labour movement proper had done so much to mould the generation of trade union leaders who had established the Nottingham Trades Council in 1890. Many amongst this leadership were active in the Mechanics Institute, the Temperance Societies, or Adult Education. Others, particularly those who led the miners, were active members of the nonconformist church or co-operative society.

The yearning for acceptance and respectability which played such a dominant part in the thinking of this important group of trade unionists was to keep on surfacing in one form or another for many years yet. The period from 1880 until the formation of the I.L.P. in 1893 comes at the end of a classic period of labourism. The strength and power of the ideas embraced by this concept had, however, struck very deep roots into the local movement. In March 1891, for instance, the Mayor of Nottingham wrote to the Trades Council in order to ask that a number of them meet at his private residence, "in order that he might have a chat with them on labour subjects". Such was the awe in which even the more progressive elements held the office of Mayor that even the militant Nottingham correspondent of the Workman's Times reported this invitation as a triumph which indicated that "truly, trade unionism is making its influence felt."¹⁶ Later, the Trades Council Annual Report boasted of the fact that the Mayor



George Allcroft was born at Mansfield, but he came to Nottingham when he was ten years old. At fourteen he was apprenticed as an engineer to a firm which built lace machines. He joined the A.S.E. when aged twenty and became the secretary of the Nottingham No. 2 branch when it was formed. Allcroft remained secretary of this branch for the next four decades. He was for a number of years treasurer of the Trades Council, and at one time between 1883-1886 he was a member of the School Board. The Webbs who interviewed him in the early 1890's labelled him as one of the most conservative unionists they had met.

had "honoured a section of the Trades Council with invitations to a banquet."¹⁷ In October 1890 the Typographical Association, at its annual dinner in the town after toasting "the army, navy and auxiliary forces", went on to lift their glasses to "our employers" and there is little doubt that this union's representatives on the Trades Council would have been, together with those of other craft unions, in full agreement with the Trades Council members who, in July 1893, set up a joint committee with the local Chamber of Commerce to settle trades disputes in the town.

Beneath the surface harmony indicated by this kind of development, however, some of the old political certainties were beginning to break up. In 1890, for instance, a Nottingham socialist wrote to tell the

Workman's Times :

"The hoardings and walls are now covered with election addresses;—we have endeavoured to find an address where the Trade Unions are not specifically mentioned and we have failed to do so. We find, on the contrary, that Trade Union principles are lauded to the sky by the candidates and that one or two cases with such glaring hypocrisy and audacity that we hope will meet with the defeat such meanness deserves." ¹⁸

The hypocrisy and audacity referred to here were a product of the need of established politicians to win working class support. Since this need complimented the aspirations of the aristocratic elements in the local Trades Council it inevitably led to a long series of political alliances and arrangements which in turn helped to shape the industrial and political development of the Nottingham labour movement. For the moment, however, Nottingham remained a stronghold of the labourist tradition. In 1893, the year in which the I.L.P. was founded, Allcroft, the secretary of the Nottingham No.2 branch of the A.S.E., told the investigator working with the Webbs on their History of Trade Unionism that many in the town had been very vexed when the Midland Railway built its workshops in Derby and thought that they had lost a good thing. His opinion, however, was that "any town is better off without the crowd of wretched ill paid labour that a railway works would bring with it."¹⁹ Later the Webbs researcher characterised Allcroft and his colleague Conery as, "the most

old fashioned conservative engineers I have met." There is little doubt, however, that both men were typical of a type of trade unionist who was fully content with a place in what E.P. Thompson has called "Smiles Valhalla."²⁰ This group of labourists often had a place in the Liberal firmament and the majority of them almost always supported the Liberal Party. As a consequence the socialists found it extremely difficult to make headway against the controlling influence of the old guard. In time, however, the undisguised hostility of skilled workers like Allcroft would help to push many amongst their unskilled colleagues toward the socialists who sought a transformation of society and away from those labourists who remained content to merely protect what they saw as specifically working class interests.

ORGANISING THE TRADES COUNCIL

The first attempt to form a Nottingham Trades Council followed the establishment of a Chamber of Commerce in the town in 1861. Its objects were relatively unambitious, centering on a desire to bring moral pressure upon labour organisations in the hope of developing general sympathy and good will between workers of different trades. This Association of Organised Trades, as it called itself, declared in favour of :

"the establishment and perpetuation of a more intimate connection between all branches of the operative classes ... increased efficiency in the operation of Trade Societies ... watching over the general interests of labour, both in and out of Parliament ... the peaceful settlement of labour disputes." 1

In the view of the Association, "the frequent disputes arising between Employers and employed have long been suggestive of the necessity of some plan to prevent, if possible, those social disasters called strikes, which are attended in most cases with loss on both sides, and in some cases with ruin to the former and privation to the latter."

Throughout the 1860's the Association of Organised Trades seems to have been relatively inactive, only making its voice heard during the 1867 London Tailors' strike and the stoppage of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Miners in the same year. However, the organisation was represented at the Sheffield Trade Union Congress in 1868 and in 1872 it convened the Nottingham T.U.C., its own chairman presiding over the deliberations. By 1878 what was now being called the Nottingham Organised Trades Council had an Executive of 40 members representing over 6,000 workers in various trades. The largest groups were the Lace Operatives and the Rotary Framework Knitters' Society. Building trade workers were organised separately and had their own Trades Council. 2

In 1875, for reasons which are obscure, a Federated Trades Council was formed, seemingly as an offshoot of the Organised Council. It is

tempting to speculate that this development was politically motivated but whatever the reason, both groups were in a debilitated state at the start of this study. The Annual Report of the Organised Trades for 1880 said:

"The falling away of some societies from the Council during the past few years through which the depression in trade has continued has been in consequence of their inability to pay the usual subscription, whilst other societies have found themselves reduced in numbers from the same cause." 3

Groups like the railwaymen and miners were not affiliated to either organisation and although in 1881 engineering accounted for 10% of the male workforce, none of the 3 branches of the A.S.E. were linked to the other unions in Nottingham. Against this background an attempt to unite the Organised Council, together with the Federated Council and the Building Trades Council was overdue when, in December 1883, a meeting was called to form a Joint Committee. This preliminary Meeting was followed, in January 1884, by a further meeting at which delegates from all 3 organisations reported in favour of what they called "the movement." The new grouping, to be called the United Trades Council of Nottingham, comprised 4 delegates from each organisation and declared its objectives to be :

"to afford moral assistance and sympathy to the whole of the trades in Nottingham in times of trouble, to organise trade societies for protective and friendly purposes, to bring about an amicable adjustment in cases of dispute, to petition Parliament upon questions affecting the rights of the working classes and to co-operate with similar associations." 4

It is significant that this regrouping took place in 1884, for that year saw the start of a long period of heavy unemployment in the town. The late 1870's, a period of "abnormal development in the town"⁵ which reached a peak in 1883, was accompanied by a building boom. William Mansell, secretary of the Nottingham stonemasons, told the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry in 1886, that during the 1870's there had been a great deal of "speculation by jerry house-builders" which attracted extra labour into the town.⁶ When investment suddenly slackened at the end of 1883, this augmented labour force was added to the usual heavy

seasonal winter unemployment creating a major crisis.

The new grouping quickly began the job of consolidating its position. In March it was inviting the Secretaries of the Engineers and the Joiners to attend future meetings. A month later it fully endorsed the action of the bricklayers who were on strike in a local dispute, before going on to organise a demonstration in Long Eaton where serious attempts were made to induce the lace workers of that town to organise. This demonstration cost the Nottingham trades unionists £24.13.11d. They had hired a train and two bands as well as getting the support of the Derby Trades Council.

In August a spokesman from the Miners Federation met the United Trades Council Committee to complain that the checkweighman at Wollaton Colliery was being hindered from doing his duty because he was "a staunch society man".⁷ This report led to the United Council appointing a deputation to wait on Sir James Oldknow, one of the employers, to lay the facts before him. Clearly the Council was here demonstrating its belief that the exerting of moral pressure rather in the style of the old moral force Chartists could be a major factor in the settling of disputes. By itself, of course, this kind of tactic could never be particularly successful and by early 1885 there are signs that this truth was beginning to dawn on the most active of the town's trade unionists.

Against the background of mounting unemployment the building trade unions accused the Town Council of restricting local job opportunities by awarding building contracts to firms outside Nottingham. In March over a thousand unemployed had presented themselves at the workhouse, forcing the guardians to offer them places, 55 being subsequently admitted.⁸ At the same time the Town Council was awarding the contract for new Law Courts, Police Station, Fire Station and Public Offices to a Liverpool firm. Not surprisingly, this decision led the United Council to conclude that "seeing the conduct of our own Town Council in giving work out of the town...it is advisable that this body should take up the question of working men's

representation."⁹ Subsequently, the Building Trades Council formally asked the Town Council to reverse its decision in favour of a local employer, but the Council rejected this plea. A later complaint from the United Council that the Liverpool contractor was using sub-standard material was also turned down and eventually the matter had to be dropped.¹⁰

Unemployment continued to be a major problem and with this in mind the United Council seems to have continued its efforts to form a Labour Representation Committee although discussion on Parliamentary representation was put on one side in April 1885 because of the "difficulty of putting forward a Labour representative!"¹¹ The unemployment statistics were also a major stimulus in persuading the United Council of the need to extend their organisation and develop effective defences against the employers' attempts to force down wage levels. According to Harry Collier, the Secretary of the Nottingham branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the most prominent symptom of the depression was the employers "taking a mean advantage of those who were employed to reduce wages, alleging that others would work for less."¹² The Annual Report of the Organised Trades for 1886 makes the point that "encroachments upon the wages and privileges of the working men have been continuous and severe". According to the same report the hosiery industry was particularly badly hit; "many members have been thrown upon their funds by the continuance of bad trade."

Even before the winter unemployment figures began to climb the Organised Trades Council was busy trying to strengthen its defences and in June 1886 it decided to "render all assistance in our power to the Building Trades Council."¹³ This was a reference to attempts to form a trade union for building trade labourers. At this stage these efforts do not seem to have been very successful but despite this disappointment it was reported in December 1886 that the Joiners branches in the town were about to join the Building Trade Council. Predictably, the winter months of 1886-7 led to severe distress. Led by a marching band, crowds of unemployed straggled through the streets and in January the Mayor appealed for funds

to make possible the distribution of bread and soup to those out of work. In the same month a mass meeting in Sneinton Market Place produced 2,000 signatures to a Petition calling on the Council to open relief works, but by and large these appeals fell on deaf ears, the memorials from the unemployed being simply passed to the guardians.

Although unemployment continued to be a major concern of the United Council industrial disputes of one kind or another were its major pre-occupation. In February 1887 it was reported that the brickmakers were being threatened with an 11% reduction. Not surprisingly the Trades Council pledged to use "all of its moral support to resist such an unjust reduction."¹⁴ Later in the year the Council was in the thick of the Midland Railway lock-out. In August the Council passed a resolution which regretted:

"the action of the Midland Railway Company in compelling the workmen in the employment as engine drivers and firemen to strike against what we believe to be a most objectionable system sought to be introduced by the Directors which would be the means of practically driving some of the men to the verge of starvation and this Council unanimously agrees to give every assistance they possibly can to the men who are combatting a most indefensible system of tyranny and oppression."¹⁵

Later the Council heard a deputation of Engineers and Firemen and although the railwaymen were not at this stage affiliated to the United Council it was agreed that the Council would support a mass meeting in the Market Place. Sadly the consequences of this dispute created a good deal of bitterness and distress. In November Thomas Ball, who had been an engine driver with the Midland Railway, wrote to the Nottingham Express to appeal for work on behalf of the men out of work as a result of the strike:

"49 have left their native land for America and Australia we have some 50 men left whose only solace appears to be the fact that they were faithful and not traitors to their comrades."¹⁶

At about the same time the Council was involved in trying to prevent the efforts of a local employer to "lower the standard rate of wages of the bricklayers of the town."¹⁷ Stoppages of local miners and the town's cigar makers also attracted the support of the United Council so that by

the end of 1887 the organisation was well on the way to having consolidated its position as the major spokesman for the town's trade unionists.

As the depression of the 1880's continued the challenges faced by the Council became more serious and the organisation found itself increasingly involved in trying to better the lot of the poorer paid and sweated workers. This was, of course, the period in which the movement to organise the unskilled was beginning to gather momentum and the Council did a good deal of work to help this development forward. A United Council enquiry into the extent of sweating in the area, for instance, produced evidence of extensive sweating in the clipping and scalloping departments of the lace industry. Sweating in the hosiery trade was a feature of the seaming operation and the Boot and Shoe workers reported sweating as a feature of work in the country areas surrounding the town. On occasion the United Council publicised the names of employers who were known as sweaters, and in December 1888, after hearing a deputation from the Tailors' Society they agreed to join a protest at a Town Council decision to place a police clothing contract with a sweating employer.¹⁸ In the same period the engineers were busy trying to organise the unskilled workers in their trade. Evidence collected by the Webbs suggests that although it was true to say that "the engineering trades in Nottingham are well organised and far above the average of other trades", it was also the case that the sinker makers, the drillers and the labourers were unorganised. The labourers, according to the Webbs, were "at present entirely unorganised, although several attempts have been made to get them into the Gas Workers Union."¹⁹

Shortly afterwards, on December 12th 1889, the Building Trades Council gave notice of its intention to withdraw from the Joint Committee, as a consequence of political differences. This development left the way open for a significant series of negotiations which led to the amalgamation of the Association of Organised Trades and the Federated Trades Council. The first meeting of the modern Trades Council was held in the Lace Operatives Office on June 19th 1890 and was attended by 41 delegates,

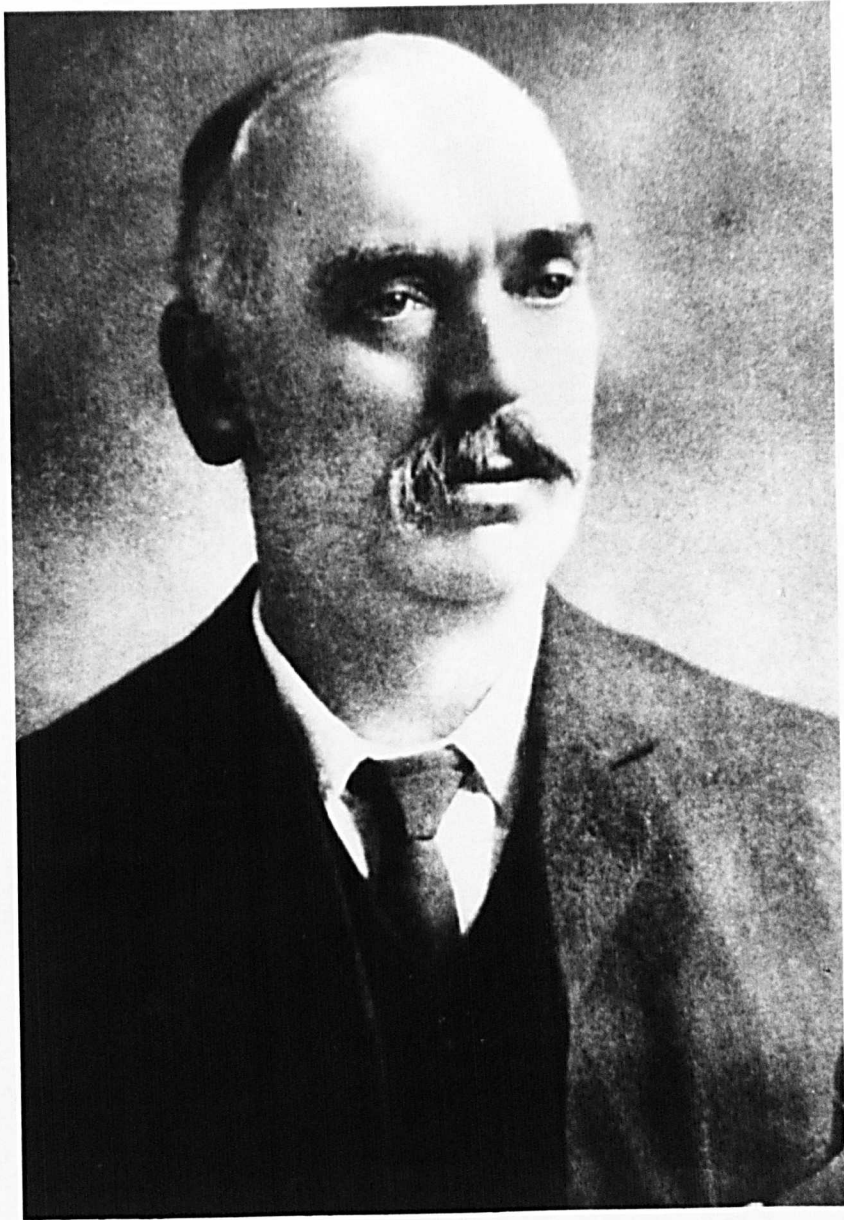
representing 21 trade union branches. To secure additional affiliations the second meeting set up a special committee, which carried out its task so energetically that by the end of the year 9 more societies had joined the Council, and 8 more in 1891.

The earliest organising work of the new Trades Council took place in October 1890 when they mounted a special meeting with Lady Dilke around a campaign to unionise women workers. Lady Dilke spoke for sixty-five minutes about the plight of the match girl and matchbox makers. Later she spoke about the conditions of white lead girl workers before strongly appealing to the Nottingham women workers to "follow the example of their downtrodden sisters in other parts of the country and form themselves into protective organisations."²⁰ This meeting may well have had some success since shortly afterwards it was reported that women working in the local hosiery trade had formed a union for themselves which claimed to have 400 members.

Other Nottingham trade unionists were also heavily involved in working to organise workers who at this stage were outside the official trade unions. In August 1890, for instance, the Gas and General Workers Union, which had formed a Nottingham branch in December 1889, held an outdoor recruiting meeting which was very well attended :

"First to hold forth was Jebbett the chairman, a man of few words, robust and earnest nevertheless...then the rapid ejaculations of the immaculate Proctor pouring upon us with relentless grievances of Labour from the Antipodes to Great Britain, from the continent of America across the Pacific to darkest Africa, on through Arabia's burning sands, with a final peroration upon the conditions of those he was addressing. Then, like a breath of wind upon a hot scorching day the quiet, persuasive tone of the ever youthful Reuben Davis who, in a few words, delivered a speech fit for the occasion. This brought up the apostle from London, Mark Hutchins, impulsive and fiery, with flashing eye, he recited the tyranny which brought forth the union." ²²

All of this activity is indicative of the convection currents which were at work within both the national and the local labour movement.



W. Lane was born in Nottinghamshire in 1860. In 1885 he was taken on by Nottingham Corporation as a gas stoker. Lane was one of the founders of the Gasworkers and General Labourers Union in 1889 and became secretary of its No. 1 branch on its formation. In 1901 he became a member of the Trades Council Executive. He was greatly interested in Friendly Society work.

A Nottingham contributor to the Workman's Times made the point that the Trades Council "bids fair to become one of the strongest in the Kingdom, at the present time something like thirty societies are connected with the Council with a promise of two more joining at the next meeting... a list of sixteen societies is made out for visitation by the deputations appointed for the purpose and no doubt these societies will be prevailed on to join." ²³

In the months which followed this prediction showed plenty of signs of proving accurate. In September the Gas Workers No.1 branch and the Cabinet Makers affiliated. Early in October the Gas Workers No.2, the Steam Engine Makers, the Hucknall Framework Knitters, the Lithographic Artists and the Blastfurnacemen all joined. On October 17th four delegates from the Nottinghamshire Miners Association attended for the first time and Bailey, their full time agent, gave notice of his intention to move a resolution at the next meeting calling on the Trades Council to organise the tram and bus men. A few weeks earlier four new trade union branches had affiliated, leading the Workman's Times to remark "on every side we see a desire to federate and consolidate the whole interest of the working class." ²⁴ The same report went on to rejoice that "one very appropriate and interesting feature of the Trades Council meeting was the presence of a lady delegate representing the Female Cigar Workers... and another large shop has joined the Women's Hosiery Union." In November the Workman's Times was able to happily report some success for the growing numbers of Nottingham trade unionists when it claimed that "the shoe has pinched very severely, those firms not on the fair shops list operated by the building trades and Typographical Association." ²⁵ All of the available evidence seems to indicate that these few months at the end of 1890 were ones of unparalleled expansion of the Nottingham trade unions. The Typographical Association was reported to be growing in strength both by an accession of new members and the recruiting of new workshops to the list. The Basford

Bleachers Association which in March 1890 had 40 members was reporting over 150 on its books by November. On October 31st the Trades Council invited Mr. Jackson of the Northern Counties Tramway Hackney Carriage Employees Association to come to the town to help form a branch and a month later three midnight recruiting meetings had been successful in getting a branch off the ground. In December an organiser from the Brass-workers visited the town and successfully launched a branch of their Association. The Building Trade workers continued their efforts to organise labourers and the Bakers reported "new members joining well."²⁶ Also in December the Tailoresses affiliated to the Trades Council, providing a third woman delegate and rounding off a year in which in organisational terms the Nottingham trade unions had gone from strength to strength.

Amongst the established unions the 1880's had as for instance in the case of the engineers or lacemakers, suffered from an inability to absorb on a permanent basis the mass of the lower paid. The "closed" unions which they developed deliberately restricted entry to the occupation they organised and their bargaining power hinged upon this restriction.²⁷ Many of those most active in the explosion of trade union activity which occurred in 1889-90 seem to have been younger men and many amongst these were attracted to the doctrines of socialism. Bailey, Hardstaffe and the rest of the Nottingham older generation of Trade Unionists tended to cling to the old labourist ideology underlining, as Asa Briggs has pointed out, that "there is real value in labour history, as in other branches of history, in thinking in terms of generations."²⁸ The very dramatic growth in trade union organisation which young men like Samuel Bower, or Ernest Gutteridge in Nottingham and similar individuals all over the country helped to establish was described by G.D.H. Cole as "the child of socialism out of unemployment",²⁹ but just as important in Nottingham was the general discontent of the unskilled and the return of a temporary prosperity. During the years 1889-1891 union membership

doubled. Growth of this kind brought with it many changes, the most important of which was, as E.J. Hobsbawn has pointed out, a sharp turn to the left and with it "the creation of a new cadre of leaders and policy makers... mostly inspired by various forms of socialism."³⁰ All of this was certainly true of Nottingham where the rapid expansion of unskilled unionism did much to challenge the sectional and aristocratic unionism of the lacemakers and other craft organisations.

Despite organisational progress the problems and challenges facing the town's trade unionists continued to multiply. On December 12th 1890 a group of Basford bleachers came out on strike in support of the right to belong to a trade union. A fortnight later they were still out, although their pickets had been successful in inducing several men to leave the place. On January 2nd 1891 about 200 women employed in the local hosiery trade were locked out for refusing to change the method of work without an increase. A month later both groups were still out, and there is little doubt that great hardship was being suffered. Undoubtedly some of those involved were beginning to draw political lessons from their experiences as the following report demonstrates :

"It is generally thought that in the hosiery trade wages have got to the bottom. All over the three counties the workers are beginning to cry out for something to be done ... I have been out of work for three weeks now. In plain language, I got the sack for resisting a reduction. Yet such is the insane system of society that we live under, that although there are thousands like myself, able and willing to work, we cannot get the opportunity. Again, although there are thousands going about in every large town, ragged and shoeless, they cannot give employment to tailors and shoemakers because they are so miserably paid for their labour and have not sufficient purchasing power. When will this state of things end ?"³¹

As the year continued the expansion of the local trade unions showed every sign of continuing at the same heady pace. In February two very successful outdoor meetings were held in support of striking Scottish railwaymen. Each was attended by about six thousand workers and shortly afterwards the railway trade unions announced that they would affiliate to the Trades Council. Even old-established organisations like

that of the Framework Knitters seem to have been expanding and in February they claimed that their membership had increased by 135 in the last six months. Later in the year two branches of the Railway Servants affiliated to the Trades Council and in October Hardstaffe, the President of the Trades Council, chaired a major recruiting meeting for the Railway unions. This effort seems to have been well organised with a brass band playing and parading the principal streets prior to the meeting, whilst Ben Tillett was also in the town, organising the railwaymen. Certainly, there seems to have been plenty of scope for advance amongst railway workers and the Labour Leader report of the demonstration hoped that "Mr. Clarke, the organising secretary of the Union, will be able to arouse these workmen from the apathy that prevails amongst them"³² Meanwhile the cab and busmen of Nottingham were "coming forward in a ready manner to join the Northern Counties Tramway and Hackney Employees Association,"³³ so that as the year turned the Nottingham trade unionists as a whole could look back on a year of great organisational advance.

These organisational labours continued into 1892. In February the Trades Council sponsored a meeting at Bulwell designed to organise chimney sweeps. In April they helped form a branch for men working in the blacksmith and forging trade and during the same month they helped the Gas Workers with a series of meetings designed to recruit the unskilled. Throughout this period, hardly a meeting of the Trades Council was allowed to pass without it being asked for help in some dispute or other. In August, Pete Curran, the Gas Workers' leader, held two recruiting meetings in the town and in September another big railwaymen's demonstration was held. The outdoor meeting in Sneinton Market Place passed a resolution deploring the large numbers of unemployed, many of whom must have been in the crowd of some thousands. The evening meeting held in the Co-operative Hall was supported by many leading members of the Trades Council and Bailey, the Miners Agent, spoke passionately in favour of the eight-hour day, making the point that :

"the forces against them were greed and capital, the desire for wealth and to manipulate industry and the industrial workers so as to gain from them every possible thing." 34

This kind of language from a well known Liberal is a useful pointer to some of the more subterranean currents which were at work within the local movement. Certainly the First Annual Report of the Nottingham Trades Council which was published in 1892 left a great deal unsaid in simply setting out a record of organisational success which recorded that within a year of its establishment it had added 22 additional branches to the original 23.

Nottinghamshire in 1892 had a population of 505,311. Of these, 31,050 were claimed by the Webbs to be members of trade unions, equalling 6.14 of the population. Of the neighbouring counties, Leicestershire had organised 7.34 of its population and Derbyshire 6.82 whilst for comparison, Northumberland had 11.23 of its population in trade unions.³⁵

These figures help to put into perspective the degree of progress which the trade union activists of Nottingham had still to make, but they should not disguise the fact that in the period 1880-1892 tremendous organisational steps forward had been taken.

TRADES COUNCIL POLITICS

The first United Council inspired attempt to launch an organisation aimed at achieving independent labour representation seems to have originated in 1884. The Council had presented a memorial to the Corporation asking that townsmen should be given preference in the execution of work for the City Council with the hope of relieving unemployment. In the same year the Trades Council petitioned for the removal of the Deputy Coroner as a person unfitted for his duties. Arising from these activities the Joint Committee took up the question of working men representatives on the City Council and took steps to carry out this objective. This early labour representation committee seems to have died at birth and it is tempting to speculate that it was stifled by the Liberal sympathies of many of the old craft unionists, although it must be remembered that in other towns the labourists were happy to support working men candidates.¹

Mention has already been made of the attempt made within the Council to kill trade union support for John Burns in the 1885 General Election, but in 1886 Henry Broadhurst, who was identified with old-fashioned trade union respectability, won an easy victory in the West Nottingham Division against Seely, a Gladstonian Home Rule supporter.² This victory for Broadhurst is partly explained by the fact that Seely, a local coal owner, was involved in a labour dispute at the time of the election. Perhaps just as important, however, was the appeal which Broadhurst generated for the older generation of trade unionists. This appeal to long established virtues of moderation and respectability still exercised a tight grip on the minds of many working class voters and Broadhurst's success at national level was to be repeated by many similar types in local Nottingham elections.

Against the background of the kind of Liberal manoeuvring which ensured Broadhurst's success it is not surprising that the Annual Report of the Organised Trades for 1886 makes the point that although an effort to promote a labour representation committee was "well supported at first, the question is not making such progress as its promoters would wish."³ Predictably perhaps, progress when it did arrive followed a trade dispute with a local Liberal employer. In August 1887 a United Trades Committee visited Mr. Vickers who, it was alleged, had provoked a strike of bricklayers by reducing their rate of pay. In February 1888 after a long correspondence with Vickers had produced no progress, it was resolved to lay the matter before the Wollaton Ward Liberal Association. In the dusty answer which they received lay the seeds of real political change for by October 1888 the United Committee was discussing seriously the names of candidates for the municipal elections, producing an "approved list" and agreeing to strongly oppose any attempt to nominate Vickers.⁴ Within a year the United Committee were to find themselves in the thick of a political debate which was to occupy them for the next three decades. At their meeting on August 8th 1889, after hearing accusations from the Nottingham tailors that Mr. Baggaley, a local employer and Liberal candidate, was an employer of sweated labour, it was agreed that the Council should seek an interview with the Bridge Ward Liberal Association to oppose his candidature. At the same meeting it was agreed to oppose the nomination of Mr. Elsey for Sherwood Ward. Two months later, after a long and animated discussion in which Sam Bower, the leader of the Rotary Power hosiery workers figured large in the demands for active trade union involvement, it was agreed to send the names of Baggaley, Wootton Elsey and Pyatt to the press as bad employers, unworthy of trade union support.⁵

Arising from these developments it seems that the tailors approached the hosiery workers with the suggestion that Bower should be asked to run as a trade union candidate. Bower, who was the full-time secretary of the Rotary Power workers, had been meeting Linforth, the

Liberal Party agent, about the United Council's objections to Baggaley's nomination and it was probably this series of meetings which decided the more intelligent of the Liberal Party managers that the time had now come when they must make a determined effort to absorb the leadership of the local trade unions. In any event some very fast talking seems to have taken place for within a day or two of the decision to denounce Baggaley as a sweater it was announced that Bower would stand as a Liberal nominee for St. Mary's Ward with Baggaley as one of his proposers.

As it happens, Bower was not the only trade union candidate in 1889 for the Liberals very sensibly nominated Bailey, the Nottinghamshire Miners agent for the St. Alban's ward in which lived many of the town's miners. Of the two trade union candidates, Bailey was much the safer from the point of view of the Liberal leadership and after telling the electorate that he came forward, "not merely as an earnest Liberal but as a working man candidate" he duly won the seat from two Conservative candidates.⁶ Bower, who seemed somewhat uneasy to find himself an official Liberal candidate, claimed that :

"the trade unions of the town had this time been unanimous in the selection of a candidate for their representative on the Council... he was not, therefore, the representative of any clique or section of the labour party. He came forward purely on labour lines, but at the same time he would not hide the fact that he had political opinions of his own."⁷

Just before the poll Bower told an open air meeting in Red Lion Square at which he was supported by Bailey that :

"they had no one on the Council to represent them; the present members were there to represent their own interests and they would be fools if they did not represent themselves first... if they wanted men to look after their own interests they must send men like himself to the Council Chamber."⁸

The views which Bower is here expressing were like those of similar activists all over the country capable of developing in favour of independent labour representation and all the signs are that this is what Bower really believed in. Unfortunately, despite a meeting of the unemployed at the Lace Makers Office which passed a resolution calling on "the working class of St. Mary's Ward to give their vote and support to

Mr. Sam Bower, the labour candidate,²⁷ Bower lost the election although his vote was more than respectable :

A.T. Wooton	Conservative	569
S.Bower	Labour	398 maj. 171

Bowers' defeat was, however, not enough to deflect the determination of those who believed in independent working class representation and they promptly redoubled their efforts to try and commit the Trades Council to the principle.

Undoubtedly, this factor must have generated a certain amount of tension within the United Committee for after some members of the Committee had protested at the action of the four Building Trades Council delegates in signing the manifesto of a Conservative candidate in the 1889 elections, the Building Trades Council gave notice of their withdrawal from the United Committee. Although seriously weakening the unity of the Nottingham trade unions, this withdrawal paradoxically had the effect of clearing the political decks and although there were, of course, many like minded elements in the Organised and Federated Councils, the Trades Council which was set up in 1890 was to some extent at least, more likely to take an independent political line than its predecessors.

The first meeting of the new Trades Council took place on June 19th 1890. At its second meeting on July 10th, Bower gave notice that at the next meeting he would call attention to the question of labour representation and move a resolution. News of this development must have spurred the local Liberals into action for at the Trades Council meeting on July 30th the President announced that he had received a letter from the President of the Liberal Union, Alderman Gripper. Mr. Davis, a member of the Liberal Executive it was explained, was in a position to "inform" the Trades Council of the opinion of the Liberal Party on this question. It appears that Robinson, the Trades Council President, had met Davis with the consequence that the Liberals had expressed themselves willing to meet a Trades Council deputation. It was suggested that the Liberal

Party was prepared to adopt trade union candidates for several wards if the Trades Council would select men to be brought forward. Bowers spoke in favour of the deputation but predictably his proposition was opposed by an amendment that "the Trades Council should have nothing to do with political questions."¹⁰ In the event a deputation did meet the local Liberals, but it was decided to take no action on their proposals until funds were available.

By October, however, arrangements were being made to decide what steps to take to secure the return of a labour candidate. The most progressive elements were determined to remove "some of the fine glib-tongued gentlemen who will promise anything at election time on purpose to secure a seat on the Council."¹¹ In the event John Skerritt, a Nottingham joiner was nominated as a Trades Council candidate without Liberal support for Wollaton Ward. By late October Skerritt's campaign which was based on a programme advocating "clean streams, clean streets and healthy habitations; fair wages, shorter days and pleasant recreation,"¹² was well under way with Wollaton Ward reportedly being vigorously worked by the "Labour Party". As far as canvassing returns could be relied on it was claimed that Skerritt stood a good chance of winning the seat. Although it was reported that Skerritt was being supported by the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Class as well as Mr. Peacock, the Temperance candidate for Market Ward, the realists amongst his supporters realised that :

"the elements against which the labour party has to fight are very formidable and it will need cute and careful watching on the part of the vigilance committees to circumvent the political sharks who are ever on the alert to trap a voter by a liberal portion of that commodity known in Nottingham vernacular as 'grease' or 'golden ointment'." ¹³

As it happened this prediction proved accurate and enough palms were greased and thirsts slaked to ensure that Skerritt did not win. Naturally enough his defeat was deeply regretted by the progressives, the more so since they could point to "a section of the labour party who have not hesitated to oppose Mr. Skerritt."¹⁴ Despite this disappointment, however, those active in the cause of independent labour could claim that

they had succeeded in ensuring that labour questions had come well to
the fore :

"nowhere has this been more displayed than in Nottingham during the municipal elections just decided. Every one of the candidates who has been successful at the poll is pledged to support the giving of Corporation contracts to those who pay the standard rate of wages..."¹⁵

That this group knew that they had a long way to go before they achieved their objective is demonstrated by what followed :

"not much reliance can be placed upon the promises of politicians if we take past experience as our guide. Hence we are strongly of the opinion that the most strenuous efforts should be made by organised labour to secure direct representation on the Council."¹⁶

Since it seems that one of the successful Liberal candidates had been supported by the General Railway Workers Union it is plain that there was still serious political differences between the union branches in the town. Not unnaturally the more aggressive elements found themselves fighting on more than one front and in the case of the railway workers they complained not only that the liberal sympathies of the railway union were "conspicuously displayed on posters" but that railway men were not "coming to the front on trade union questions and taking their stand alongside the other organisations in the town by joining the Trades Council."¹⁷

Shortly after the 1890 municipal elections the Building Trades Council was reported to have decided to "persevere in their desire to secure direct labour representation."¹⁸ In December the Trades Council heard a delegate from the engineers make a "capital speech" in moving a resolution which called in a very early reference for the setting up of a "Labour Representation Committee". This resolution was carried unanimously and this fact might be taken to indicate that a growing number of trade unionists in the town wanted to see early progress made. If this was the case there were others who were perhaps becoming disenchanted with the political process. One of these wrote to the Workman's Times after Broadhurst had failed to turn up to a demonstration in

support of Scottish railway workers :

"I wonder how long the masses will continue to be gulled by politicians and expect any good from them, or for that matter, from Parliament." ¹⁹

In the event those who hoped that the Trades Council would "put on one side their little jealousies and party politics" seem to have had some success and in March 1891 representatives of the Trades Council, the Building Trades Council (who must have had a change of heart) and a group of socialists who had set up an organisation called the Workers Electoral Federation all met at the offices of the Lace Makers to try and form "one solid labour party."²⁰ As a guide to the kind of general support amongst Nottingham workers for the need to set up independent labour party it is interesting to note that the Workman's Times, a trade union newspaper which was advocating this policy was, in March 1891, selling 1,276 copies in Nottingham, only Birmingham, with a sale of 1,554, seems to have been doing better.

By May it was reported that the Nottingham Trades Council:

"mean business. They have long talked about labour representation and municipal elections and they are now crystallising their thoughts into deeds. One of the first steps is to draw up a programme, the acceptance of which they will urge on all ..."²¹

Later in the month at the Labour Electoral Congress in Westminster Town Hall, Bailey, the Miners Agent and Liberal councillor, concluded a long speech by saying that:

"he would like to see at the next election some 40 or 50 men running and if they progressed as the influence they were able to wield deserved, within the next ten years they ought to have at least 100 labour representatives in the House ..."²²

In June it was reported that the Trades Council had elected a Labour Representation Committee, the progressives hoped that it would "do something besides talk this next November."²³ In August this Trades Council committee announced that they would run four labour candidates in the November municipal elections. This announcement apparently caused :

"Quite a flutter amongst the Liberal Party. They have in five or six wards within the last week or so, selected their candidates ... I should like to know if this is a fair specimen of the liberalism and labour we heard so much about last November ... we are only asking for four seats out of sixteen ... but it appears that if we are to get them, we shall have to make a few three-cornered fights. We have taken a back seat long enough." 24

The exasperation which is here being expressed by an individual who was probably a member of the Workers Electoral Federation was well justified, for of the four "labour" candidates named by the Trades Council three were to run with Liberal support, and one with Conservative backing. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Workman's Times, after reporting that an "energetic" movement was under way in the town, carried a letter from a Nottingham worker signing himself "Demos" which made the point:

"of all the silly and ridiculous programmes I have ever come across this one beats all ... if they mean business why are they not already in the field advocating measures which will induce the unemployed, the overworked, the cab and busmen, the women workers and workers of all kinds to take an interest in, make common cause and work to secure the return of genuine labour representatives independent of either party." 25

Obviously, with feelings running so high a split between those who were still the psychological captives of the old political parties and the socialists was inevitable. As the tension increased it was reported that:

"the labour representation committee are just now having their patience tried. Several of the so-called Trade Union leaders in the town seem determined that it shall be a party affair. Some have gone so far as to say that if it is not a party affair they will do their best to make it burst like a balloon. It is rather consoling to know that the parties who talk in this manner have more audacity than intelligence." 26

Subsequently, however, at a Trades Council sub-committee meeting between Bailey, the President, Trusell, the Vice President and Richards, the Secretary, it was agreed that a deputation should visit various trade union branches in order to appeal for funds towards the expenses of fighting four wards. This appeal was aimed at financing contests in

St. Ann's, Trent, Forest and Meadow wards. Because of the shortness of time the genuine socialists in the town now had no alternative but to stand on the sidelines as a campaign developed which demonstrated for all to see just how deep were the rifts in the organisation of the Trades Council.

Of the Trades Council sponsored candidates, Harry Collier looked the most incongruous. Standing as a Conservative-Labour candidate, Collier was only 36 years of age. He had, however, been secretary of his branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners since 1881 and also served on its national committee. Standing in the heavily working class Meadows Ward, Collier was supported by A.H. Jones, the President of the Nottingham branch of the Typographical Society and W. Mansell, the president of the Builders Society. Just how committed a Conservative Collier was is difficult to say. Certainly his candidature must have puzzled many of the miners and railwaymen who lived in the ward, one of whom, at an election meeting, advised Collier:

"neither party has done much for labour, if returned
Mr. Collier should not be pinned to the coat tails
of either party but act on independent lines. 27

Standing in Forest Ward as a Lib-Lab was Thomas Cheetham, a 41-year-old compositor. During his campaign Cheetham boasted that during his period as Branch Secretary of the Typographical Society its membership had increased from 37 in June 1881 to 252 in June 1891. Certainly, Cheetham seems to have been rather a smug and self-satisfied individual. From the platform of one of his meetings he proudly told the audience that :

"if evidence was wanted to prove the estimation in which he was held by the Society of which he was the Secretary he might mention that 12 months ago he was presented with a marble clock, a purse of £10 and a brooch for his wife, in recognition of his 'untiring service as Branch Secretary.'" 28

Skerritt, the candidate in St. Ann's, was another Joiner. Thirty-six years of age, he had in 1890 stood against the Liberal in Wollaton Ward. Now he had their full backing, as well as the support of

Richards, the Trades Council Secretary. Sam Bower, the Lib-Lab candidate for Trent Ward comes across as the most progressive of the four candidates. Born in Kirkby in Ashfield he was now 39 years old. As a boy he had worked on the land before beginning, at the age of 12, to work 12 or 14 hours a day in the neighbouring colliery. Bowers had come to Nottingham in 1878 to work in a hosiery factory. Two years later he was the hosiery workers' representative on the forerunner of the Trades Council and later whilst out of work having been victimised he was elected full time secretary of the Rotary Power Frame Workers by a majority of some 400 votes.

During the campaign in which these four candidates were involved the strain inside the Trades Council built up very considerably. Early in September the Workman's Times carried the comments of a contributor calling himself "Rotary Hand" which, after acknowledging that a "considerable difference of opinion" existed, went on to argue :

"our only chance is to obtain our ends through the political party. On labour questions our candidates will have a free hand."²⁹

These views (probably contributed by Bower) were not, however, shared by more aggressive elements and a week later the Workman's Times carried the very different opinions of one 'Agitator' :

"I will have a few words to say on the labour representation farce now being enacted in Nottingham ... I have just read Rotary Hand's Notes on the subject with which I cannot agree at all ... now in the name of goodness why go cringing hat in hand to either political party for leave to assert our rights to a share of the seats on the Town Council... at the meeting of the Joint Committee it nearly came to an eruption, part of the delegates having made up their minds to retire if the political clique gained the ascendancy, which, however, they did not; but when it comes before the Trades Council, if the party cry is not given up, the whole thing will end in smoke again."

A week or two later "Demos" joined in the argument by writing to complain that :

"an unholy alliance had been made between representative trade unionists and the Liberal Party whereby the former may be taken under the distinguished evil patronage of that section of the plundering classes and the game has begun. It began last Tuesday night when Mr. Skerritt (the heretic of last year in Wollaton Ward) delivered a curious speech (when he not only apologised for his conduct last year, but for his programme this year.)"³¹

Later in the campaign "Demos", whilst replying to an attack in the previous issue of the Workman's Times, went even further :

"the matter with me is that I had an attack of nausea which has not wore off yet ... after reading Skerritt's speech. Mr. Bowers the labour candidate for Trent Ward seems to me the most straightforward man of the lot. although there were some Liberal councillors in the room he told us last Friday night he went for labour first and last ... I hope he'll get in." ³²

When the results were announced only Skerritt in St. Ann's had been successful, beating his Conservative opponent by 104 votes. ³³ The progressives immediately made the point that if "the labour party had acted independently they could not possibly have done worse and probably better." ³⁴ In Meadows Ward it was pointed out the Liberal members of the Trades Council had canvassed in opposition to the Conservative-Labour candidate in spite of the fact that he was the chosen candidate of the Trades Council. So deep was the disgust of one group with this state of things that it was claimed that over 20 names were taken to form an independent labour representation association.

Analysing the result 'Rotary Hand', who, before the poll had been in favour of the Liberal alliance, made the following points :

"The bulk of the Liberal Party like the Conservative Party have not much love for labour. The following facts speak for themselves:-

In Trent Ward where Sam Bower ran as a Liberal-labour candidate he polled 464, last year the Liberal polled 605 or 141 more than Sam Bowers. In Forest Ward T.Cheetham ran as Lib-Lab and polled 619, last years Liberal polled 905 or 286 more than T.Cheetham. In the Meadows Ward a Conservative is run in the person of H.Collier who polled 471, last years Tory polled 601 or 130 more than H.Collier. I think one year's trial of the political parties is enough for the bulk of honest trade unionists... never mind - we know how to pay them for it." ³⁵

As the year drew to a close the discontent which had been simmering for so long finally boiled over when on December 12th at a meeting attended by over 100 in the Dove and Rainbow public house a resolution was passed which decided to form an Independent Labour Union. The officers elected to run this embryonic Independent Labour Party included: Mansell (Stonemasons) Camm (Joiners) Goldsmith (Cabinetmakers) Stratton (Tailors)

Jones (Miners) Elvin (Tailors) Potter (Hosiery Workers) Yeld (Painters) Nolan (Plumbers) Thundercliffe (Bakers) and Mansell (Printers).³⁶

During the spring and summer of 1892 many of the old political certainties began to break down. In January a Nottingham report remarked that:

"things are altering fast ... when I was a boy it was an easy thing to have been turned out of a public house for preaching trade unionism or justifying a strike. But I saw the other day an employer who has got his men on strike turned out of a public house. The publican afterwards remarked that he had too much respect for his customers to permit a man to remain who would not pay his men 5d an hour."³⁷

During this period the Fabian Societies which were being established in different parts of the country were often more proletarian and down to earth in character than the parent body. In Nottingham the Fabians had first appeared in January 1891 when Herbert Bland lectured on "The Future of English Politics" and "The New Reform Bill." In February, ~~E.C. Manning, a local Fabian,~~ spoke on "Machinery and Modern Industry." In November the Trades Council arranged a series of four Fabian lectures with Manning as the speaker and at the end of December Sidney Webb, after addressing a meeting on the aims and objects of the Fabian Society, successfully established a branch in the town. The working class nature of the Society in a period when it was being used as a kind of staging post for the later working class parties was well illustrated in Nottingham when in February 1892 the correspondent of the Workman's Times reported that he had visited the Dove and Rainbow and "as usual found a few trade union agitators and other dangerous persons discussing a series of Fabian meetings in the Mechanics Lecture Hall."³⁸ The discussion and argument indicated in this report must have been a major factor in accelerating the speed of political change and in the early part of the year a number of political propagandists helped to speed things up. In March, for instance, Cunningham Grahame, speaking in his "usual witty and sarcastic straight John Bull style" succeeded in persuading the miners of the West Nottingham constituency to pass a resolution pledging that they

would not vote for any candidate who would not support the Miners' Eight Hour Bill.³⁹ Later, at a Fabian meeting Mr. J.W. Buttery of Stafford Trades Council spoke to an audience of 90 on "The Political Duties of Trade Unions" and only a week later at another Fabian meeting the benefits of "Municipal Socialism" were expounded.⁴⁰ Some amongst the Nottingham activists, however, warned that the Fabians were "too prone to optimism; beware gas and water socialiasm employed to turn the workers aside from the capture of the mines and the mills." Since at this stage the Trades Council was only slowly bringing itself round to the idea of independent labour representation this particular warning was somewhat premature. In March 1892 the Council was once more involved in argument with the local Liberals about the nomination of an employer accused by the local tailors of using sweated labour. On this occasion the disagreement was about a Liberal candidate for the Board of Guardians. The Trades Council claimed that he had acted "contrary to the best interests of labour."⁴¹ In April the Wollaton Ward Liberals agreed to meet a Trades Council deputation but their secretary wrote to say that the Liberal Committee "considered themselves equally competent as the Trades Council to decide upon what is considered to be the best interests of labour."⁴²

At about the same time the Liberals wrote to ask the Trades Council to appoint a deputation of three delegates to confer with a like number of Liberal members of the School Board to discuss the filling of vacancies. Meanwhile, however, a significant shift of political opinion seems to have been taking place in some of the most important trade union branches. On April 23rd the Workman's Times reported:

"the gasworkers have passed a resolution to support no Parliamentary candidate who will not support the Miners' Eight Hour Bill. With the miners, the gasworkers and the hosiery workers nearly unanimous on the 8-hour day, besides many belonging to other trades, I don't see the security of Henry Broadhurst's seat in the same light as the wire-pullers of the Liberal Party, we are working men first, politicians afterwards."⁴³

Early in May, at a special meeting of the Trades Council, a resolution from the Labour Representation Committee was discussed which called for

a meeting with certain members of the Town Council, "to confer on the immediate desires of the Labour Party".⁴⁴ The right wing amongst the delegates managed to get this resolution adjourned before reporting that the Liberals would allow a trades council candidate for the School Board a free run, provided that the Trades Council would contribute to the costs. Later in May, however, the left were able to win a victory when a resolution pledging Trades Council support for a candidate in "the labour interest" in the Mansfield Division was passed by 29 votes to 27.⁴⁵ Personalities were also moving across the political spectrum in the spring and summer of 1892. At a meeting held in April Sam Bowers was elected secretary of what was now being called the Independent Labour Party. In its issue of April 30th the Workman's Times published an article calling for the establishment of an Independent Labour Party and asking supporters to send in their names and addresses. Of the first list of 163 replies which was published on May 14th Nottingham contributed 6 names and there is little doubt that this group of pioneers represented many more sympathisers. On the surface, however, there was little to indicate the subterranean movements which were now under way. May Day, for instance, passed off very quietly, leading 'Agitator' to complain :

"to be any quieter, the town would have had to be deserted. What are the Trade Union leaders (?) thinking about or doing (?) If they don't wake up and do something, they will have to be driven along a bit... the only procession I saw anything of was the Salvation Army. Last year the Trades Council talked about having one, but they seem to be as good at palavering as St. Stephen's and will probably let talking serve for next year, if they are not stirred up..."⁴⁶

Perhaps 'Agitator' himself was a member of the Trades Council for at its next meeting there were signs that a good deal of "stirring up" had been done. To the obvious chagrin of the Liberal supporters, an official Liberal offer to let the Trades Council replace a Liberal member of the School Board which carried with it the understanding that at the next municipal elections the Trades Council could run two candidates with Liberal support was rejected at a special meeting of the Trades Council.

Demonstrating how far he had moved the old Liberal supporter 'Rotary Hand' told the readers of the Workman's Times that in his opinion the Trades Council were "acting wisely in declining the offer. We had enough of Liberalism and labour last November and don't intend to be sold again."⁴⁷

By late May the list of potential Independent Labour Party members contained nine Nottingham names. For comparison, Derby had supplied two names and Leicester, five. Of the nine Nottingham workers who had expressed interest, one explained that he had been interested in the advancement of the workers towards social democracy but that eighteen months or two years ago he thought the time when a Labour Party would exist would be in the far distant future. Now, however, he had come to the conclusion that his class was at last waking up to the situation and almost wherever he went he heard talk of the need for an Independent Labour Party. This worker concluded by

saying of the Nottingham branch of the Tool Makers and Machinists, that he could "see them week after week, one by one, beginning to have their doubts as to the sincerity of either political party."⁴⁸ On June 4th the Workman's Times added two more Nottingham names to its list before telling its readers that Colonel Seely had consented to stand as a Unionist candidate against Broadhurst in the West Nottingham constituency in the forthcoming General Election. According to 'Rotary Hand' there was not the slightest doubt that he would pledge himself to support the Miners' Eight Hour Bill. If this was to be the case, added 'Rotary Hand' "he will have my vote for although I am opposed to him on politics, the Eight Hour question is of more importance than tweedledum and tweedledee."⁴⁹

It was perhaps the close proximity of the General Election which decided the protagonists of the Lib-Lab cause to once more try the issue at a full meeting of the Trades Council. At a meeting on June 29th they managed to get 24 votes for a resolution which said that :

"in the opinion of this Council, in consideration of the general circumstances, it will be unwise to continue the existence of a direct Labour Representation Committee."⁵⁰

The opposition to this resolution led by Jones of the Miners' Association

then moved a resolution of their own which argued that:

"direct labour representation can best be served and maintained by the formation of an independent labour organisation under the patronage of the Trades Council, with provision for individual membership and the affiliation of trade societies as a whole." ⁵¹

This motion received 22 votes in its favour and the narrow gap of only 2 votes between the 2 resolutions demonstrates just how evenly divided opinion was amongst Trades Council delegates. It seems that when the Jones resolution was about to be put to the vote, the Trades Council President, Hardstaffe of the Lace Workers, left the chair whilst "inviting the meeting to nail the resolution to the table." Certainly there seems to have been a good deal of bitterness generated by this disagreement. The socialist delegates to the Trades Council claimed that half the Council was

"so enamoured with the Liberal Party that sooner than sever themselves from them they will prostitute their labour principles to the Liberal Party." ⁵²

The mood of this group was not however, particularly downhearted, since they went on to say that the decision of the Trades Council had "cleared the ground for the Independent Labour Party which already had over 100 members."⁵³ Growing support for an Independent Party was certainly demonstrated in the additional 7 Nottingham names which were added to the Workman's Times list during June 1892. Included amongst them was that of William Doleman, the secretary of the Nottingham Tailors and his name was only one amongst a number of leading trade unionists who were now coming forward as I.L.P. supporters. During July 6 more names were added so that by July 23rd Nottingham could claim 35 of the first 1,000 names sent to the paper.

Meanwhile, largely because of his opposition to the Miners' Eight Hour Bill, Henry Broadhurst, the Lib-Lab M.P. for Nottingham West, had been turfed out of a constituency which he had won easily in 1886. For some time Broadhurst had been incurring the animosity of the large number of miners in West Nottingham and in 1892 he paid the price, losing

the seat by 301 votes.⁵⁴ The miners, of course, were not the only workers to oppose Broadhurst. Sam Bower had determinedly worked against him and in July it was reported that :

"Amongst the old trade unionists a very bitter spirit has been shown to Mr. Sam Bower for his action in opposing Henry Broadhurst. They have been indulging in the idea that he should be dismissed from his secretaryship (of the hosiery workers) at the General Meeting. The meeting has come and gone but, instead of Sam getting dismissed, a unanimous vote of confidence was passed in him. What a smack in the face for those fossilised old trade unionists who are content to be the hacks of a political party."⁵⁵

Although Bower easily maintained his position inside his own trade union the bitterness remained and in the wider movement the struggle between right and left seems to have intensified. After Hardstaffe, the President of the Trades Council, had been returned unopposed to a Liberal seat on the School Board, he came under heavy fire from the more progressive elements who remarked :

"considering the almost superhuman efforts that Mr. Hardstaffe has recently put forth for the purpose of grafting labour onto the liberal tree, this mark of appreciation does not occasion much surprise... Mr. Hardstaffe was once the pride and the hope of that section of local trade unionists who think that labour should dissociate itself from party politics, but he has developed ... perhaps more correct to say degenerated into an advocate of the most pronounced type of the doctrine of liberalism and labour. In fact, he may be regarded as the foremost local exponent of a policy designed to subjugate labour to the machinations of the party who prepare its schemes at the H.Q. of Liberalism. I wish Mr. Hardstaffe all the success he deserves."⁵⁶

The heavy sarcasm of this report is an indication of the strength of feeling within the Trades Council. This animosity next had an opportunity to demonstrate itself during September when the Council decided on its delegate to the Trades Union Congress. In what seems to have been a straight split between the left and the right, Hardstaffe received 38 votes and Jones of the Miners, 31. This result seems to have generated a further attack on Hardstaffe in the columns of the Workman's Times where a report on his election continued :

"when a job offers, what a fluttering in the dove-cotes, what a pulling and bustling and kicking out behind as the struggle who shall be up the ladder first develops and then, why then there is a leader missing and the rest go on the old game while waiting for the next race." ⁵⁷

This analysis of the process by which labour leaders were "bought off" was, of course, shared by many Nottingham workers. From it stemmed the belief that a new organisation independent of the corruption of older parties was needed. In the summer of 1892 all the signs were that the glacial grip of the old and degenerate political forms was beginning to melt. In July, for instance, at a large and successful I.L.P. meeting, "about a score of new members were recruited."⁵⁸ The Workman's Times was continuing to report additional Nottingham names coming in, and the August meeting of the organisation seems to have been well supported. Despite this progress, however, some of the activists continued to be depressed at the failure of many Trades Council delegates to come over. In September it was claimed that in Nottingham :

"the Labour Party are in a deplorable state here. Would you believe it, we are the worst political ridden town in the British Isles. The labour leaders do a little for labour six months in the summer, but towards November one third get the yellow jaundice and one third the blues ... labour groans under oppression ... Nottingham commonly called the Queen of the Midlands has men working in bleach yards for 2½d an hour ... a man worked 90 hours for 24s ... young married women work 56½ hours for 5s 6d a week."⁵⁹

In an attempt to capitalise on conditions like these the group supporting an Independent Labour Party were now holding regular outdoor meetings. In October at a Sunday night meeting in the Market Place, "splendid stirring addresses were delivered by Knight (Boot and Shoe) Bower. (Hosiery) and Jones (Miners). As usual, after the meeting new members were made."⁶⁰ Later the group decided to run Bower and Knight for the School Board. Within a couple of weeks, however, it was decided that only Bower should run as "Mr. J. Peacock is coming out as an independent. Mr. Peacock is a socialist and a very popular man."⁶¹

As the municipal election approached arrangements were made in September for a deputation of 6 Trades Council delegates to meet members of the Building Trades Council for a further discussion on the whole question of independent labour representation. In October, after a request from the Labour Electoral Association had been supported by 26 votes to 22, Skerritt was allowed to report to the full Trades Council on his year's work as a Town Councillor. Not surprisingly, Broadhurst's defeat seems to have soured the relationship between the Trades Council leadership and the local Liberal Party managers and late in October it was reported that Robinson, the Trades Council secretary, had retired from the fight for a seat on the Council :

"He came out as a Liberal, but he now finds the Liberal Party don't want labour men and won't support them. If the Liberal Party will play a few more such farces as the Robinson farce the I.L.P. will go up by leaps and bounds." ⁶²

Almost as if to oblige, the Liberal Party also refused to adopt Bailey, the Nottinghamshire Miners' Leader. Undoubtedly this snub followed on Bailey's outspoken opposition to Broadhurst in the General Election. According to the Workman's Times these developments meant that "the labour horse is not entered this year, having been hobbled just before the House of Commons handicap was run ..." ⁶³ In fact, however, the same confused scenario seems to have been played out at the November elections. Collier, the Tory joiner, stood again in the Meadows Ward as a Conservative-Labour candidate. Not surprisingly, the Liberal vote of the Clifton colliery miners sent him down to a second defeat. Cheetham also stood again as a Lib-Lab nominee in Forest Ward, but he too was defeated. Skerritt managed to hold on to his seat in St. Ann's as a Lib-Lab, and Samuel Bowers, standing again in Trent Ward, managed to get 464 votes against the 744 of the successful Conservative. During the course of the campaign Baggaley, the Bridge Ward Liberal candidate, declared himself to be "in full sympathy with labour". Speaking in his support Mr. Wharton

advocated what he termed "a system of municipal socialism". Both, however, were interrupted from the floor by a member of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors who "denied that Mr. Baggaley paid the price, or was in accord with that society."⁶⁴ Despite his denials, however, Baggaley failed narrowly to win the seat and it is probable that the trade union vote was the decisive factor. Once the results were known discussion about the role of independent labour candidates seems to have heated up and in late November the Trades Council defeated a proposal that "no member of the Trades Council be allowed to use his position as a member of the Trades Council in furtherance of anything political."⁶⁵ In December, the local Fabian group was busy considering how it might "unmask some of our professed labour leaders. They have been running all over the town canvassing, speaking etc., and the substance of their speeches has been 'vote for the Liberal Eight'. "⁶⁶

In the same period Bailey, who had now been elected the National President of the Labour Electoral Association and who had retained his seat in the municipal elections without Liberal support, together with Threlfall, its moving spirit, addressed the Trades Council on its aims and objects. Subsequently, after a long discussion, the Trades Council underlined its own ambivalent position by passing a resolution which:

"recommends the association as a most useful and successful one worthy of the support of all working men."⁶⁷

In fact, of course, the Labour Electoral Association was very far from being a socialist organisation. Its programme never went beyond a vague desire to see more labour men "of good will" as Members of Parliament. Most of its support came from the trade union leaders who liked to be called "advanced liberals." This group led in Nottingham by the officials of the Lace Operatives and the Nottingham Miners, constituted the main opposition to the socialists at the end of 1892. Not surprisingly given their backgrounds, they were to continue their attempts to undermine independent labour politics until well after the establishment of the Independent Labour Party in 1893.

THE LACE MAKERS ¹

Like many other groups of skilled workers the Nottingham lace workers established permanent unions for their industry in the period following the Great Exhibition of 1851. The three major sections of the lace trade, Curtain, Levers and Plain Net, all established lasting organisations in the period 1850-1851. In the years which followed, the Nottingham lace workers demonstrated that they possessed the full range of mid Victorian virtues. With respectability as their watch word these able and intelligent craftsmen built a strong and stable organisation. Levying high weekly subscriptions, preferring conciliation and arbitration to industrial action and whenever possible, controlling the supply of skilled labour, these "New Model" trade unionists were riddled with the superior attitudes which in later years were to provide the bedrock of Lib-Lab-ism. Despite these attitudes, however, the skilled twist hands were forced to admit auxiliaries into their unions sometimes, in an effort to secure a closed shop and to control the employers' use of "black sheep".

During the early 1870's the lace industry started to suffer from depression and the machinery of conciliation and arbitration began to break down. Wage rates soon came under attack and the surrender of the Levers Lace Society to employer pressure for abatements led first to its collapse and then to the formation of a breakaway organisation committed to ignoring the Arbitration Board. During the course of 1873 the situation continued to deteriorate and a strike soon followed. This dispute developed into the greatest the trade had yet seen and a great deal of bitterness was generated. Although during the strike old wounds were healed and solidarity amongst the workers restored, the strike had to be called off and defeat admitted after a struggle which had lasted several months.

The failure of this great strike, further pressure on wage rates, lower profit margins and the growth of the trade outside Nottingham all helped to convince the twist hands that only greater trade union strength and efficiency could restore their bargaining position. Accordingly, in August 1874 a new Amalgamated Society of Lace Operatives (Lace Makers Society) was formed from the three trade unions which had preceded it. Although numerically much stronger, the Lace Makers Society was thoroughly infected with all the weaknesses of superior craft attitudes displayed by the old organisations. These attitudes were a major stumbling block to any attempt to build any kind of working class consciousness beyond the simple, narrow sectional interest of the skilled twist hands and they were destined never to be completely purged from the organisation.

The defeat of the Levers strike marked the beginning of three decades of bitter struggle between the men and their employers. At the first sign of trouble the employers would often try to frustrate union action by means of a lock-out. Sometimes this would be confined to only one factory but on occasions it could develop into a general lock-out of a whole section of the trade. This occurred in the great Plain Net lock-out which continued from December 1878 until February 1880. The employers were insisting on a one-sixteenth reduction. After nine months the union realized that the dispute was "assuming more of a question of dignity as to who should or should not give way than a dispute as to the price of labour"² and offered to meet the employers with a reduction of a one-thirty-second reduction. It was, however, another five months before work was resumed. Perhaps because of the pressures of bitter disputes of this kind, the rules of the Lace Makers were hard and inflexible and the recorded minutes of the Society often show the Executive administering them harshly. In November 1880, for instance, a group of members who could no longer afford the subscription owing to short-time working were allowed no sick or other benefit once they were six weeks in arrears.³

As the 1870's came to an end there were encouraging signs that the lace trade was beginning to look up. The 1880 Annual Report of the

Nottingham Association of Organised Trades reported that "the improved state of trade had at last made its appearance in our midst, one of our staple trades being in a prosperous position."⁴ In later years the period 1879-1882 came to be looked on as the golden years of the lace industry. Many apocryphal stories began to circulate about the pretensions of twist-hands, some of whom, it was said, were earning between £6 and £8 a week. One employer claimed that his men drove to their work every day in hansom cabs and smoked better cigars than he could afford. Yet another story turned on a twisthand and his wife who were sitting in the bar parlour of a Nottingham hotel :

"Mrs. Twisthand had grown tired of the wearisome repetition of drinks, so she said to the Lord of her bosom, 'Jack, what does your Mester drink?' 'Oh, I dunno. Brandies-and-sodas mostly, I should think.' 'Well, we're as good as him,' remarked the Lady, as she gave a defiant call of : 'Waiter!' When the servitor arrived for the order he was told to bring two brandies-and-sodas. 'And, waite^r!' 'Yes'm'. 'Bring 'em 'ot, mind!'"⁵

Amusing as they are, these stories betray a good deal about the position of the lace makers in the early 1880's. It seems likely that they were put about by lower paid workers who deeply resented the pretensions of the twisthands and the exclusiveness of their trade union. In any event the irony, sarcasm and satire which was aimed at the lace makers was strongly entwined with the developing consciousness of many unskilled workers and was deeply rooted in a desire to see the aristocratic presumptions of the twisthands brought down to size.

By 1883, when the Trades Union Congress was held in the Mechanics Hall, Nottingham, the Lace Makers Amalgamated Society was claiming 4,040 members. It must be remembered, however, that the 3,000 to 4,000 operatives who actually controlled the lace making machinery (twisthands) were only a small proportion of the people who got their living from the lace industry. Every lace maker had to help him two or three auxiliary workers whilst the number of workers engaged in other processes through which the lace had to pass before it could be placed on the market was

legion. Additionally, the localisation of lace manufacturing in Nottingham led to the establishment of a number of allied industries usually spoken of as the "making up" trades, of which blouse making was by far the most important. Undoubtedly the twisthands organisation was the most important trade union in Nottingham during the 1880's. One of its members, John Jepson, was the Secretary of the Federated Trades Council and the lace makers were deeply involved in efforts to establish a united trades council. In 1886 the lace makers sent three delegates to the Trades Council, Bowring representing the Plain Net section, Jepson the Curtain branch and Sansom the workers in the Levers section. As the 1880's continued, however, the "golden years" began to fade and an acute slump began to develop.

Perhaps as a consequence of the developing slump the Lace Makers Society found itself having to mount a recruiting campaign by arranging for national speakers to visit the town. Joseph Arch was amongst those invited in 1884 but his meeting was countered by the employers with a lock-out. The aristocrats of the industry were undoubtedly worried at the deepening depression, but this concern does not seem to have fully recognised the need to organise the auxiliary workers, or those employed in the sweated trades. The Union was also weakened because the twisthands, although anxious to control entry into the industry, were prepared to allow members to remain in the union even if they became owners or shareholders in a lace machine.⁶ Twisthands were sometimes loaned as much as £200 for this purpose. Arrangements like this facilitated the fragmentation of the industry and facilitated the growth of the trade in outside centres like nearby Long Eaton. The Lace Makers Society also allowed its members to go to Long Eaton and other centres outside the town for rates of pay lower than those laid down in the agreed price list.

This movement out of the town accelerated from 1886 and in 1888 several Nottingham firms removed and established themselves on the Continent. These developments placed the men's union under serious stress.

In 1884 £9,500 was paid out in unemployment benefits; in 1885 2,500 members received a further £10,537. The weekly excess expenditure during this period averaged £100. In 1885 a Long Eaton lockout forced the Society to declare all Long Eaton shops "open" where employers did not victimise Society members. This retreat demonstrated that the union was on the defensive and the Long Eaton employers capitalised on this weakness by refusing to pay the Nottingham rate. By August 1886 the union had only something like £3,000 left as ready cash with the consequence that unemployment benefit had to be cut from 7s to 5s a week. In 1886, after a town meeting called by the Mayor to discuss the developing crisis, the Nottingham manufacturers were successful in forcing a reduction of about 15 per cent in both the Levers and Curtain branches. The persistent removal of machinery continued, however; in September 1890, for instance, the Workman's Times complained about lace machinery being exported and a year later there were rumours that Walker & Son were about to remove machinery to Chard in Somerset "away from the influence of the union."⁷ Against this background the Board of Conciliation broke up in 1887 when the Levers and Curtain branches refused to send representatives.

This continually deteriorating situation put the union under tremendous stress. In 1888 over 2,000 lace workers were out of work, and many union members applied to the Society for grants towards the cost of emigration to Canada, America and Australia.⁸ The maintenance of union rates became increasingly difficult and in practise this was only possible in large factories which were fully unionised. In May 1889 the Lace Manufacturers Association gave notice of a 40 per cent reduction on curtain goods, 25 per cent on levers goods and 15 per cent of all other prices. Once the union had refused to accept the appointment of an arbitrator, some of the employers threatened that unless they immediately accepted a 25 per cent reduction, they would remove their machinery to Long Eaton. One manufacturer did this, bringing the total number of machines in Long Eaton to 207, with a further 120 at Ilkeston.

Subsequently, the union called a mass meeting at the Nottingham Mechanics Hall and over 2,000 men attended. The strike which followed began in July 1889. Some 1,800 Levers and 700 Curtain operatives came out and over 3,000 warehouse workers were also involved.⁹ In the end, after agreement between the two sides, the strike was settled by Alderman Renals as an independent mediator. It was agreed that the new price list would be suspended, on the return of the men, pending the formation of a new Board of Conciliation.

This strike, by the time it was settled in September, had cost the union a huge amount of money. Cash had been paid out at over £1,200 weekly and there is no doubt that the union desperately needed a settlement. The new price list when it eventually emerged from the conciliation process allowed an average $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent reduction in both the Levers and Curtain branches and after it came into operation in November 1889 it ruled the industry until the close of the century. Despite the relative industrial peace which the new Board was able to achieve a trickle of machines continued to leave the town. In 1889 some 38 machines removed to Sandiacre, Ilkeston, and Long Eaton and the continual erosion of the number of machines in Nottingham remained a major problem. The natural consequence of these developments came late in 1889 when the Long Eaton and District Association of Operative Lace Makers was formed. The Nottingham union was of course, shocked and outraged at this development, but in many ways they had only themselves to blame for the successful breakaway. The policies which the union had pursued throughout the 1880's had to some extent encouraged the removal of machinery from the town and although the potential of Long Eaton had been there since the Midland Railway linked it with Nottingham in 1839, its potential as a haven for non-unionist lace makers was largely due to the mistakes of the Nottingham Lace Makers Society.

The twisthands' union was also primarily to blame for the failure to organise, in any very effective way, the auxiliary workers. After 1886

unions did to some extent develop in the auxiliary and finishing sections but this was really despite the twisthands rather than through any positive programme of organisational work on their part. The most important of these "New Unions" were the Auxiliary Society of Male Lace Workers and the Bleachers' and Dressers' Association, but many thousands of lace workers remained outside any organisation and the exclusive and aristocratic nature of the Lace Makers Society can only have weakened the bargaining position of the vast majority of those who earned a living in the trade. Of these, those in the lace finishing trades were notoriously sweated. Working from their homes in dank and insanitary areas like Sneinton Bottoms or the back-to-back houses of the Meadows, the women and young children were never able to scratch more than a miserable existence and there is little evidence that their plight really concerned the craftsmen of the Lace Makers Society.

That the vast majority of skilled lace workers were supporters of Liberalism is very plain. In February 1887 this was well demonstrated when at the suggestion of Jepson, the Curtain branch of the Lace Makers Society, agreed to organise a shop collection in order to help finance a memorial to Morley, the Liberal Member of Parliament. In 1888 at the Trade Union Congress Heasleden, speaking on behalf of the lace makers, supported the position of Henry Broadhurst, the Lib-Lab. M.P. by arguing that because the lace trade "had to struggle with continental competition employing men during long hours at low wages, a universal 8-hour bill would simply be destruction."¹⁰ In some Nottingham lace factories chapels built on the premises were used by the employers to enforce their own bourgeois morality and it seems likely that the strictly controlled ideological moderate form of the Lace Makers' Union must in itself have reinforced the pervading Gladstonian Liberalism of the vast majority of the local labour movement.

As might be expected the prevailing labourism of the lace makers' leadership was constantly reinforced by the economic position of

the twisthands. Eric Hobsbawn, in a pioneering study of the labour aristocracy, has pointed out that in the 1860's leading hands in the Nottingham lace trade were earning three times the wage of dressers and menders, sometimes more.¹¹ Later, Hobsbawn uses wage figures collected in 1906 to demonstrate that the lace makers in the Lever branch of the industry were fourth in a table of 15 occupations in which 40 per cent or more of the workers earned £2 a week or more. Robert Gray, another, more recent writer on the labour aristocracy, has emphasised the way in which social relations in the workplace were also an important factor in underpinning the ambitions and aspirations of the labour aristocracy. Gray makes the point that these depended on the nature of an industry's technology, the division of labour and the deployment of managerial authority whilst these things in turn were themselves conditioned by the wider structure of industry and by the employers' strategies.¹² All of this was certainly the case in the Nottingham lace industry where the practise of sweating outworkers helped to involve some lace makers in the phenomenon characterised by Eric Hobsbawn as "co-exploitation". Although it is easy to exaggerate the contribution of this technique to the body of ideas held to underpin the aristocracy of labour, it seems clear that the relationship of the skilled with the unskilled helped the Lace Makers Society to maintain its exclusiveness whilst at the same time reinforcing the feeling of superiority and snobishness which the twisthands demonstrated.

The wide gap that existed in this period between industrial and political solidarity was well demonstrated after a Trades Council meeting in October 1890. On this occasion 2 delegates from the locked-out Calais lace workers appeared in order to appeal for help. According to the Workman's Times the Nottingham Lace Makers Society immediately sent £100 and promised a further £50 a week as long as the dispute lasted. The A.S.E. contributed £50, the Power Frame workers £10, the trimmers £10, the bleachers £3, the brickmakers £10 and the Basford gas stockers £1.9.6d.

The Secretary of this last branch remarked that "workmen had not yet learnt to put their hands deep down in their pockets to help the cause of trade unionism." The Workman's Times went on to comment, "this is a remark that, to our mind, is full of significance and one that it is our painful duty to report has been experienced during the last few days by those who have been approached by many prominent trade unionists asking for their support on behalf of the candidature of Mr. John Skerritt, the labour candidate for Wollaton Ward ... many have refused simply because he is not a nominee of a political party."¹³ Those who refused on this occasion were to refuse many times more and there is no doubt that prominent amongst them were many leaders of the lace makers. One of these, James Varney, who had held office as General Secretary for a number of years, was challenged for the post in 1891. The contest does not, however, seem to have been political and he won a majority of 31 in a ballot in which less than one third of the members voted.¹⁴ Although Varney does not seem to have been an active Liberal, others were. Reuben Davis, a lace worker, won Broxtowe Ward for the Liberals in the municipal elections of 1892. Davis had been a member of the School Board and according to the Nottingham Daily Express he did "able service for the ratepayers as well as his fellow working men."¹⁵ Hardstaffe, a warp lace worker, was also a Liberal member of the School Board. His nomination for a safe Liberal seat was seen by many on the left as a reward for the efforts which he had made when President of the Trades Council to stifle the voice of the emerging socialist propagandists.

The voice of socialism when it eventually began to be heard in the Nottingham lace trade, came not from the twisthands, still less the auxiliary and sweated workers. It came instead from the highly skilled lace designers and draughtsmen. The trade union which this group set up seems to have been established by the organising committee of the Trades Council.¹⁶ The initial meeting which took place on April 3rd 1891 attracted between 200 and 250, and included amongst these were George

Christie and Ernest Gutteridge, who between them, in the years to come, established the Nottingham branch of the I.L.P. In the process these two early socialists were often to find themselves frustrated by the tactics of Lib-Lab elements. In May 1892 the Designers and Draughtsmen wrote, withdrawing from the Trades Council. In July the Trades Council Secretary reported that his letter inquiring the reasons for the withdrawal had gone unanswered. It is tempting to speculate that since both Gutteridge and Christie were involved in efforts to establish an independent labour party in this period, the withdrawal of their trade organisation was a protest, not only at the blocking tactics of the Liberal majority on the Trades Council, but also at what they saw as the suffocating grip of labourism on the rest of lace trade unionism.

THE MINERS AS NEW UNIONISTS¹

Throughout the second half of the Nineteenth Century the growth of the railway system encouraged the large scale exploitation of the Nottinghamshire - Derbyshire exposed coalfield. New collieries centered on the Leen Valley were sunk at regular intervals and the advantage of a thick seam of virgin coal relatively free from faulting allowed new and technologically up-to-date workings close to the pit bottom. As a consequence of these developments the number of workers employed underground in the Nottinghamshire coal mines increased very rapidly. Between 1874 and 1920 they leapt from 9,099 to 41,979. This increase was partly supplied by a natural increase in the mining population, but many more were drawn into the mining districts from other parts of the East Midlands. At Hucknall, just outside Nottingham for instance, the first spadefuls of earth were turned in 1861. At that time the population was 2,863; by 1871 it was 4,257 and in 1881 it was 10,023.²

The living to be gained from work in the pits was a relatively good one. Even in places like Basford and other parts of Nottingham where other work was available the rates paid for work underground ensured that boys went into the mines. Although, of course, there were fluctuations in the wages paid to miners, the collier of the Leen Valley in the last twenty years of the Nineteenth Century earned an average wage in excess of 5s a day, whilst by 1900 the faceworker was paid 7s 10d compared with the £1 a week paid to agricultural workers for longer hours.

During the 1880's the output of the Nottinghamshire miners averaged slightly more than 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ million tons per annum. During the 1890's this rose to nearly 7 million tons and by 1900 the Nottinghamshire pits produced about 3% of the total output of the United Kingdom.³ Between 1881 and 1891 the local industry absorbed Labour at a greater rate than any other industry. Beyond the periphery of the town the opening of new

mines encouraged a drift into those areas and small mining communities began to appear as, for instance, at Cinderhill about three miles from Nottingham. Many more miners and their families congregated in the working class areas in the Western Division of the town, whilst others after the opening of Clifton pit in 1868-9 began to live in the back-to-back housing in the Meadows area in the south of Nottingham. Unlike the workers in the Nottingham lace and hosiery industry, whose trade unions emphasised the range of virtues advocated by Samuel Smiles, with elaborate benefits as one of the major objectives, the miners' organisation during its early period had the single aim of redressing their grievances by direct action. The contribution the miner was able to pay for his trade union membership made it impossible for the colliers' organisation to provide benefits, with the result that they were forced to concentrate on attempts to improve the pay and conditions of miners by industrial action.

Before the 1880's mining trade unionism often took on the characteristics of a mere ephemeral strike organisation, hastily thrown together in the midst of revolt. Clegg, Fox and Thompson have pointed out in their History of British Trade Unions since 1883⁴ that the mining unions were in a very different position from the craft societies which were able by a mixture of unilateral action and localised bargaining to avoid major disputes with their employers. Coal unions, on the other hand, had to face organised groups of employers, some of whom were already setting wages and conditions over wide sections of the industry. Against this background miners found it extremely difficult to establish a permanent organisation and their task was made more difficult by the way in which the less well skilled, absorbed during periods of prosperity, tended to drop away during difficult times leaving only the faceworkers. One example of the type of organisation created by circumstances like this occurred in 1866 when during a period in which a Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire miners union was trying to make progress, William Brown, a miners national agent, addressed a Hucknall strike meeting. This resembled a

Religious revival meeting rather than a properly organised trade union gathering. Hymns from the miners song book were sung and nearly all of the platform speakers were better known as Primitive Methodist preachers than trade union organisers. During the 1870's miners' unions all over the country collapsed when an overall fall in the price of coal was followed by a concerted demand by the employers for wage decreases and the introduction of sliding scales. The Webbs, in their History of Trade Unions, interpret the colliers' acceptance of a sliding scale in ideological terms and argue that it involved :

"the sturdy leaders of many trade union battles gradually and insensibly accepting the capitalists' axiom that wages must necessarily fluctuate according to the capitalists' profits."

Clegg, Fox and Thompson⁶, however, have argued that a recognition of the need for wage reductions was a condition for union survival in this period. These agreements, it is claimed, demonstrate that automatic adjustments through a formal machinery were to be preferred to frontal clashes. In the case of the Nottinghamshire miners, however, both were probably true. Compromise on wage levels possibly did help to keep some kind of rudimentary organisation together before 1881, but an examination of the political record of the leadership also indicates that key individuals in the union had been conditioned into a basic acceptance of the capitalist system.

Dr. Alan Griffin, the historian of the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association, has pointed out that it was an improvement in demand which eventually ushered in the N.M.A. in 1881. In July of that year, at a meeting held in Kimberley, a Nottinghamshire Miners' Federation with branches throughout the county was formed. Amongst these branches, those at Clifton, Arnold, Bestwood and Wollaton are of particular relevance to this study since all employed colliers who were part of the Nottingham Labour Movement. In other parts of the country and indeed, in the northern part of Nottinghamshire, the miners' organisation was characterised by the strong corporate spirit which was generated amongst miners not only by

the sharing of common danger, but from the fierce sense of community which derived from settlement in pit head mining villages. Both of these factors played an important part in the development of a strong sense of solidarity, which may, however, in the immediate vicinity of the town of Nottingham, have been seriously weakened by the intermingling of colliers with workers employed in the textile and other industries.

From the start the newly formed N.M.A. found it extremely difficult to build a viable organisation. Seriously weakened at the outset by a strike in 1882 at the Bestwood pit, which lasted five weeks and ended with the victimisation of the pit leadership. The Union's membership by 1884 had fallen over a year from 2,167 to only about 1,000. In this period the trade cycle had begun to dip and as the succeeding slump set in the price of coal fell from 5s 5d a ton in 1884 to 4s 10d in 1885. As the price of coal fell the collapse of the men's union might have been expected. The colliers subsequent loss of earnings was, however, cushioned to some extent by the overall fall in the cost of living and the union survived.

Politically the Nottingham miners' organisation in this period was firmly wedded to the Liberal Party. At the first of their great annual demonstrations held at Hucknall in 1884, the chair was taken by a local coal owner, John Edward Ellis, who later became a Liberal Member of Parliament. In this period intelligent employers were already coming to realize that it made sense to win the support of working class leaders. Colonel Seely of Babbington Coal Company, for instance, during the 1880 General Election campaign, whilst addressing a meeting of railway servants in Nottingham, made an early bid for the support of the mining community by advocating fair pensions for the widows of men killed on the railways or in the coal mines⁷. In October 1882, after a Miners' National Conference had claimed an increase of 15 per cent, Seely's company gave an increase of 11 - 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent without waiting for a formal demand. Later J.E.Ellis, the Quaker proprietor of Hucknall Collieries, addressing an

A.S.E. meeting in January 1884, claimed the credit for reducing the hours of colliers in his employ. Ellis in 1884, Alderman Cropper in 1887 and Thomas Bayley, the Proprietor of the Digby Colliery Company and a Liberal Party candidate, all took the chair at miners' demonstrations and all three, it must be admitted, helped the men's union in its early years.

The leadership of the union in its early stages was in the hands of Joseph Hopkin, a Primitive Methodist preacher, who was the full-time agent from January 1884 until the autumn of 1886 when he was "induced" to give up the post. Subsequently, Hopkin was unemployed until after the 1892 election when he was given employment at Babbington colliery as a reward for helping Colonel Seely. ⁸

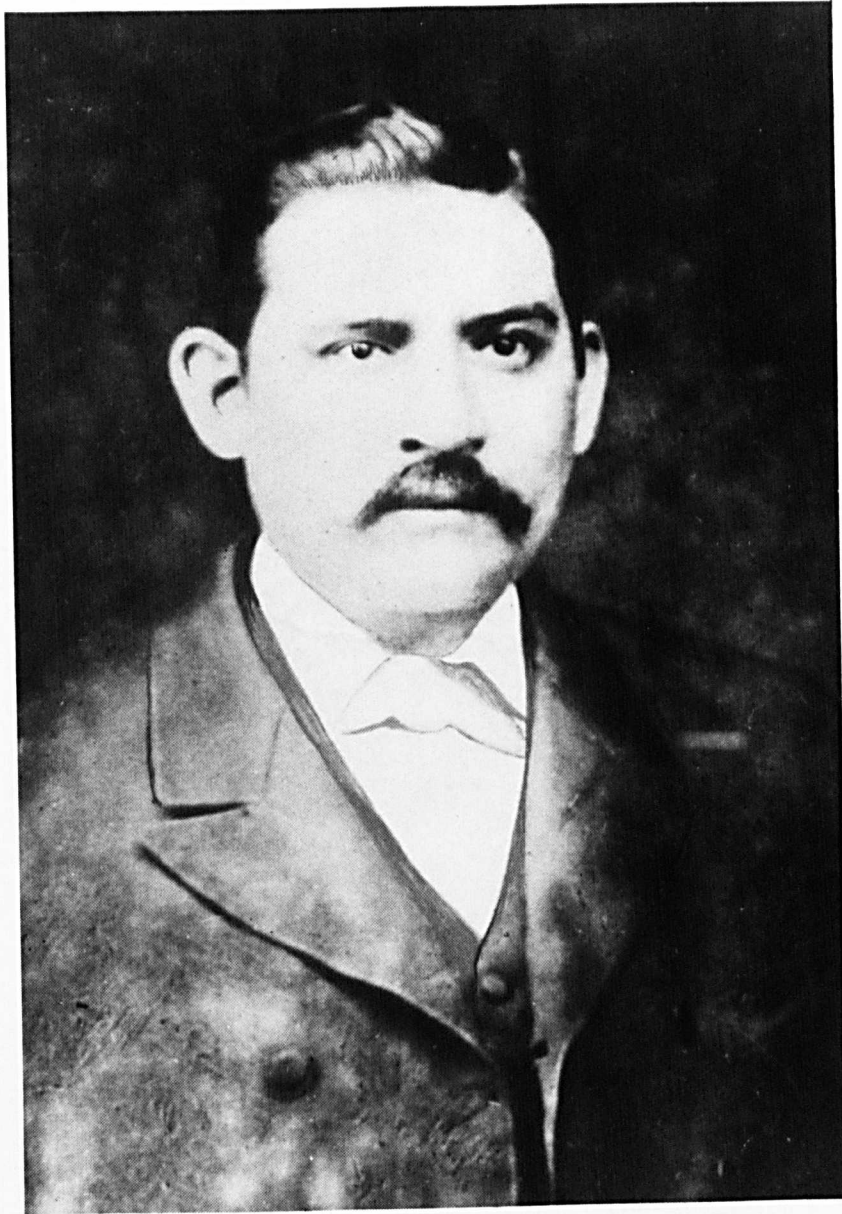
Initially the N.M.A. did not find it easy to establish itself. Its first treasurer, John Jackson, was a sympathetic milkman from Bulwell and this, no doubt, indicated a general fear of victimisation on the part of potential activists. Certainly, some of the local coal owners tried hard to crush the union in its early years. In 1884, for instance, the Wollaton Colliery Company confiscated gathered coals (i.e., coal dropped from the trams onto the haulage roads), reduced wages, stopped supplying home coal and victimised the check-weighman and other active members. This early attempt to break the men's organisation started when they gave notice of reduced wages to eleven stalls only. The union committee subsequently resolved :

"that if the men are permitted to submit to any reduction whatever, another section of the colliery will be attacked 'till the whole pit is reduced." ⁹

Later, some of the butties (small labour contractors) refused to pay their share of the checkweighman's wage and this was connived at by the owners, who hindered the checkweigher, John Hopkins "from doing his duty, he being a staunch society man." ¹⁰ It seems that a sycophantic butty, John Hutton, alleged that Hopkins had tried to coerce him into membership of the union, with the consequence that Hopkins, together with other active union members, was excluded from the employment of the company. Undoubt-

edly the men's organisation found it extremely difficult to resist this kind of pressure. The union was not yet really strong enough to win major disputes. This was well demonstrated in September 1885. A National Conference held in Nottingham had decided to campaign for a 15 per cent increase in wages but the campaign was a complete failure. Only 200 men in Nottinghamshire obeyed the union's instructions to hand in strike notices and they quickly withdrew them. Similarly, a National Conference held in November 1886 decided to agitate for a seven hour day and increased wage rates. Reports given at this conference indicated that the Nottinghamshire Miners had no heart for a fight, possibly because they were amongst the best paid in the country, earning between 4s 9d and 5s 3d a day.

In 1887 William Bailey, a well known Primitive Methodist preacher from the age of 15, became the full-time secretary-agent of the Nottinghamshire miners.¹¹ Due to the energy and enthusiasm of Bailey, and too the improving state of trade and the general upsurge of interest in trade unionism, the membership of the Union rose rapidly from about 500 on his appointment to 18,835 in December 1893. At the Good Friday miners' demonstration on Bulwell Common in 1887 the signs of a new confidence could already be seen. About 5,000 are said to have attended. The Hucknall men had marched to the common behind a local temperance band. Others employed at Babbington pit had come from Cinderhill with their own band, whilst the Pleasley band had marched in front of the men from Sutton. Henry Broadhurst M.P. was the main speaker and it seems likely that it was after speaking on the same platform as Bailey that the doyen of the Lib-Lab movement decided to "take up" the local miners' leader. Subsequently Bailey was to become a key figure in the politics of the Nottingham Labour Movement. An ardent Liberal, he had been a founder of the Labour Electoral Association in 1886 and with the help and support of Broadhurst, as well as the local Liberal Association, he and his supporters were able to hold back the cause of those who believed in independent labour politics.



William Bailey, a well-known local preacher, was engaged by the N.M.A. during the closing months of 1886 to address open-air meetings. Later it was decided to appoint Bailey Secretary Agent and he took office in 1887. A Liberal Party supporter Bailey worked hard to undermine the early socialists. At his death in 1896 John Burns said that the N.M.A. had lost a "good leader...they did not know his value while he was alive."

Late in 1887 a national conference of miners recommended an output restriction in an attempt to clear surplus stocks and to secure a ten per cent increase in pay. In Nottinghamshire the pits at Wollaton, Bestwood and Babbington subsequently refused to work more than an 8-hour day. This led to a lock-out of the men at Bestwood and after a short struggle the policy was abandoned. This victory for the employers was quickly followed up. The men at Wollaton had won an increase of 2d a ton on soft coal and 1d a ton on the hard coal seam in November 1887. In May 1888, however, the company gave notice of a reduction to the old rate. Sixty men who would not accept the decrease were dismissed, with the result that the rest of the pit stopped in sympathy. The 700 men involved received strike pay of 8s a week, plus 1s for each child under 12. When funds began to run out after a month this had to be reduced until eventually the men were receiving only 2s a week. Predictably the non-unionists began to return to work and eventually the strike was settled on the company's terms. Interestingly, there was a good deal of support for the union during this dispute. The miners were given free use of the Radford Mission Hall. Later the proceeds of an Albert Hall meeting together with 1,000 loaves and a quantity of tea were given to the men by Arthur Richardson, a Lib-Lab grocer who was made an honorary member of the N.M.A. as a consequence.¹²

In the late summer of 1888 agitation for a 10 per cent increase resumed. The colliers were now making good time and the price of coal was beginning to move up. In these changed circumstances the advance was conceded within a fortnight. Undoubtedly the leadership drew important lessons from this series of events and in order to capitalise on the still rising price of coal a second campaign for a further 10 per cent increase was launched in the spring of 1889. In response the coal owners offered an immediate 5 per cent with 5 per cent to follow on October 1st. The growing strength of mining trade unionism in the Nottingham area was, during this period, being mirrored in other coalfields and in the autumn of 1889 this was reflected at a conference in Newport at which the

Miners' Federation was established. William Bailey moved the resolution calling for the formation of a National Federation and there is no doubt that behind the scenes he and the leadership of other areas in which real advances had been made on the wages front had been particularly busy in trying to lay the foundations for greater co-operation between the mining unions. Against the background of growing demand and rising prices, 5,000 Nottinghamshire miners came out for a further increase. The owners immediately offered 5 per cent with another increase of the same amount to follow on July 1st. This easy victory marked the end of this period of wage agitation. In little more than 2 years the men's union had secured an increase of 40 per cent on the basic rate.

The early years of the N.M.A. had been tremendously difficult. After the formation of the union its initial impetus helped it to reach a peak of only just over 2,000 members in 1883. With the fall in demand and prices the membership fell away to reach its lowest ebb in 1886 when, with only about 350 members it must have been hard put to it to survive. Only a year later, however, under the stimulus of new and energetic leadership coupled with signs of recovery in the coal trade, the organisation was able to recruit large numbers of additional members so that by the end of the 1880's its future was secure. This hard won security was based in large part on the pits of the Leen valley. Most of the new branches opened by the N.M.A. in the late 1880's were either in or in the immediate vicinity of Nottingham. The union's headquarters at Old Basford was only a couple of miles from the centre of the town and there is little doubt that the growing labour force in this area, as well as the increasing membership of the union, helped to give the organisation and particularly its leadership a growing political importance which neither the established Liberal hierarchy or the growing number of socialist propagandists could afford to ignore.

The socialist gospel had begun to reach the Nottinghamshire coal field in the late 1880's. During the 1889 wage campaign for instance, Tom Mann had spoken to a miners' meeting in Hucknall Market Place. The S.D.F.

and the Socialist League had both been active amongst the mining community and Samuel Tyler, an old member of the Nottingham branch of the First International, was involved in helping to form many of the coalfield lodges.¹³

The reception given to socialist ideas in the Nottinghamshire coalfield was, however, markedly less enthusiastic than in some other coalfields. The usual explanation for this lack of success and for the strength of mining Liberalism in the Nottingham area turns on the geological conditions in the county. Thick and unbroken seams, relatively easy working conditions and high output, all of these factors are advanced to explain the relative lack of industrial and political militancy. Certainly all of these factors were important. A number of other factors suggest themselves, however. It seems likely for instance that the proximity of the Nottingham pits to stable and growing domestic markets must have been important. The demand for coal of midland factories and locomotives helped to make the Nottingham mines profitable enough to provide the employers with the elbow room needed to buy off workforce militancy.

Additionally the huge numbers of women employed in the Nottingham lace and hosiery factories must have included a large number of the wives and daughters of coalminers. The money earned by this female workforce must have been a critical element in the family income of many colliers, helping to create the kind of home atmosphere in which working class Liberalism could flourish. Finally, it seems likely that as important in producing a generation of leaders as thoroughly labourist as William Bailey, miners' agent, local preacher, borough councillor and member of the Board of Guardians was the whole range of direct and indirect, overt and covert pressures used by the coal owners and other capitalists to seduce the leadership.

These last factors are important because it is not really true that working conditions in Nottinghamshire generated a great deal less industrial strife than other coalfields. In fact, the 1880's and 1890's contain a number of disputes which demonstrate that the constant, colliery by colliery

argument about rates and working conditions was playing an important role in establishing the solidarity which was such a feature of early Twentieth Century disputes. This process, however, was slowed in the Nottingham area partly by the lack of homogeneity which followed the necessary labour migration into the area as the industry expanded. The recruitment of men from other industries, like agriculture and handframe knitting, was also important and inevitably the settlement of colliers alongside other groups had the effect of retarding the growth of mining militancy.

The butty, or labour contractor system is another feature of mining in Nottinghamshire which helps to explain the strength of mining Liberalism in the county. It will be remembered that the newly established N.M.A. had most of its strength in the Leen Valley. The pits in this area employed a labour force about half of which, in the case of coal face workers, were butties. This group played an important role in the leadership of the N.M.A. Many of them were also involved in the range of cultural institutions which played a crucial role in helping to win the working class for bourgeois ideas. At Hucknall in 1881, for instance, the Wesleyan, New Connexion and Primitive Methodists all had congregations. There were three sick clubs and a branch of the Oddfellows. The Co-operative Movement was well established and the advocates of temperance had branches of the Good Templars and Independent Order of Rechabites. By their involvement in the leadership of these organisations and their privileged position at work the butties had a stake in the status quo, which impelled them towards either active or passive support for Liberalism. This predilection for safe, respectable, Gladstonian Liberalism was, built on by the more intelligent element amongst the coal-owners and their success was demonstrated in 1889 when, after the death of Ellis, a Liberal coalowner, the miners demonstrated a kind of solidarity by leaving work at 12 noon to "show sympathy".¹⁴

Despite setbacks the Nottingham mining community toward the end of the Nineteenth century exuded a Victorian optimism with coal owners and colliers becoming increasingly prosperous. After the early success of its wage

campaign the N.M.A. began to concentrate on the need for an 8-hour day. This campaign included mass meetings, conferences and leaflet campaigns and it may have been generated not only by a desire to improve working conditions, but also by a need to maximise job opportunities, by reducing working hours and by restricting access into the industry. At a conference in 1890, for instance, William Bailey said :

"At a time like the present, when they were striving to get better wages, it was very important that they should try to prevent anyone who chose to apply from being allowed to go down the mine. " 15

This campaign, despite the support of other groups who had a vested interest in the success of eight-hour agitation, failed to make much progress. A deterioration in trading conditions during 1892 saw a rapid fall in the pit-head price of coal. At 7s 3d a ton it was 9d lower than the previous year and 1s lower than in 1890. During the third week of March 1892 all pits in Nottinghamshire were at a standstill. According to Bailey the men were not on strike but "taking their spring holidays."¹⁶ Later the union decided that one day a week should be "play day" with the consequence that every Nottinghamshire pit was idle on the Saturdays between 16th April and 27th August. In evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1892 the Nottingham coal-owners listed their objections to the introduction of the 8-hour day :

"Parliament ought not to be asked to legislate for adult labour.
The effect of its introduction would be a reduction in output which would raise the price of coal and reduce earnings.
The greater hurry consequent upon shorter hours would increase danger in the mine.
The system would lack elasticity, since neither masters nor men could take advantage of 'good times' by working longer hours." 17

But none of these objections carried much weight with the colliers who heard them attacked at the annual demonstration in August in a "rousing socialist speech" from Keir Hardie, then the Member of Parliament for West Ham. 18

In the early months of 1893 the employers began to try to cut the basis rate (i.e., wage made up of 'basis rate' and a percentage addition

known as the current percentage). In June 1893 the coal owners demanded a general 25 per cent cut. Not surprisingly, the miners made their opposition plain. At least one employer (Seely) opposed the cut, but when the time came he issued lock-out notices with the other coal owners. Alderman Thomas Bayley, M.P., of the Digby Coal Company, was also sympathetic to the men and whilst speaking at their annual demonstration he urged the men to stand firm. The lock-out notices expired in the last week in July and in September Bayley broke with the Coal Owners' Federation. This dispute created a great deal of bitterness. At one stage a man found working at Seely's Radford coal wharf was made to parade around the streets with hands tied, a rope round his neck with a black flag. Later the N.M.A. received a loan of £500 from the Lace-makers and 1,000 loaves given by the Prudential Insurance Company were distributed at Bulwell, Basford and Clifton. The union's fund allowed only 1s 6d. a member over the ten weeks of the lock-out and although at the outbreak N.M.A. funds stood at £17,000, by the end of the dispute the union was £30,000 in debt. During the lock-out Percy Redfern, a Nottingham shopboy, remembers that rumours began to fly. Owners were breaking away. Concessions would be made. "Time enough with children clemming!", "But Bestwood's got blacklegs! Now, when we're winning! The bloody scabs!" Anger flared in the Hucknall area and Redfern, with other shipworkers, hastily put up shutters, anticipating the crowd that came in waves along the main street with "Scottie", a "bull-necked avenger of workers' wrongs, shouting the colliers on." Later Redfern recalled :

"In the darkness, trucks of supposedly new won coal were overturned and burned; and next morning many of the younger men met...each armed with some sort of club. Finally they marched out, along another road, to a more distant pit, and wild stories came back of mine officials hunted from the pit-bank and pit gear burned. Stemming the torrent, gathering their men together, the local trade union leaders, earnest Methodists, steadily preached patience and order." 19

Before the leadership's efforts could be successful, however, a company of dragoons was quartered in the district. Every morning the mounted and fully armed soldiers jangled past Redfern's shop and violence was repressed whilst the dispute went sullenly on. In September the Trades Council pledged its full support and set up an appeal for the miners. During the discussion which followed concern was expressed that the appeal might be frustrated by "recent riotous proceedings." All trade unionists were asked to "assist the authorities in maintaining peace!" Gangs of roughs and youths it was alleged were, by their actions "causing a revulsion of feeling on the part of local townspeople." Rioting was certain, delegates were told, to alienate the public sympathy.²⁰ By October the Trades Council had collected upwards of £40 for the miners' fund and later Bowers of the Hosiery

Workers moved a Trades Council resolution which called for the "public ownership of the mines and railways for the benefit of the nation and not as at present, for the enrichment of individual capitalists."²¹

Amongst these capitalists, Colonel Seely was sympathetic to the union. This employer made loans available to the men and his wife provided meals for miners' children. Most owners had withdrawn the lock-out notices by October 12th with the result that the miners were able to claim what they considered a famous victory. The men had indeed received a good deal of public support. The union dispute fund was fuelled by collections organised by the Nottingham Daily Express and by money collected at churches, chapels, football matches and factories. The great lock-out of 1893 is an excellent example of the militant politics of the Miners' Federation. The settlement of the dispute, however, produced a situation which ultimately divorced union leaders like Bailey from the rank and file. The miners' leaders found themselves imprisoned by a form of conciliation agreement from which it was difficult to escape partly because they themselves had hailed it as such a great advance at the end of the lock-out. Henceforward,

militancy was to come from the rank and file of the men's organisation.

From the conclusion of the 1893 lock-out the special character of the Leen Valley and the Nottingham pits became more clearly marked. The coal owners together with the Digby, Wollaton, Clifton and Babbing-ton Companies, formed an association of their own. The men employed in these mines enjoyed a five-day week from 1892 whilst those in other parts of the county were sued by the owners for breach of contract when they tried to achieve the same advance. Ellis conceded the eight-hour day in 1895 and it is plain that he, together with other enlightened employers like Bayley and Seely, was on friendly terms with the union leadership. Intelligent members of the English bourgeoisie, as Theodore Rothstein has pointed out, had plenty of political sagacity.²² Coal owners like Bayley, Seely and Ellis fully realized that the trade unions constituted a sort of safety valve, insuring the maintenance of bourgeois society and there is no doubt that their support for the N.M.A. had more than a touch of self interest. Against this background it seems likely that this group of employers became, over a period, the political mentors, not only of Bailey and the first generation of miners' leaders, but of Aaron Stewart, John George Hancock and George Spencer, who between them dominated the N.M.A. for the next twenty-five years.

Despite these strong links with the Liberals it must not be assumed that the miners were simply the blind adherents of the Liberal establishment. In November 1888, for instance, at a meeting convened by the Labour Electoral Association, William Mellors was adopted as a "working men's candidate" for the County Council. Not surprisingly, the local Liberals were furious but the miners who now had the vote used it to good effect and Mellors topped the poll with 1,124 votes. On this occasion Mellors made great play of the need for miners' gardens, well demonstrated by the fact that when two gardens became vacant in Hucknall there were 73 applications for them. This victory would seem

to indicate that when the miners felt strongly that they had a deep-seated grievance they were prepared to defy convention and vote against supposedly "safe" candidates. This was well demonstrated at the 1892 General Election. Henry Broadhurst, who had been the secretary of the T.U.C. Parliamentary Committee, was the sitting Lib-Lab member for West Nottingham. However, Broadhurst was an opponent of the eight-hour day and this fact led Bailey, who was by now a Liberal Councillor, to refuse to endorse Broadhurst, preferring instead to support Charles Seely, a Liberal-Unionist who, although a coal owner, supported the eight-hour day. Bailey had long been in favour of the eight-hour day. At the 1888 Trade Union Congress he had seconded the motion in favour of an Eight Hour Bill. In his speech he made the point :

"In the district of Basford the feeling of the workers was distinctly in favour of the eight-hour movement. He believed that if an Act of Parliament could be passed they would get what they wanted but not otherwise." 23

Bailey had also been for a long time trying to increase the number of Labour representatives in Parliament. In 1889 he had spoken at the Trade Union Congress in favour of the payment of M.P.'s, arguing that this would "open the door for the addition of a large number of labour representatives. The question was of great importance to them." 24 In 1890 he had become the vice president of the Labour Electoral Association and in 1892 became its President. Now, however, he was prepared to throw his power and prestige against the most famous "labour representative" of them all. That he was aware of the potential power of the mining vote was made clear in November 1890 when he boasted that "no candidate could be returned for the Western Division of Nottingham without the votes of the miners." 25 Already a possible clash with Broadhurst was on the cards and in December 1890 the Workman's Times drew attention to this when they reported a very successful meeting of the Wollaton miners in the Railway Hotel at which Bailey had spoken on the eight-hour question "making clear the miners' determination to get it." 26

A miners' meeting, it was explained, had carried a resolution pledging to neither vote for nor support any candidate who refused to support the Eight Hour Day. "Let Mr. Broadhurst have been what he may" wrote the Workman's Times. "He is not up to date now, and we cannot afford to wait until he is dead before we move on." The Labour Leader, in an article in December 1891, had joined in the argument by advising the miners and other trade unionists of Nottingham of Broadhurst: "He is a gentleman now and having grown quite respectable, has got out of touch with the present day Labour Movement altogether. Shift him." 27

As the General Election drew near the signs that the miners might follow this advice began to multiply. Bailey accused Broadhurst of putting the interests of the Liberal Party before those of the Trade Union Movement. In the end, enough miners were prepared to follow Bailey's lead and Broadhurst lost the seat :

C. Seely	Liberal Unionist	5,610	
H. Broadhurst	Lib-Lab.	5,309	maj. 301

Not surprisingly, Broadhurst felt a keen disappointment at his defeat which he explained by reference to the "ingratitude of the miners", going on to claim that in his opinion the eight-hour question was not "to any appreciable extent the cause of my defeat at the polls." Colonel Seely had, according to Broadhurst, been assiduously nursing the constituency, giving freely to the various philanthropic causes in the neighbourhood and this, together with the attitude of Bailey, was enough to ensure his defeat. Broadhurst's apologia went on to explain :

"As the contest proceeded I missed from my meetings a number of influential people who had supported me in 1886 ... the election took place on the first Monday in July. On the Saturday a great open-air demonstration was held on the Forest. No speakers from the outside world were there to assist me, but I received great aid, as I had done at all my meetings, from the able and devoted labour leaders in Nottingham representing every branch of industry except miners ... when I contested Nottingham in 1886 no miners' organisation worthy of the name existed. Everything was practically in a state of chaos. When Mr. Bailey, the newly appointed Miners' Agent, arrived on the scene I gave this gentleman every assistance in my power, introduced him to

many of my political friends in the locality and requested all my supporters to aid him as far as was in their power in his task of organizing the miners ... yet, when the contest came, Mr. Bailey openly espoused the cause of Colonel Seely and exerted every effort to secure my defeat." 28

Broadhurst's references to the help which he received from the "able and devoted labour leaders" of Nottingham were certainly something of an exaggeration. There is, however, no reason to doubt that in the late 1880's he had done a good deal to help the political and trade union career of William Bailey. The General Election and the eight-hour question did much to sour the relationship between the miners' leadership and the Liberal establishment; at rank and file level it opened the door to the socialist propagandists who were now beginning to appear with increasing regularity on the Nottingham labour scene.

To summarize, the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association was to some extent a "New Union" although only in the sense that its origins in the 1880's were established in a period during which the early socialists were active. There is, however, little evidence that they played any significant part in its revival. Ideologically and politically its rapid growth did not mark, as in the case of other "New Unions", any sharp shift to the left. Its early leaders and policy makers were inspired not by Marxism or even a watered-down form of socialism. Instead they were shaped by nonconformism of one kind or another, and by a belief in Gladstonian liberalism. The establishment of the N.M.A. did, however, shift the centre of gravity of the organised Nottingham labour movement. As the number of miners increased, their importance in both political and industrial terms came to be recognised both by other trade unionists and by the Government and employers. After the defeat of Broadhurst, the miners too came to realize their own importance and as the union continued to grow in the 1890's the penetration of anti-capitalist sentiment began to deepen and become more significant.

THE HOSIERY WORKERS

From the time that the stocking loom was invented in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Nottingham was always heavily involved in the making of hosiery. The transformation of the industry from hand frame production to the factory system occupied a remarkably long transition and the stresses and strains of the process were to play a crucial role in the unions which the industry's workforce developed. From the years around 1850 the numbers of hand frames in the industry began to fall, but hand frame unions were not finally to disappear until the end of the century. The factory-based unions which began to develop in the late 1860's found themselves having to deal with a series of technical developments which were gradually revolutionizing the hosiery trade. Steam-powered rotary frames were first installed in a new five-storeyed factory by Messrs. Hine and Mundella and this early development was extended in the years which followed by the application of steam power to a range of auxiliary operations. Despite these innovations, however, the extension of mechanization and factory production was an extremely slow process. In Nottingham in 1865 there were 1,000 power rotary frames, 1,200 sets of circular power machinery and 400 warp hosiery power frames. At the same time there were still 11,000 narrow hand frames and 4,250 wide hand frames.¹

Many reasons for the retarded growth of factory production in the town have been advanced, but in Professor Wells' opinion, the major obstacle to change was to be found in the state of the labour market :

"Generations of grinding poverty had almost killed the spirit of enterprise among the stockingers, and in the hosiery villages where they lived comparatively isolated from the social and industrial life of the outside world, children followed their father's trade as a matter of course, for the main alternative,² that of agriculture, offered even worse prospects."

Whatever the reasons for this slow development, there were two factors

which were hastening the shift to factory production. One was the abolition of frame rent in 1874 after trade union agitation. The other was the extension of the Factory Acts to workshops and the introduction of compulsory school attendance which had the effect of reducing the supply of child labour on which the domestic industry largely depended. Subsequently the hosiery trade became increasingly competitive. As the pressure of competition increased, however, many of the smaller producers were forced under. In 1891 it was estimated that, of the 105 hosiery manufacturers who had begun in the industry since 1863, 27 had failed, 27 closed because of inadequate profit margins, 13 had changed hands and only 17 were still in business.³

The survivors of this cut throat competition were, of course, the larger undertakings. Outstanding among these was the firm of I. and R. Morley which, by 1887, owned 7 factories in the East Midlands, as well as employing several hundred hand workers in the villages. As the older framework knitters died, however, hand frames were slowly withdrawn and the factory owners were able to consolidate their position. Like manufacturers in other trades the hosiery employers were continually trying to increase the security of their operation by raising the productivity of their workforce and for a time at least, their efforts benefited the workers who operated the new machines. In 1860, a male steam powered rotary machine worker could earn between 20s and 35s a week, whilst women earned between 12s and 20s. The earnings of auxiliary workers were also much better than those paid to their domestic counterparts.⁴ The overall improvement in the living standards of factory hosiery workers led George Kendall, one of their leaders, to comment when giving evidence to the Factory and Workshops Commission in 1876:

"We used to have formerly long periods of depression, but latterly the periods of depression never last so long. People wear better things than they used to generally..."⁵

Working conditions in the factories and warehouses were much better than

those of the average domestic workshops. Hine and Mundella, the directors of the Nottingham Manufacturing Company, provided amenities which included a club under the management of the workers and a generous benefit club. Annual outings, a brass band and sports events were also part of their enlightened policy.⁶

The series of technological and organisational changes undergone by the hosiery industry during the years after 1850 had important ripple effects in the field of industrial relations and trade union organisation. Initially at least, the relatively high wages paid by employers like Mundella earned the loyalty of the workforce so that he could boast :

"Why, do all the Trade Unions stand by me so firmly? Because I have helped to double and quadruple their wages. I don't want to dwell upon this, but since I became an employer I have carried my feelings for the workpeople to the verge of Quixotism. Had I been less considerate for the good of others I should now have been a very rich man."

Later, Mundella became a Liberal councillor for the elegant middle class Park Ward. His contributions to the debates on the questions of the day suggest that he had retained his earlier radical philosophy. He argued for bigger schools, not bigger gaols; more co-operation between the middle and working classes, and more restrictions on the public houses.⁸ Mundella's career in the Nottingham council chamber demonstrates that he was a supple and conciliatory wire-puller although it must be acknowledged that his political outlook was wider than most.

Mundella's influence in the town was very significant and it seems likely that he played a key role in persuading important elements in Nottingham's ruling group that the time had come to seek an accommodation with the leading trade union personalities. In 1872, for instance, whilst a special Trades Union Congress was being held in Nottingham, Mundella persuaded the town authorities with the Mayor at their head to attend the opening there to solemnly extend a hearty welcome. Later, at an official banquet at the town hall the trade union leaders were entertained by leading citizens including Mundella. Special excursions, "at homes"

and other "honours" were also arranged. It seems that during the official banquet a toast to "The Queen" brought forth a cry of "flunkeyism" whilst half a dozen trade unionists remained seated. The majority of the trade union leadership, however, soon acquired a taste for this kind of treatment considering it a proof of their power and symbol of their equality. Mundella's major role was, however, as an advocate of arbitration and conciliation. Theodore Rothstein has accused Mundella of being partly responsible for helping to smother the "last spark of class dignity and class consciousness!" and although this is something of an exaggeration there is little doubt that his ideas in the field of class collaboration did indeed, help to retard the development of a truly independent labour movement.

As the growth of mass production techniques increased the wages of the factory workforce, the obsolete outwork industry faced a deepening crisis. Resentful of the new inventions and jealous of those who worked them, the framework knitters eventually came out on strike towards the end of 1860. Other disputes quickly flared and many of the employers began to argue for a general lock-out to teach the workers a lesson. Mundella fought against this plan insisting that it would mean "throwing the whole population on the streets. We should have a dreadful state of commotion. We were sick of it."⁹ Instead, Mundella suggested that both sides of the industry should attend a round table conference and this eventually took place on September 17th 1860. The settlement which eventually emerged conceded the wage demands of the workers whilst at the same time establishing a board of arbitration to prevent a further recurrence of industrial trouble. The impact of these developments on the hosiery trade was extremely significant. One aged worker remarked: "I have been in the hosiery trade since I was 10 years of age and I have never been at such a meeting before."¹⁰ Undoubtedly, Mundella's flair and intelligence was primarily responsible for the establishment of the Board of Arbitration. Its establishment helped to shape the hosiery industry and its

trade unions for many years to come. Equally significant, however, was the effect of this agreement on the hearts and minds of other groups of workers. The principles of conciliation, arbitration and co-operation advocated by Mundella struck deep roots into the Nottingham labour movement. For many years hardly a voice was raised against them whilst Mundella's own popularity was well demonstrated in 1868 when, on returning to the town after winning a Sheffield Parliamentary seat, he was welcomed by a huge crowd of 20,000 at the Midland Station. Later, at his warehouse, he was presented with an Address by one of the hosiery workers. A broadsheet circulated in the town celebrated his triumph thus:

"Mundella is the poor man's friend
And Sheffield people may rejoice
There's none more able to defend
Them, then the man they've made their choice.

His interest is the poor man's cause,
And all their rights he will maintain;
His aim will be to make good laws,
Success and honour to his name."¹¹

Entering his carriage, with a sax-tuba band playing, Mundella was escorted by a tremendous crowd to his residence in the Park. "Never" wrote the Nottingham Express "was a reception more hearty and generous. Everybody seemed anxious to excel everybody else in shouting out congratulations."¹²

Numbered amongst those shouting the loudest in 1868 it is probable were the leaders of the Rotary Framework Knitters Society which was established in 1865. This organisation had been established in order to be officially represented on the Board of Arbitration, the success of which was already helping to establish a new respect and recognition for the workers' organisation. This recognition had the effect initially at least of helping the union to increase its membership, although in the long run it also helped to delay the establishment of a firmly established, financially sound organisation. This dichotomy came about because confidence in the Board of Arbitration also had the effect of keeping subscriptions low, the workers relying on levies to meet any emergency.

"They maintain their union just as well and better with the Board as without it," remarked Mundella. "Their union now costs them only a shilling per year instead of a shilling per week." ¹³

It will be seen from this just how vulnerable the men's organisation really was. Completely reliant on the success of the Board they had in the long run presented themselves as hostages to the employers.

The flaw in the arbitration machinery began to develop in the early 1870's. The workers were fundamentally split over sectional interests and petty jealousies weakened their bargaining position. Delegates from the Hand Framework Knitters were always at odds with the Circular Union (which had been formed in 1857) and with the Rotary Power Union, with the result that the workmen were consistently outvoted by the employer representatives. A number of strikes during the 1870's put the Board under increasing strain and although it continued to meet into the 1880's it was finally dissolved sometime in 1884. It is, of course, significant that the major faults in the system of arbitration began to become serious in the late 1870's. In this period an economic downturn meant that hosiery workers were forced to accept reductions. Subsequently, several strikes for higher wages helped to accelerate the trend which had been developing of moving machinery out of the towns into the nearby villages where labour was cheaper. By the mid 1880's this dispersion to the areas outside the town led union officials to claim that Nottingham was merely becoming a sales centre for hosiery made outside in the country districts.

Faced with this kind of difficulty attempts to strengthen the union bargaining position by co-operation and federation were relatively weak and ineffective. Both the Circular and the Rotary Union were, of course, craft orientated. Although they worked alongside one another in the factories, the two organisations saw themselves as having quite different identities and interests with the inevitable result that their collective strength was weakened. From time to time co-operation was attempted

but no joint fund was established. A federation was formed in 1874, but this had little success and in 1877 the Circular Society accused the Rotary Union of having failed to support them during an important strike. In May 1882 the Circular Union voted to wind up the alliance as "the Circular Society had not been benefited by the alliance."¹⁴ The lack of good will and solidarity which is here evidenced was, like many other aspects of the hosiery trade in this period, exacerbated by the very difficult trading situation. In 1880 the Annual Report of the Nottingham Association of Organised Trades had earnestly wished for a revival of the trade, pointing out that "much capital has been thrown into the hosiery manufacture, which suffers now from over production as much as any branch of trade could do."¹⁵

Not surprisingly, during this crisis both hosiery unions were too small to play an important role in the wider trade union movement, although in Nottingham itself both were early members of the two organisations which preceded the Nottingham Trades Council. At the 1883 Trades Union Congress the Circular Society claimed 200 members and the Rotary Union 700, whilst the Warpers' Association had 120.¹⁶ According to information gathered by the Webbs, the Rotary Power Workers had only 500 members in 1887, "but that was a low water mark; before that there had been many more." In 1893 the membership was 656 and the annual income approximately £900. According to Sam Bower, its leading activist, the union never struck a member off the books; "they used to, but found they lost many members entirely in bad times." The union executive met weekly and general meetings were held quarterly. No shop committees existed, although Bower told the Webbs that "several times the union had tried to institute such shop committees but the men are much too afraid of the employers, the men were thoroughly cowed by the removal of the trade."

Politically all the evidence points to the fact that, like their colleagues in the Lace Industry, most of the workers in the Hosiery Trade were deeply imbued with Liberal ideology. In March 1884 the Basford and

District Hosiery Trimmers voted to contribute to the Henry Broadhurst testimonial fund. Six years later their Minutes record their regret at hearing of his resignation as secretary of the T.U.C. Parliamentary Committee. George Robinson, the president of the Trimmers Union, became a Liberal councillor and when, during the 1890's the question of a Trades Council and labour representative was raised it was decided to take no action.¹⁷ Other hosiery workers too were deeply concerned with status and respectability which were the hallmark of the Lib-Lab element. In April 1887 Osbourne of the Rotary Power Union brought forward at a Trades Council meeting the question of working men on the bench, not, it seems, because of any particular grievance, but because he and the people he represented felt deeply that the time had now come for the recognition of respectable labour by making some amongst them J.P.'s. The generation of trade union leaders now being examined have been characterised as "real flunkeys of capitalism" but this is really too simplistic. Some, like Robinson, may well have had as their central objective, the abolition of strikes and the winning of the employer's confidence. Others, like Bower were, however, involved in a personal pilgrimage across the political spectrum to a position from which they could begin to build a genuinely independent labour movement.

Towards the end of the 1880's like many other groups the hosiery workers seem to have been influenced by the wave of new unionism. In November 1889 it was reported that even the handframe knitters who, in this period, together with the Shirt, Pants and Drawers Union, continued to enjoy a feeble existence with about 60 to 70 members respectively, spurred on by the miners' organisation, had become union-minded again, and that at Hucknall "100 knitters joined last month".¹⁸ This sudden spurt amongst the outworkers was to be their last desperate effort to safeguard their deteriorating position, for in December 1890 the Workman's Times reported that the Handframe Workers Society was now down to 17 members and had decided to "dry up".¹⁹ Amongst the factory workers, however,

the unions seem to have been making steady progress. By 1891 Robinson of the Basford Trimmers was president of the Trades Council, and in June of the same year a recruiting campaign in the out districts was under way. Previous to the commencement of the meeting at Arnold the local prize band paraded the streets to attract attention. Sam Bower of the Rotary Union told his audience that "it depended on the men of Arnold whether they would support their fellow workmen and be thoroughly organised, or continue to be the 'black spot' in the hosiery trade." This meeting seems to have been a great success and Bower caused a great deal of laughter and merriment by vividly portraying the "ideal son of the luxurious indolent aristocracy. He made him live before our eyes, cigarette in mouth, walking stick in hand, linen round the wrists and a 'stick up' under the chin."²⁰

The problems faced by the unions in this period were legion. The working of overtime in particular worried the mens' organisation. The Workman's Times reported in July 1891 :

"The Union was in a position some 10 years ago to regulate it; but as we are all aware, things went from bad to worse and now a manufacturer has only to say 'I want you to work from 6 o'clock in the morning 'till 8 or 9 at night' and woe to a union man who kicks his heels against it. It is Hobson's choice - do it or go."²¹

This was, of course, the period when some employers were beginning to think in terms of a counter offensive with which to recover some of the ground lost to the trade unions. As Professor Saville has pointed out, the most militant manufacturers were on occasion prepared to use the law as a weapon with which to intimidate the unions and in July 1891 one of these attempts was made. On this occasion, 8 workers who had been employed at W. Perry's No.4 factory were charged with conspiring to intimidate and also with persistently following from place to place Henry Warren, Iram Danby and Charles Danby on the 8th, 9th and 23rd June. In the event this charge was struck out for lack of evidence, but later, another charge was brought to court alleging that a hosiery worker had told one

blackleg that "he would get his head kicked in". It was also alleged that there had been some "baaring" at one complainant. These charges were proved and the accused fined 40s leading the correspondent of the Workman's Times to describe the proceedings as "a burlesque on justice" which demonstrated the need for working men magistrates.

These developments may have helped persuade some amongst the leadership of the hosiery workers of the validity of the arguments in favour of independent labour representation. In November 1890 the Basford Bleachers had made a grant to the L.R.C. and in August 1891 a deputation from the local L.R.C. visited the Rotary Power Workers' monthly meeting. Later, after Kealy and Stanton had delivered a "stirring address" it was agreed, with the support of Bower, that the union would provide financial support.²³ What was left of the Framework Knitters organisation also agreed to support the L.R.C. and in October 1891 'Rotary Hand', the correspondent of the Workman's Times was busy sniping at Broadhurst, the leader of the Lib-Labs in the country.²⁴ These decisions in favour of independent labour representation may well have been influenced by the depressed state of the hosiery trade. In April 1892 the officials of the Leicester hosiery workers called attention to the numbers of Nottingham hosiery operatives who had called at their office in a penniless state after having walked from Nottingham in search of work. In April a week of "great anxiety" was reported. "Meetings, deputations, a strike among women and all the usual annoyances connected with bad trade, have been in full operation ... the secretary began at half past nine on Monday morning by visiting an employer to stop a reduction and finished the week on Saturday night by holding a meeting with the women on strike."²⁵ The Handframe Knitters were in an even worse state. Arthur Bonser, and Samuel Oscroft told the 1892 Royal Commission on Labour that 5,000 workers were still working in the outwork industry in the Midlands. Many of these, according to Bonser and Oscroft, were victims of sweating. The middleman, it was claimed, "is what is commonly called a sweater ...

if there is any man working under him whom he can take advantage of he will do so". Later it was alleged that the secretary of the Handframe Knitters had been "out of work now for over 20 weeks merely through the spite of the sub-contractor on account of his being an official of the union."²⁶

Samuel Bower, who was steadily moving left in this period, tried hard to get the Trades Council at its November 1892 meeting, to begin sending official reports to the Workman's Times, but this attempt to push the council in the direction of independent labour politics failed by 32 votes to 8.²⁷ His keenness to do so was undoubtedly sharpened by his conception of the reforms needed, not only in hosiery trade but in society at large. Giving evidence to the 1892 Royal Commission, Bower estimated that about 1,500 men and 400 women were in the union, with some 4-500 men and 6-700 women being outside the unions. Asked by Mundella what a good efficient workman could earn on a fair average machine he replied :

"We have such a bad system of working in Nottingham that you really could not say what a man could do. Some are working one frame, some two, and some three."

Bower went on to claim that there was a good deal of discontent in the trade "on account of the irregularity of the prices that are paid". Reminded by Mundella that for 20 years the price had been maintained by the Board of Arbitration, Bower said that the Board had been broken down by the employers "who will not have it". Later he spoke strongly against the middlemen "who buy a few machines or get them on credit, and fetch the work from the manufacturers, and do it at sweating prices." Asked by Mundella how it was that the union allowed this, he replied that they had only just organised, so could not yet enforce equality of payment. Bower went on to complain that hours of work were still between 54 and 56 a week as a consequence of the Factory Acts being "in abeyance practically" because of the unwillingness of the Inspector to enforce them. In any event Bower claimed that when the union tried to reduce the hours of work the employers "shifted half the machinery nearly

out of the town into the country places to defeat us." Like his colleagues in the outwork trade Bower claimed that "a lot of cruel sweating was going on, particularly in the sewing of shirt buttons. Bowers' assertion that an attempt was being made to supplant men's labour with that of women was challenged by Mundella who argued that women could not handle some machines. To this Bower replied, "She can manage for the manufacturer's purpose and that is to run down wages." Asked about strikes in the hosiery trade he answered, "I think something should be done to prevent them ... I think we ought to have a Board of Arbitration". Bower was apparently serious in this assertion since he explained that he had written to about 50 manufacturers in Derby and Nottingham with the suggestion that a Board be formed but that only 9 had replied, of whom only 1 was in favour. Concluding, Bower complained that for the past "12 or 14 years we have never been without 1 or 2 shops out at once". He then explained that the employer always had enough non-unionists to break a strike. "They can do it when we fetch one or two shops out. Then they have just enough surplus labour to fill them and that is when they have us beat. They generally schemed to have one or two shops strike instead of offering us a general reduction or letting us get a general strike."²⁸

This comprehensive evidence makes it clear that in the period immediately before the establishment of the Independent Labour Party in 1893 the Nottingham hosiery industry was subject to the full range of strains generated by industrial society in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century. The Webbs who enquired into the demise of the hand frame industry in 1893 were told that many former framework knitters had been forced to enter the local workhouse. Others had found work as chimney sweeps, porters on the railway, handymen in the factories or "anything they can get."²⁹ The insecurity created by the trauma of the collapse of the outwork industry was, however, only part of the fertile soil in which the seeds of socialism were to prosper. The men and women employ-

ed in the factories were in the same period beginning to listen to the propaganda of the socialists, and in Samuel Bower they had a leader who would play a vital role in helping to establish not only the I.L.P. but also a transformed trade union movement.

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WOMEN WORKERS

The employment of very large numbers of women in the hosiery and lace trades was a factor of the town's demographic history. At each census between 1811 and 1841 women outnumbered men by between three and four thousand. Between 1851 and 1861 the excess of female labour rose to more than seven thousand as the factories and warehouses being built attracted migrants from the surrounding counties. Employment in the lace and hosiery trades rapidly increased and these jobs were subsequently added to by the engineering trades, printing and paper box manufacture. By the end of the century the lace trade employed 14,701 women (compared with 6,925 men). Over 30 per cent of all working women were connected with the industry, which included large numbers in the making-up trade. Similarly, by 1901 women vastly outnumbered men in the hosiery industry. Technological change in both industries simplified the machinery and the unions were gradually persuaded to allow women to work some of the smaller machinery. By 1897 the number of women in the hosiery factories formed 75 per cent of the total labour force. ¹

This female proletariat, even when not organised into trade unions, must obviously have played a significant role in helping to shape the emerging local labour movement. The attitudes of the husbands, brothers and fathers of this large group of working women, as one might expect of the Victorian male, left a good deal to be desired. Many agreed with Broadhurst, the prominent Lib-Lab., who argued that "it was very natural for ladies to be impatient of restraint at any time," therefore, the factory was an unsuitable place for them. "Wives should be in their proper place at home." Early efforts to organise women workers all seem to have foundered, but in 1887, following a strike which was the consequence of an employers' attempt to force a heavy reduction in wages, a Female Cigar

Workers Union was formed. According to the Webbs, taking evidence in the early 1890's the union had a membership of about 420. Only one small shop which had been lost during a strike was outside the union, and the ten women in this work place were quickly blacked. Several other strikes had succeeded in raising wages considerably and as the Webbs pointed out, the union was the only one in England entirely controlled and governed by working women members. With Mrs Briant as its secretary the union preferred to remain independent of their male colleagues although it seems that they kept closely in touch with them.²

The wave of new unionism which began at the end of the 1880's seems to have considerably affected Nottingham's women workers. As elsewhere, new unionism did much to challenge the sectional interests of aristocratic unionism and not before time there were signs that the male unionists of the town were coming to realise how important it was to organise the female labour force. Many women were, of course, employed as sweated labour and it may have been the concern expressed by the Tailors Society at a Trades Council meeting in 1888 at the giving of police clothing contracts to well-known sweating employers which first began to concentrate the minds of male unionists on the need to recruit women workers.

By 1890 the Workman's Times was writing about the need to organise female labour in Nottingham. It was reported that both the Women's Hosiery Union and the Female Cigar Makers were now "firmly established".³ These unions had been established it was noted, with the help of male union members, demonstrating a "friendly attitude...supporting and encouraging in every possible way those through whose instrumentality women's unions have been formed."⁴ According to one account, however, the real work of establishing the Nottingham and Leicester Women Cigar Makers Union had been put in by the women and girls employed by the firm of Robinson and Barnsdale of Derby Road Nottingham. This group had first organised in 1887 in opposition to a proposed cut in wages, which under the leadership of Mrs Briant they had successfully resisted.

In the following year the union survived another attempt to cut wages and by 1889 there were between one and two thousand members. Mrs Briant the womens leader was a young married woman with two children whose husband worked in the same factory. At a meeting in Liverpool during 1889 which had been called to help form a local branch of the union Mrs Briant gave the following account of how the union had come to be formed :

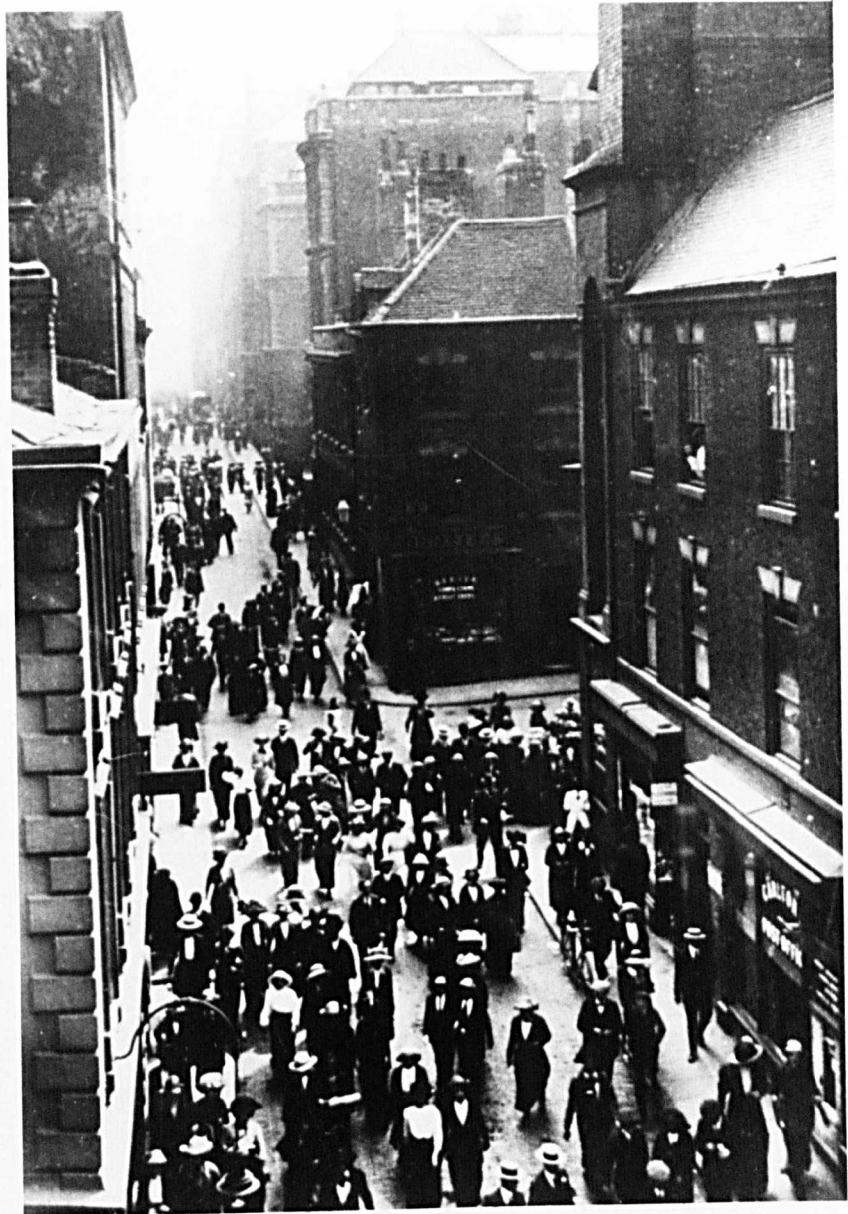
"Work had been slack for a few weeks, and they kept on complaining and finding fault about simple little things...well one morning I came into work, and there was all the others a-talking and in a great state, and they said to me 'Mrs Briant, have you seen that notice?' and I says 'No, what notice?' and there was a great paper posted up...and it said that owing to foreign competition...for the Mexican work was just coming in about that time, you remember...Messrs Robinson and Barnsdale could not afford to pay their cigar makers what they had done...and so I said, 'Well, what shall we do?' and they said 'What can we do?' and then in comes the foreman 'Now don't excite yourself Mrs Briant' days he, and I said to him 'Now Tommy, just tell what is the reduction, for you have'nt put it up' He said it was to be sixpence a hundred. Well we all began talking about it, and I said again I will not take a reduction, and we said what shall we do, and then we said we ought to have a meeting and form a union..."

Later the women appointed a deputation to approach their employer. Mrs Braint the leader of the delegation spoke up saying :

"And its always the workers that its to fall on, when trades slack, its always them thats to suffer, and never anyone else...its not your travellers or your foremen that you reduce when trade is bad; no, nor yet your profits...Oh dear no! its always the cigar workers that you reduce first thing, and yet you can't do without cigar makers they make your money for you." 5

Later in 1890 Samuel Bower and other Nottingham delegates to the Trade Union Congress approached Lady Dilke in order to ask that she come to Nottingham to "assist in the work or organising amongst the female workers."⁶ By November, however, the correspondent of the Workman's Times was expressing concern that recruitment amongst women workers was not so good as had been expected :

"As early as a quarter to eight in the morning anyone may notice that a steam of 'our girls' has begun and should the individuals who notice this care to see the same girls returning home



Women lace workers flooding out of the factories in the lunch hour. The photograph is of Stoney Street, looking south from Goose Gate.

at night they may do so by being in the Lace Market at 8 p.m. ... what are these large parcels which so many are carrying away? Night work which must be done by the morning, or the slave of labour to capital will have the consolation of paying for the same out of her poorly paid weeks work." 7

In the same period, however, Mrs Briant was given a particularly warm welcome when she took her place as the first female delegate to the Trades Council. At the same meeting the Gasworkers had reported that they had successfully formed a special branch for women workers. In the discussion which followed Bower of the Hosiery Workers reported that the recently established female hosiery workers' union now had 400 members on its books.⁸ By March 1891 the women's branch of the Gasworkers and General Workers Union was reported to be doing well. Most of the members seem to have been tailoresses. In late April a group of 40 had joined the organisation which seems to have been growing alongside the male branch of "new union" recruits.

In October 1892 Bower announced that Lady Dilke, together with Miss A.B.Marland and Miss A. Holyoake, would soon be visiting the town to help in the task of organising the female hosiery workers. Subsequently Holyoake and Marland were successful in establishing a tailoresses branch which was joined by a "goodly number".⁹ A branch of the Female Lace Workers had affiliated to the Trades Council in May 1891. The membership of this union which had been established by the Trades Council in May 1891 was, however, very small only a tiny fraction of the available membership taking the trouble to join. Undoubtedly most of the spade work in organising groups of female workers was initially put in by trade unionists of both sexes who had been influenced by the wave of new unionism. Equally certainly, however, some of these activists must be counted amongst the band of enthusiastic early socialists.

Evidence that this was the case comes most readily from the pages of the socialist newspapers. William Morris's paper Commonweal for instance during the course of 1888 reported several incidents of female militancy. These strikes included Blanket Weavers in Heckmondwike, cotton and jute

workers in Dundee, girl workers in a tin box factory in London and Nottingham's Female Cigar workers demonstrates that the members of the Social Democratic Federation and Socialist League were concerned for the fate of their female comrades. Clearly, the most advanced sections of the local labour movement did understand that their own emancipation could never be achieved whilst women were still enslaved.

Many ordinary workers were, however, still firmly blinkered. The Clarion in a sarcastic little article printed in 1892 and headed "Moral Nottingham", were really drawing attention to this when they wrote :

"An audacious attempt to seduce the morality of the good town of Nottingham has been happily defeated by the vigilance of the town's religious bodies. The wicked proposal was actually submitted to the Nottingham Council that the Castle Museum and Art Gallery should be open on Sundays! But, of course, it was defeated by a large majority. Long Row will, however, remain open on Sunday evenings until further notice." 10

Long Row was, of course, the haunt of the town prostitutes and their customers. The hypocrisy which this report illustrates was carried over into many other aspects of the relationship between men and women. Undoubtedly, men of all social classes in the late Victorian period had a series of expectations of their women-folk, which many women were happy to fall in with. In the case of working class women it seems likely that whether or not they were members of a trade union, their husbands would always expect them to put home and family first. Even though Nottingham had a riotous reputation it appears that the prevailing social atmosphere had by the 1870's and 80's done much to underpin the high priority put on not disrupting the community. Potential sources of conflict were often not allowed to surface and in ensuring that they remained subdued it seems possible that a kind of alliance between the labour aristocratic elements and large numbers of the female labour force constituted an informal means of helping to keep the peace and assert certain values.

Though part of the same system of exploitation as men, most women workers in Nottingham were employed in outwork of one kind or another and obviously this must have made the task of organisation almost impossible. Even where women were at work in factories alongside men there were none the less, as Sheila Rowbotham has pointed out, elements in the position of women which made it more difficult for them to organise.¹¹ Reproduction, the long periods spent in child-bearing which interrupted the work routine and the orientation of women within the family combined with bourgeois propaganda about thrift, patience and self-help, to help retard the proletarianization of working class women. Against this background the work of Wife or Mother outside the home came to be seen as an economic supplement to the wages earned by the man of the house. As a consequence, women workers were often prepared to accept low pay and were usually employed as cheap unskilled labour, by employers who wanted to dilute the bargaining strength of the organised male labour force. For these reasons there was bound to be a latent hostility between the male and the female labour force and it seems likely that this would be exacerbated in those industries like hosiery which were in the transitional stage of being mechanised.

Faced with problems of this kind it must be acknowledged that the male trade unionists of Nottingham were themselves primarily to blame for the failure to adequately unionise female labour. Initially, the fault would seem to be in the men's own feelings of superiority. Many members of both the lace and hosiery unions seem to have lumped their female work mates together with the huge number of unskilled male workers who for many years were not considered worthy of organisation. The few attempts made at unionisation in the late 1880's and early 1890's were feeble and inadequate. Trade unionism was heavily male-dominated, so was most political activity. The price for this exclusiveness was to be a significant slowing in the advance of both.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

In 1880 very few members of the Nottingham Labour Movement could remember the election of Feargus O'Connor as the town's Chartist Member of Parliament in 1847 and fewer still the burning of the castle in the Reform Bill riots of 1831. It must have seemed to many that Socialism in Britain was almost extinct, suffocated by the development of labourist policies, and weakened by the abandonment of an independent class outlook by leading sections of the Trade Union Movement.

After the failure of the final Chartist petition in 1848 and despite the efforts of a brave group of Nottingham supporters of the First International in the late 1860's and early 1870's, many of the ideas and ambitions of the first socialists had virtually disappeared. Large sections of the organised workers became the left wing of the Liberal Party and the loss of socialist aims, perspectives and organisation slowed the independent political advance of the working class for a long period.¹

This check to labour's political advance led Frederick Engels in 1881, at the start of this study, to describe the working class movement as "the tail of the Great Liberal Party."² Certainly, only a close inspection of the Nottingham political scene affords any indication of socialist activity in 1880. During the course of the year a General Election underlined that the hold of the Liberal Party on the town's working class vote was as strong as ever :

Seely	(Liberal)	8,499
Wright	(Liberal)	8,055
Isaac	(Conservative)	5,575
Gill	(Conservative)	5,052

This result was mirrored in many other towns and it is significant that only three working men were returned as Members of Parliament, all of them Liberals.

The basis for results like these was, of course, the strength and resilience of British capitalism. By the 1880's, however, underlying economic trends were beginning to present a series of major threats to the stability of British society. As these trends began to force political and social change the first signs of a socialist revival among scattered groups of middle class idealists and thoughtful working men could be seen. Britain's world supremacy was being seriously challenged by about 1875. The years which followed were marked by a long series of economic crises. Prices fell, markets became saturated and profit margins were squeezed. All of these developments were to seriously affect Nottingham's traditional industries of lace and hosiery and although in some respects the years 1879-1885 were golden ones for Nottingham twisthands, the slump which followed was the price that had to be paid.

Coinciding with this depression, British capitalism began to develop to the stage of monopoly. In Nottingham the employers in both the lace and hosiery industries responded to the threat of increasing competition by moving their machines out of the town into country areas where labour was cheaper. In 1886 William Mansell, the secretary of the Nottingham Stonemasons, told the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry that both the lace and hosiery trade was "going away from the town (abroad) and to small villages adjacent to the town."³ Henry Collier, the secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, told the Commission that trade was "sadly depressed" and blamed the use of machinery:

"which it is of no use to protest about, and cheap imports of doors and frames from Sweden and Norway at a price far below what we can make them for."

Collier went on to point out that in his own industry :

"we produce more than ever per man with machinery and scamping the work ... some of the speculation jobs make a good workman shudder."⁴

William Flint, who gave evidence to the Commission on behalf of the Nottingham branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, described his industry as being "very much depressed" and advanced the view that "great over-production of late years in the lace machines"⁵ was its major cause. In the lace trade the depression was ascribed to the demands of the trade unions, but the President of the Lace Manufacturers Association told the Royal Commission in 1886 that the Nottingham twisthands were co-operative and had within the last year agreed to a reduction of between 15 and 20 per cent in their rates.

The real reasons for the slump in this period were, of course, much more complicated. Many factors were involved in generating the crisis of British capitalism in the 1880's including over-production and the impact of foreign competition. These, however, were the most important priming agent, making for important new developments within the British Labour Movement, which, as the crisis deepened, led to a growing questioning of the existing system, and social order, by increasing numbers of workers. It was this questioning which led in the end to the revival of Socialist thought.

Much of late Victorian England echoed with the birth cries of socialist or quasi socialist movements so that no one living in a town of any size could fail to hear them. Certainly in large industrial centres like Nottingham these early propagandists found a ready audience. The tradition of open air Socialist evangelising was at its height at the end of the Nineteenth Century, and the huge Market Square at the centre of Nottingham which had been the stage for great political meetings for over a hundred years, was often filled with speakers whose message varied from the traditional orthodoxy of Jimmy Dupe, a well-known preaching butcher, to the disturbing criticism of established society of the Secularists and early Socialists.

Throughout the 1880's the members of the Nottingham branch of the Social Democratic Federation, spurred on by a kind of puritan surge for a

sense of right and wrong, could often be heard speaking in the Market place, and on Sneinton Market in the west of the city. Their branch met weekly in Creswell's coffee house, but their converts were made at the outdoor propaganda meetings which were often attended by huge crowds. By April 1884 Justice, the S.D.F. newspaper, was listing more Nottingham agents than any other provincial town and in August the Annual Conference of the S.D.F. was told that the Nottingham branch was "most active and has done good service."⁶

Early in 1884 this group of early Socialists were giving added encouragement by the announcement that John Burns would become the S.D.F. Parliamentary candidate for West Nottingham. John Burns had been one of the delegates to the 1884 Amalgamated Society of Engineers Rules Revision Conference in Nottingham. On the Sundays preceding and following the conference, Burns spoke for the S.D.F. at the Market Square meetings. As a result Burns became the S.D.F. candidate for West Nottingham and between then and the General Election in 1885 he was often in Nottingham.

Henry Snell, then a young man of about 20, took the chair at many of the meetings held by Burns. "Naturally," wrote Snell "we claimed that our candidate was reluctantly bearing the workers' banner at the request of a large number of the downtrodden and impatient electors of the division, but, so far as I remember, John Peacock, Tom Proctor, Sam Whalley and myself were the only people primarily concerned."⁷ Although the group approaching Burns was a small one, there is no doubt that he was popular with the town's workers. At a Market Square meeting in June 1884 he addressed over 1,000 people. The following Sunday, speaking on Sneinton Market, over 2,000 attended his meeting and over 200 copies of Justice were sold. In the week which followed Burns spoke in different parts of the town on Monday, Tuesday and Friday and in July, after a meeting at which Burns spoke to 3,000, a resolution was passed in favour of a Labour candidate who "must go in for a revolutionary programme."⁸ In September the Socialists Proctor, Whalley and Keeling spoke at an open-air meeting

on the subject of "Socialism and Representation." At this meeting money was handed up by workers who said they wished to start an election fund for Burns. A week later a meeting in the Square passed unanimously a resolution in favour of Burns as the S.D.F. candidate and on September 26th 1884 a great meeting in the Square of between 4,000 and 5,000 workers clapped and cheered Burns until he agreed to stand.⁹

By October the S.D.F. campaign was well under way with meetings in New and Old Radford, Basford, Bullwell and Hyson Green as well as in the City centre. Justice, of course, fully supported Burns and late in October it vented some of the spleen for which the early Socialist propagandists are justly famous by ironically reporting Arnold Morley, who was standing as a Liberal Candidate in South Nottingham, as having claimed that in Nottingham the "moral condition of the working class was much improved;" this, he claimed, was due to the presence in the midst of the Nottingham workers of the Nottingham Tabernacle, a religious edifice which enjoyed Morley support. At least, added Justice, Morley had the grace not to say anything about the influence of the Morley hosiery factory and its starvation wages had on the bodies and souls of the Morley workers, and it went on to advise the town's workers to use the Burns candidature to show the world "what they think about canting capitalists who steal the workers' labour to put in tabernacle plates."¹⁰

A large meeting at the beginning of November passed a resolution that "as the Liberal Union refused to consider a memorial of working men asking for a Labour candidate, that Colonel Seely (the Liberal candidate) should retire in favour of the candidate John Burns."¹¹ This impertinent suggestion was an early sign of the impatience felt by the most progressive elements of the working class movement with a Liberal Party which, in its attempt to become the party of "the people" was increasingly caught between two stools. Later in the month, Burns revealed just how worried the local Liberal Party was by his nomination, when he announced that he had been approached by the Liberal agent, anxious to see "if any arrangement

could be made for his withdrawal from the contest."¹²

By the end of November the Burns campaign had helped the S.D.F. establish three branches in the town. All three (East, West and South) were holding weekly business meetings as well as throwing their full weight into the propaganda campaign. Meeting after meeting of the town's workers reiterated their support for Burns. H.H.Champion of London and G. Smart of Salford were among speakers from other parts of the country who came to Nottingham to speak for Burns. On December 5th a large meeting stood in pouring rain to hear Burns and the local leadership before passing a vote of confidence in the S.D.F. candidate who was now not only being harassed by organised Whig gangs, but was also accused by the Liberals of being a paid agent of the Carlton Club, sent to Nottingham simply to split the working class vote.

In fact, the Burns campaign was largely being financed by the Fabian proprietor of the celebrated Bay Soap firm,¹³ and Joseph Burgess, an ex lace worker, but now editor of the short-lived Nottingham Operative, was able to prove in its columns that, in fact, it was the Liberals who were active in offering Burns money to drop his candidature. Writing to Burgess, Burns, after dealing with these attempts, goes on to say that any Liberal visitor to his lodgings would have to go "through a lively five minutes, should he call for the express purpose of inducing me to withdraw from the contest."¹⁴ In fact, Burns was attacked whilst on his way to a meeting in the Mechanics Institute. When Burns arrived it was noticed that his lips were bleeding. The Chairman had to explain that the candidate would not be able to speak for long, as when he left home some villain had struck him in the mouth.

In the event it took a lot to silence Burns, who proceeded to make a speech in which he complained that the Liberals were asking his friends in Labour organisations to rebut his candidature. It had been said, he claimed, that he had come to split the vote, but there was no party for the labourers in the field ... " he was called a Tory tool, but

would a Tory tool speak as he had done on behalf of the people?". There can be no doubt that the rhetorical talent of Burns and his supporters gave the Liberals a serious fright. Every attempt to discredit him was made, and in the attitude of the most intelligent representatives of the established parties, was an awareness that the popularity of Burns amongst those working class voters able to defeat the many obstacles designed to prevent them registering their vote represented the first erosion of their own position.¹⁵

This fear must have deepened as the mood of the increasing numbers of unemployed in the town began to turn ugly. In October 1884 Justice reported that at large meetings of the unemployed in the town, some said that they had not eaten for 2 days. Arising from these meetings a Committee of the Unemployed led by Mr. Jones, a local miner, waited on the municipal candidates in order to demand work for the unemployed. During December the unemployed paraded the principal streets with a band and the attendance at the S.D.F. propaganda meetings continued to grow. John Burns' Election Address, when it was issued, contained the following ten points :

1. Free education, compulsory on all classes, together with the provision of at least one meal a day in Board Schools.
2. Eight hours or less to be the working day in all trades.
3. Adult suffrage.
4. Payment of members and all official expenses at elections.
5. Abolition of the House of Lords and all hereditary authority.
6. Triennial Parliaments.
7. Legislative Independence for Ireland.
8. Free Justice.
9. Nationalisation and municipalisation of land, mines, railways, machinery and banks.
10. The power of declaring war, making peace and making treaties to be vested in the people. 16

These principles, Burns added, he laid before the electors as a Labour candidate and a Social Democrat, in the firm belief that only by a thorough change in the social and political system could the producing classes be benefited.

The echoes of Chartism which some of these demands evoke were also present in the riot which occurred on polling day. Although, of course, the political issues were important, the ferocity of the running fights between the supporters of the various candidates have within them some elements of the pre-industrial popular disturbance. Writing in the Sunday Express in 1927, C.F.G. Masterman recalled the extraordinary version of events which Burns had told him :

"I shoved my wife into a fried-fish shop and said 'Stay there my girl'. The Market Place was paved with cobble stones. We levered up these stones with some instruments and, as he told me with delight, at the end of the evening there was not a pane of glass unbroken within the area of combat." 17

This colourful account continued with Burns estimating the amount of damage done by the riot as £20,000, but Henry Snell told Burns' biographer that he considered this account highly imaginative. Imaginative or not, a major riot certainly did take place. The town's unemployed must have made up most of the crowd in the Market Place and their rejection by industrial society must have added weight to their protest. The police effort to clear the square resulted in many broken heads, and at 9 p.m. the Mayor was forced to telegraph for the Hussars, stationed at Leeds. The Leeds soldiers were, however, rendered immobile through lack of horse boxes, so that an urgent appeal had to be sent to Sheffield. Eventually over 100 men of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Regiment arrived in the town where a serious riot was now in progress. Before the night was out a magistrate had been forced to read the Riot Act from a window of the Exchange Building and running fights had spilled from the Market Place into Dilkes Yard and Chapel Bar. When the poll was declared Burns declared that he was the man "who refused to be greased" but, nevertheless, the Liberals had won easily:

Colonel Seely (Lib.)	6,609
E. Cope (Con.)	3,797
J. Burns (S.D.F.)	598

So ended the Social Democratic Federation's first provincial campaign.

In August, the Sixth Annual Conference of the S.D.F. received a report that "the candidature of Burns in Nottingham thoroughly permeated the town with Socialism and our candidate would undoubtedly have obtained a much larger number of votes had it not been for the lying reports concerning him which the Liberals set about on polling day."¹⁸ Although perhaps, this claim pitched things a little high, it is clear that a great deal of propaganda work had been done. As well as the large outdoor meetings organised by the S.D.F. the steady sale of Justice helped to convince many that the Socialist evangelists were at least asking some very awkward questions, as the following report in the Nottingham Figaro helps to demonstrate :

"At a neighbouring platform Justice is to be had for a penny. 'Cheaper than you can get it at the Town Hall' one of the vendors remarked. This must be Socialism, listen ! 'What I can't understand is this ... why should one man get £20 a week and another £1 ?' If you forward this poser, Mr. Speaker, to the Editorial sanctum you will no doubt be requested to ask another." ¹⁹

Despite the progress made in Nottingham, however, the inquest generated by their poor showing in other parts of the country pushed the S.D.F. during the winter of 1885 into a critical period. At the General Election the party had run three candidates: Burns in Nottingham, another in Hampstead and a third in Kennington. These last two candidates mustered only 27 and 32 votes respectively, and in the row which followed J. Hunter Watts, the S.D.F. treasurer, claimed that the party had been financed by Tory funds. In the storm of protest which followed the S.D.F. lost a large percentage of its membership and the trail which Burns had blazed quickly became overgrown. Subsequently C.L. Fitzgerald, a former member of the S.D.F. Executive, set up a rival body called the Socialist Union. This organisation seems to have had some support in Nottingham but by the end of 1886 it had almost petered out amongst the general confusion which was now being generated by the political and personal disagreements of the national leadership. Despite the respectable and hard won vote achieved by Burns, therefore, the Nottingham Socialists were still a long way from

returning a successful candidate of their own and a great deal more propa-
ganda would have to be done before this aim was achieved.

Two years later, in the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, con-
ditions in the town continued to reflect the huge gap that existed between
rich and poor. In August 1887 the Nottingham Express wrote :

"In this year of the Jubilee, there is a good deal of
suffering in Nottingham from want of employment and
there are many more than is generally supposed living
on miserable pittance, in the hope of a better
living. Living ... no, existing on earnings which
are barely enough to keep body and soul together." ²⁰

In this period, as Henry Pelling has pointed out, unemployment was help-
ing to generate a situation in which desperate men were willing to threat-
en public order. ²¹ Not surprisingly, the S.D.F. took the lead in organ-
ising demonstrations of those out of work whilst at the same time contin-
uing their efforts to convert and recruit the Nottingham working class -
despite the derision of the Nottingham newspapers, well expressed in a
report which mocked :

"Had John Burns, the Social Democrat, seen the lanky
German fop who tried to fill his shoes on Sunday
morning, he would have despaired of the future of
Democratic Socialism. He wanted the man who earned
the shilling to have the shilling, and not the
employer to have 9d and the worker to have only 3d
out of the 1s." ²²

They continued evangelising in the Socialist cause whenever the oppor-
tunity offered. In February, two excellent open air meetings on "Social-
ism and the Unemployed" and "The Right to Live" were held and the outdoor
propaganda work amongst those out of work was bringing new recruits into
the town's growing Labour Movement. In March the local Socialists cele-
brated the anniversary of the Paris Commune with a tea and ball, held in
the Secular Hall. Speeches on the Commune were delivered by Whalley,
Cooper and Proctor in English and by Detre in French. The Marseillaise
was sung in French by Coutoux and songs and recitations were given. Among
the decorations was a red banner inscribed "Vive la Commune" and as mottoes
the names of Hyndman, Morris, Delescluze and Dombrowski. After singing

the Marseillaise in chorus, the meeting was brought to an end with three cheers for the Commune.²³

Underneath fraternal feeling of this sort, however, the traditional tensions of the left were as obvious in Nottingham as any other area. These strains were reflected in a series of open air meetings during July which dealt with the rival claims of reform and revolution. This debate probably reflected the fact that the S.D.F. had been losing members to the Socialist League. In August the S.D.F., in its Annual Report, included an item which recorded that, although the Nottingham branch still held together a group of energetic workers, local differences and intrigues meant that propaganda was not spreading as well as would be wished. By October, however, the S.D.F. had opened a new clubroom in the town, and Justice was able to report that "our old comrades Peacock, Knight and others have rejoined the S.D.F. and we intend to start on active propaganda at once."²⁴

True to their word the S.D.F. group immediately called a special meeting to condemn the murder of the Chicago anarchists and followed this a fortnight later with two meetings to further the candidature of Whalley, who was being put forward to contest Wollaton Ward in the municipal elections. The fight facing Whalley was a difficult one, and not surprisingly, he lost :

Smith (Liberal)	1,292
Whalley (S.D.F.)	287

Although this result was a poor one, the local group was not downhearted, and the tea party held to celebrate Whalley's election fight was "crowded to excess." Some idea of the difficulties facing the Socialists in trying to return a candidate of their own can be gleaned from the report in Justice covering the election :

"Though we did not poll many, the result is encouraging considering the conditions under which we fought. Our opponent was a publican and had the support of a number of Alderman and Town Councillors. Having plenty of money he well advertised his meetings and held them in nice comfortable school rooms. We,

having scarcely any money, and not more than 7 or 8 workers, had to hold our meetings in the open air on the bitterly cold nights, besides crying the meetings ourselves with a bell. Wollaton Ward is the worst possible ward we could have contested, being dominated entirely by the Liberal caucus. The people agreed with our comrade and even admitted that he was the best man, but they objected to him because he had not come through the legitimate channel."25

The reference in this report to the "Liberal caucus" is an indication of the firm grip still held by the Liberals on a large section of the working class vote. This was well demonstrated in the 1886 General Election when even the return of Broadhurst as the Lib-Lab. Member for West Nottingham could not disguise the importance of money and influence in the established politics of the town. Against this background the dedication of the early Socialists was not by itself enough to defeat the machine of the Conservative and Liberal parties. They could, however, draw huge crowds to their propaganda meetings and a joint S.D.F. - Socialist League meeting in November 1887 drew over 2,000 workers to a gathering which was significant, since it demonstrated a new determination to work together to break the psychological grip which the Liberal Party had on the minds of large numbers of working class voters.

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

The first signs of Socialist League influence in Nottingham date from January 1886 when Tom Proctor wrote to William Morris to ask for one quire of the Socialist League paper Commonweal. At the time Proctor was the Secretary of the Nottingham Council of the S.D.F., and this fact may be an indication of the fragmentation of S.D.F. support in this period. The Socialist League was, of course, the product of the major S.D.F. split, whilst another which seems to have enjoyed some Nottingham support was the short-lived Socialist Union. Certainly, a series of 22 letters written by 3 Nottingham Socialists to the Headquarters of the Socialist League seem to indicate that the town's Socialists were fully involved in the internal arguments of the early movement. The writers' use of such terms as "Social Union: Nottingham Section", "Socialist Union" and "Nottingham and District Social Democratic League" all suggest that the town's activists were fully aware of wider developments. At one point the possibility of Nottingham becoming involved in a "Socialist Labour Party" is mentioned and this may be a reference to the movement launched in the North by J.L. Mahon in 1887.¹

Later in 1886 the Socialist League appointed a Commonweal sales agent in the town. Prior to this development, tremendous difficulty had been experienced in obtaining copies of the newspaper. Newspapers played a crucial part in the programme of political propoganda and a journal such as Commonweal was not only a vital means of disseminating Marxist views and recruiting new members, but also an essential weekly morale-booster for existing members. Whilst trying to obtain copies direct from London, however, the Nottingham Socialists ran into problems of late and non-arrival, and even on occasion of over-supply. In May, Proctor wrote to complain "this will make the third week they have not come"²

whilst in March he had explained: "We sell them not to make money but as a means of propoganda and we are not in a position to bear any loss, being all working men and many out of work."³ All of this helps to underline the correctness of Henry Pelling's view that the Socialist League was often inefficient⁴ and gives added point to the claim of Edward Thompson that to some extent the Socialist League members were part of a "destructivist" tradition which emphasised extreme individualism and a desire to dispence with party discipline and serious organisation.⁵

In April, Proctor had ordered an "assortment of leaflets" as well as the Socialist League's History of the Commune and Revolutionary Songs and it would seem that he and one or two others were busy trying to get together enough active members to form a bona fide branch of the League. This small group of individuals could not have found this task easy, since in January 1886, Clifton had written to explain: "We are rather in a peculiar fix with another organisation. If we can get others favourable to the League, will send you all particulars."⁶ A day or two later he wrote to say "the Socialists in Nottingham are not organised properly... myself and a few others have been talking over the matter, to try and see what can be done. If a good Society was started here, what support would we have from the League? The thing that is wanted is lecturers. If we had them we should soon have a strong branch here. In the S.D.F. we have had over 100 members..."⁷ These efforts to form a branch of the Socialist League continued into 1887 and in June, Clifton was writing from the Nottingham Socialist Club to put a series of urgent questions to the leaders of the League :

"Is there any notice to be taken of the article in Commonweal declaring for local and municipal action to be taken by the League as a body? Also, if our branch saw a good chance of running a candidate for Parliament would the League go against it? Would there be any attempt by the Council to boss our branch? I have had notice there is dissatisfaction amongst the branches of the League at the Motion for Political Action not being passed. The Norwich

branch being under notice to withdraw and not go over to the Socialist Union. Is there any truth in these statements? Will you please let me have a reply as soon as possible. We are going along in fine style and we shall soon have a strong society ..." 8

The questions which are being posed here make it clear that the group which formed the nucleus of the Nottingham branch of the League were not as in some other parts of the country anti-parliamentarian or anarchist in sympathy and this was confirmed in the next letter from Clifton :

"As I informed you, we had a special meeting on Sunday. Your letter was read to the members. The restriction as to Parliamentary action did not suit the members. After the question had been discussed it was resolved that as it was likely there would be a convention of the Socialist bodies called together for the purpose of forming a great Socialist Labour Party we should remain as we are at present constituted until then and decide as to what we should do ..." 9

Clifton's letter went on to say that recruits were beginning to come forward; "last night we enrolled 7 new members who seem totally different to the converts we used to get before we formed our club. It seems a great success and we shall soon have to look out for larger premises." These developments subsequently came to a head on September 11th 1887 when, after a special meeting a resolution was passed unanimously, that "the members of the Nottingham Section of the Socialist Union become a branch of the Socialist League". Two weeks later, Clifton was writing to say that the newly formed branch had moved to better rooms in Tokenhouse Yard which they operated as a nightly clubroom. Once the group was in being, it immediately embarked on its own propaganda programme. In the first week of October Proctor addressed an enthusiastic meeting of Clifton miners on "Labour Organisation" and Clifton wrote to tell the League that the Nottingham branch hoped to work harmoniously together with the League and its headquarters.

In November 1887 the municipal elections presented the League with an opportunity to try its strength at the polls. At very short notice

Proctor, who was described by the Nottingham Daily Expross as a "labour or working man's candidate"¹⁰ but who ran officially as an Independent, mounted a campaign in Byron Ward. Meanwhile, Samuel Tyler, an old member of the First International, was nominated as an Independent candidate in St. Mary's Ward. Neither of these two Socialist League supporters did particularly well :

Byron Ward

Berryman (Conservative)	875
Mutch (Liberal)	814
Proctor (Independent)	61

St. Mary's Ward

Young (Conservative)	811
Sylvester (Liberal)	466
Tyler (Independent)	68

At a meeting in October, Bailey, the Miners' Agent, together with Farmer, the Liberal Agent in the Eastern Division, asked Proctor to withdraw in return for an undertaking that 12 months hence a Labour candidate would be selected by the Liberals. Proctor, however, refused this offer and in the event, his campaign won enough votes to keep the Liberal out. Although both Proctor and Tyler stood as Independent candidates the local press made it quite clear that both men were Socialists, as indeed it did of the S.D.F. candidate who, it will be remembered, polled 287 against the winning Liberal in Wollaton Ward. Whalley, at a mass meeting just before the poll, produced a letter from Bailey of the N.M.A. "wishing him every success and urging workmen to place him at the top of the poll."¹¹ According to the Nottingham Express, however, Whalley also claimed to be a Liberal and a nominee of the L.R.C., of which the newspaper sarcastically remarked, "nothing, to all intents and purposes, is known."¹² In reality, of course, this comment could be held true of all the early Socialist organisations. Of the groups active in the 1880's the Socialist League was, in numerical terms, amongst the smallest. Its contribution to the quality of the early

movement is, however, central. Under the direction of William Morris the League took the lead in emphasising the drabness of ordinary workers' lives and in demanding a real improvement in the quality of people's lives. The disgust felt by William Morris for the philistinism and joylessness of the middle class was, as Edward Thompson has pointed out, a main feature of the Socialist League's appeal and there is plenty of evidence that in Nottingham his philosophy had a great deal of influence amongst the town's Socialists.¹³ Something of the atmosphere of the Nottingham Socialist League meetings can be gathered from Henry Snell's autobiography, in which after telling of the tremendous influence which Edward Carpenter had on him, he remembers :

"memories of a Sunday fellowship meeting at Ambergate, midway between Nottingham, Sheffield and Leicester ... crowded into a local inn where Carpenter played the piano and we sang the best known Socialist songs." ¹⁴

Later, he recalls :

"small bands of young crusaders, including myself, carried the glad tidings to the 'heathen' living outside the Borough ... our practise was to ride out on a penny farthing from the saddle of which, the machine being kept in the perpendicular by comrades either side, I and others preached the gospel." ¹⁵

The fervour of Snell and his comrades looked at with the cynicism of the present day, is difficult to understand until one realises that underpinning the beliefs of the early Socialists was the certainty in their minds that radical change was not far off. The leading propagandists underlined this view in October by choosing as the subject of a series of open air meetings "The Coming Revolution" and the Sunday evening discussions in the group's clubroom were full of certainty that the Socialist Revolution was very close.

The Socialist League's great contribution to the Socialist Movement was its vision of a great co-operative commonwealth. The emphasis which it placed on the cultural poverty to which large sections of the working class were sentenced by the capitalist system was tremendously valuable, and something of its tone can be gleaned from the Nottingham

group's autumn lecture programme which included William Morris speaking to an audience of 250 on "Art and the Working Class", a meeting on "Monopoly", and a meeting in the Secular Hall at which Morris lectured on the "Origin of Ornamental Art". The use of the Secular Hall on this occasion underlines the fact that many amongst the early activists had come to socialism via secularist agitation. Secularist lectures like that given by Mr. Shepard of Leicester in September 1887 on "Christianity as an elevating influence on Mankind" might not, on the surface, seem very likely to produce Socialist militants, but as Snell recalled many years later, they "afforded opportunities for information and discussion".¹⁶ They also allowed Snell and others to hear Bradlaugh, Holyoake, Edward Aveling, Charles Watts and Annie Besant, and there is little doubt that many who were to play a vital role in building the movement developed their speaking and debating skills at Secular Society meetings.

In April 1888 a major crisis seems to have developed and Proctor and Doleman wrote to Socialist League Headquarters to explain :

"We are sorry to have to tell you of the break-up of the Nottingham Branch of the Socialist League and the club connected with it ... we organised the club with the intention of keeping the members together and attracting others by having games, social evenings and other nights, discussions. Some of the members introduced the evil of playing cards for money. This evil began to increase and with it a disregard for discussion and propaganda work. We did all we could to stop this evil by passing resolutions setting aside several nights for debate, and stopping card-playing on Sunday and the playing of games for money. The nights set apart for debates were so badly attended that it fell through and gaming became the rage. The resolutions were treated with contempt and a further evil, namely, book-making on horse-racing, was introduced to the club... believing this practice to be contrary to the principles of socialism and degrading to our movement, we sent in our resignations with a protest against the name of socialism being connected with such an institution any longer. We, therefore, think the best course would be to dissolve the branch and thus get rid of the gambling party so that earnest socialists may have a chance of reorganising on a better footing." ¹⁷

Fortunately the earnest socialists managed to successfully purge themselves

and the branch survived. The emphasis on the quality of life which was the major feature of Socialist League propaganda naturally led many members of the Nottingham branch into work with the unemployed. As part of a campaign on this topic Peacock, who had been elected to the School Board as a Socialist in 1886 and who according to a letter to the League Headquarters from Clifton was "very popular"¹⁸ began to roundly denounce the sweating of teachers by the Nottingham School Board. This activity, together with an attempt by the Lace Manufacturers to reduce wages by 40 per cent, helped to bring recruits into the Socialist organisations and in June 1889 Commonweal reported that several new members had joined the branch and that things were beginning to move. Later in the month it reported that the Nottingham branch was progressing satisfactorily, both financially and numerically and that it had been decided to run Peacock, Proctor and Whalley as Socialist candidates in the November School Board elections.

Since Whalley was a member of the S.D.F. this campaign represented an alliance between the Socialist League and the Social Democratic Federation. This had been cemented in July by a joint excursion to Charnwood Forest. The members of the various groups proceeded in horse brakes with much waving of red flags and the singing of the Marseillaise. After dinner and tea at a farm house a single innings cricket match was played between Socialists v. Secularists in which the former scored 67 to win the match against their opponents' 46. Sensibly, the Socialist alliance was maintained in day-to-day propaganda and by August both groups were active in supporting a lace makers' strike and in helping the gas stokers and other unskilled workers to organise themselves into a trade union.

In November, Annie Besant was in the town to speak at the Secular Hall on "Education" and later she helped to inaugurate the Socialist School Board election campaign at a Market Square meeting. Later in the month, 3 meetings were held each night for a week prior to polling day, and this propaganda helped to push the Socialist vote upward by 2,000 over

the vote they had recorded in 1886. Although no Socialist candidate was returned Peacock recorded 14,176 votes whilst Proctor achieved 10,276. In December Proctor opened a series of indoor meetings with a talk on the "Unskilled Labour Movement" before the old year was seen out with a tea party and the singing of Socialist songs.

During July 1888 John Burns had again visited the town to renew the contacts which he had made during his earlier election campaign, and to help the Nottingham Socialists in their propaganda campaign. Writing in his diary Burns noted :

"Went to Nottingham, arrived 4.30 p.m. Met by Whalley and Clarke. Town very depressed, many out of work. Measuring the poverty of the town by what I saw on the streets and in the Market Place, I should say that there was 40% less money being spent than two years ago." 19

On the Sunday morning following this entry Burns spoke to 2,000 at a meeting in the Sneinton Market whilst in the evening he spoke to an estimated 6,000 in the Market Place before visiting the S.D.F. members in their club-room. At the discussion which took place at the club, Burns notes that the Nottingham Socialists expressed themselves as being in favour of amalgamation with other Socialist organisations and this note helps to underline the impression that although the town was undoubtedly affected by the arguments and conflicts sponsored by national personalities, at local level a good deal of co-operation was possible between the different groups and that at this stage sectarianism was not a major problem.

Burns left Nottingham on the same train as Bradlaugh, but before leaving the town he had noted in his diary an amusing account of the meeting which helps to capture the atmosphere of the public meetings at which so many early Socialists learnt the art of public speaking :

"In the morning at Sneinton Market an Irishman, a very voluble speaker, was speaking to a large crowd prior to our meeting. When we started his audience rapidly diminished. Making a virtue of necessity he closed what was left in order to hear me. Getting on the platform when I had finished he made a sentimental speech with little in it. Although he flattered our speech and speakers I could see he was annoyed. This

showed itself at a later meeting at night in the big Market Place. When I reached the Market at 7.30 p.m. people ran around him, hundreds were walking about. When our Chairman started they commenced to gather around us, the Irishman all the time making tremendous efforts to hold his audience. When the Chairman announced me, the audience began to leave him. As my voice (purposefully high) was heard a stampede took place. Much to his disgust he was left talking to but a few. I ought to be ashamed, he said, for stealing his audience etc. etc. It then became a question of lung power. I told him that unless he had a voice like a double-barrelled fog horn he had better abandon the struggle. He persisted for a minute and then collapsed. The last I saw of him he was tearing up his notes like one possessed and excitably pacing to and fro. The audience yelled with laughter at the easy surrender of the rival ... a sporting man in the audience, to disconcert me, then bellowed out: "Who will win the Leger". Much to his discomfiture I replied: 'The horse that is ridden by a rogue, owned by a knave and paid for by fools like you'. He retired. " 20

Many of those in the audiences which Burns spoke to must have come from the ranks of the unemployed and like other early Socialists he drew much of his support from this group and from the unskilled. The concern of the Socialist League for these elements was always predominant and in May 1890 it was well demonstrated when Tom McCarthy spoke to huge meetings in the town on "My Experience in the Great Dock Strike" before leaving with local Socialists for a great Trade Union demonstration in nearby Long Eaton.

From this concern with the under-privileged flowed too, a natural concern for the plight of women workers, well reflected in a Commonweal account of the daily life of the town's working women :

"All sorts of minor tyrannies are imposed to break the spirit of the workers and render them docile serfs. The forewomen are selected especially for their ability to 'nag' and 'drive' the hands. One Nottingham factory manager occasionally strolls down the room, and if one of the women should turn her head to glance at the majestic passer-by she is instantly dismissed. This gentleman is a prominent Liberal and Churchwarden, and his master an M.P. who inherits the virtues of a pious father (Morley), is to be the Almighty's principal instrument in returning Mr. Gladstone back to office at the General Election. In several large warehouses the girls are obliged to come half an hour earlier in the morning to have some hired parson preach and pray

at them. One of these sky-pilots had the impudence to denounce his hearers because of the few ribbons they had obtained. The managers, sub-managers and chief clerks use their power to seduce girls and then cast them adrift. The gilded youth of two counties make Nottingham their pleasure house and the army of despair which lounges round the 'Clarendon', the 'Three Crowns' or that glorified gin-palace known as the 'Talbot' is recruited from the weaker sisters of the warehouse. The result is a social ulcer which permeates the bourgeois in spite of all efforts to conceal it. One hears of Alderman slipping up back streets to brothels, or the disappearance of an inconvenient witness in a police prosecution because her evidence might compromise members of the Town Council, or the pillar of society who is said to have a kept woman in almost every street, and who turns up at mission meetings. Our M.P.'s are a curious medley worthy of their supporters; Broadhurst, who has sold and betrayed the workers like the Judas he is; Morley, the superior person; and Smith Wright, a jingo banker. Not one has an idea above the level of the grocer's shop, and not one cares two pins for the welfare of the workers." ²¹

Such comments make it clear that the Nottingham branch of the Socialist League were concerned at the overall rottenness of many aspects of late Victorian society. The grimness of the economic and social background of this period must have been profoundly depressing.

To get away from poverty and the smoke and grime which went with it the Socialist League members together with those of the S.D.F. enjoyed getting out into the nearby countryside. In June 1890, after a ramble to Stoke Ferry, delegates from Sheffield, Leicester, Chesterfield, Derby, Newark and Long Eaton met with Nottingham representatives to form an East Midland Federation. After this meeting a joint demonstration in Nottingham Market Place with 2 platforms drew crowds of between 3,000 and 4,000. A month later the annual picnic visited Charnwood Forest and an enjoyable day was spent rambling among the bracken and foxgloves, mounting the ricks and trespassing in the woods in defiance of "Law and Order."²²

Back in the town, however, unemployment and poverty remained a tremendous problem, and Proctor in particular continued with his efforts to organise the unskilled. Conditions in the town seem to have been

extremely grim with the Workman's Times reporting in November 1890 that Nottingham, "has been passing through a period of depression never before experienced for length of time or acuteness. Distress is very alarming and serious indeed."²³ As the situation continued to deteriorate the opportunities for Socialist propaganda multiplied. Unfortunately, however, in 1891 Proctor, together with the other leading Socialist, Whalley, left the town and Justice reported that the movement in the town was flagging as a result. Two successful meetings in September, however, provided a fresh start, and the S.D.F. reported that the Trades Council was beginning to play an important part in local agitation. These new links with the town's trade unionists are best illustrated in the development of the I.L.P., the first seeds of which were busy being sown in this period.

~~The socialism of this early period in the development of the Labour~~ Movement had many and undoubted shortcomings, it did, however, make real contributions in the field of organisation and theory. Although theological disputes all too frequently led the membership of the early socialist groups into pointless and bitter argument, cutting them off without good reason from the mass of the working class, the Nottingham membership of both the S.D.F. and the Socialist League seem for the most part to have done their best to break down sectarian divisions. The S.D.F. played a decisive role in converting the unemployed and unskilled to Socialism, whilst the Socialist League contributed a concern with the quality of life which is still a major theme of the modern Socialist Movement. Evaluated in their own terms, both groups did indeed, play an important pioneering role in laying the foundations of the Nottingham Labour Movement.

THE TRADE UNION MOOD

1. Carpenter, Edward. My Days and Dreams (1916) p. 83.
2. William Morris to Mrs. William Morris, March 19th, 1881 in Henderson, Phillip. (Ed) The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends (1950) p. 148.
3. Trades Union Congress Annual Report 1883.
4. Nottingham Association of Organised Trades 1883 Annual Report
5. Mins, Organised Trades November 16th, 1885.
6. Saville, John. 'The ideology of Labourism' in Benewick, R., Benki, R.N. and Parekh, B. Knowledge and Belief in Politics (1973)
7. Mins, Organised Trades February 17th, 1886.
8. See Armytage, W.H.G. The Liberal Background to the Labour Movement (1951) pp. 32-33.
9. John Burns, diary entry, June 30th, 1888.
10. Trades Union Congress, Annual Report 1889.
11. Wollaton Ward Liberal Association to Henry Broadhurst, September 5th, 1889.
12. Edward Medley to Henry Broadhurst, September 3rd, 1889.
13. See for instance notes for a speech at Market Harborough in the Broadhurst papers.
14. Nottingham Trades Council Minutes December 6th, 1892.
15. Nottingham Lace Trade Protection Society Webb Collection, Section B. XCII.
16. Workman's Times March 13th, 1891.
17. Nottingham Trades Council, Annual Report 1892.
18. W.T. October 24th, 1890.
19. Evidence of George Allcroft, Webb Collection, Section A. XVI.
20. Thompson, E.P. 'Homage to Tom Maguire' in Briggs, Asa., and Saville, J. (eds) Essays in Labour History (1967 edn).

ORGANISING THE TRADES COUNCIL

1. Quoted in souvenir programme, 1930 Trades Union Congress held in Nottingham, p. 25.
2. The Building Trades Council seem to have merged or split with other trades on several occasions.
3. Annual Report of the Nottingham Association of Organised Trades 1880.
4. Minutes of the Joint Committee of the United Trades Councils in Nottingham, July 10th, 1884.
5. Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and Relief of Distress (1909) Cd (4499) XXXVII p. 482.
6. Evidence of William Mansell, Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry, Appendix II, 1886.
7. Mins of the Organised Trades, August 29th, 1884.
8. Nottingham Journal April 1st, 1885.
9. Mins of the Organised Trades, April 15th, 1885.
10. Mins of the Organised Trades, April 15th, 1885.
11. Mins of the Organised Trades, April 15th, 1885.
12. Evidence of Harry Collier, R.C. on the Depression of Trade and Industry, Appendix II, 1886.
13. Mins of the Organised Trades, June 10th, 1886.
14. Mins of the Organised Trades, February 10th, 1887.
15. Mins of the Organised Trades, August 11th 1887.
16. Nottingham Daily Express November 10th, 1887.
17. Mins of the Organised Trades, February 10th, 1887.
18. Mins of the Organised Trades, February 9th, 1888.
19. Webb Trade Union Collection, Section A, Vol. XVI Engineering and metal trades.
20. Workman's Times October 24th, 1890.
21. W.T. October 24th, 1890.
22. W.T. October 24th, 1890.
23. W.T. August 29th, 1890.
24. W.T. September 19th 1890.
25. W.T. November 14th 1890.
26. W.T. December 5th, 1890.
27. See for instance Turner, H.A. Trade Union Growth Structure and Policy (1962) primarily a study of the cotton unions although the analysis is of relevance to unionism in general.
28. Briggs, Asa 'Introduction', in Briggs and Saville (Eds) Essays in Labour History 1886-1923, p. 3. (1971).

29. Cole, G.D.H. The Second International, A History of Socialist Thought Vol. III, Part I, p. 133. (1956)
30. Hobsbawm, E.J. 'Trade Union History', Economic History Review 2nd ser, XX2 (August 1967) p. 358.
31. W.T. February 27th, 1891.
32. Labour Leader October 10th, 1891.
33. L.L. October 10th, 1891.
34. N.D.E. September 12th, 1892.
35. Webb, Sidney and Beatrice. The History of Trade Unionism, Revised edition (1920), Appendix V, pp. 741-743.

TRADES COUNCIL POLITICS

1. As for instance in Hull see Brown, R. Waterfront Organisation in Hull 1870-1900 pp. 12-38. (1972)
2. West Nottingham Division General Election Result:

Henry Broadhurst Lib-Lab	5458
C. Seely L.U.	4609 maj. 849
3. Annual Report Nottingham Association of Organised Trades 1886.
4. Mins Organised Trades February 9th, 1889.
5. Mins Organised Trades October 21st, 1889.
6. Nottingham Daily Express October 30th, 1889, November 2nd, 1889:

W. Bailey	Liberal	1,063
W. Falconbridge	Conservative	746
T. Brailsford	Conservative	746 maj. 279
7. N.D.E. October 24th, 1889.
8. N.D.E. October 29th, 1889.
9. N.D.E. November 1st, 1889.
10. Minutes Nottingham Trades Council July 10th, 1890.
11. Workman's Times August 29th, 1890.
12. W.T. November 7th, 1890.
13. W.T. October 31st, 1890.
14. W.T. November 7th, 1890.
15. W.T. November 7th, 1890.
16. W.T. November 7th, 1890.
17. W.T. November 7th, 1890.
18. W.T. November 14th, 1890.
19. W.T. February 6th, 1891.
20. W.T. March 20th, 1891.
21. W.T. May 15th, 1891.
22. W.T. May 22nd, 1891.
23. W.T. June 26th, 1891.
24. W.T. August 7th, 1891.
25. W.T. August 7th, 1891.
26. W.T. August 14th, 1891.
27. N.D.E. October 24th, 1891.
28. N.D.E. October 27th, 1891.
29. W.T. September 4th, 1891.
30. W.T. September 11th, 1891.
31. W.T. October 16th, 1891.

32. W.T. October 31st, 1891.
33. Skerritt had campaigned in favour of the eight hour day and improved sanitary conditions.
34. W.T. November 7th, 1891.
35. W.T. December 5th, 1891.
36. W.T. December 12th, 1891.
37. W.T. January 2nd, 1892.
38. W.T. February 20th, 1892.
39. W.T. March 5th, 1892.
40. W.T. March 12th, 1892.
41. W.T. March 19th, 1892.
42. Mins, N.T.C. April 20th, 1892.
43. W.T. April 23rd, 1892.
44. Mins, N.T.C. May 5th, 1892.
45. Mins, N.T.C. May 18th, 1892.
46. W.T. May 7th, 1892.
47. W.T. May 14th, 1892.
48. W.T. May 28th, 1892.
49. W.T. June 4th, 1892.
50. Mins, N.T.C. June 29th, 1892.
51. Mins, N.T.C. June 29th, 1892.
52. W.T. July 9th, 1892.
53. W.T. July 9th, 1892.
54. West Nottingham Division result:
 C. Seely L.U. 5601
 H. Broadhurst Lib-Lab 5309 maj 301
55. W.T. July 16th, 1892.
56. W.T. July 23rd, 1892.
57. W.T. September 3rd, 1892.
58. W.T. July 30th, 1892.
59. W.T. September 24th, 1892.
60. W.T. October 22nd, 1892.
61. Market Ward result:
 Truman Conservative 701
 Peacock Independent 325 maj 376
 According to the local press "Mr Peacock's somewhat advanced political views did not prevent him receiving the votes of all interested in the temperance cause." Peacock was a keen member of the S.D.F.
62. W.T. October 29th, 1892.
63. October 29th, 1892.

64. N.D.E. November 1st, 1892.
65. Mins, N.T.C. November 19th, 1892.
66. W.T. December 16th, 1892.
67. Mins, N.T.C. December 14th, 1892.

THE LACE MAKERS

1. The major published work on the Lace Makers is the useful official history of Dr. Norman Cuthbert: The Lace Makers Society (1960). Unfortunately some of the sources used by Dr Cuthbert including the Minutes of the National Federation of Women Workers, Nottingham Branch and certain of the Minutes of the Amalgamated Society of Lace Makers are no longer available.
2. Nottingham Guardian August 2nd, 1879.
3. Council Minutes, Amalgamated Society of Lace Makers November, 1880.
4. Nottingham Association of Organised Trades Annual Report, 1880.
5. The Lace Trade in Nottingham and District Nottingham Express (1900).
6. Mins, Amalgamated Society, April 8th, 1876 and July 21st, 1878.
7. Workman's Times September 12th, 1891.
8. Accounts and papers, Amalgamated Society, 1869-1900, November 22nd, 1897, December 12th, 1887, May 14th, 1887.
9. Nottingham Daily Express July 29th, 1889.
10. Trades Union Congress Report 1888.
11. Hobsbawn, Eric. Labouring Men (1964) p. 292.
12. Gray, R. The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh (1976) p. 91-120.
13. W.T. October 17th, 1890.
14. W.T. February 27th, 1891.
15. N.D.E. November 3rd, 1890.
16. W.T. April 3rd 1891.

THE MINERS AS NEW UNIONISTS

1. Any consideration of the history of the Nottingham miners must draw heavily on the pioneering work of Dr Alan Griffin whose two volume history of the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association 1881-1944 (1962) is the standard work.
2. Horriben, Eric. Hucknall p. 82.
3. Mineral Statistics, 1869-1901, quoted in Church, R.A. Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town (1966) p. 232.
4. Clegg, H.A., Fox, Alan., and Thompson, A.F. The History of British Trade Unions since 1889 Volume I. 1889-1910, (1961) p. 43.
5. Webb, Sidney and Beatrice. The History of Trade Unionism (1920 edn) p. 339.
6. Clegg, Fox, and Thompson. p. 23.
7. Nottingham Journal March 15th, 1880.
8. Hopkin who was a native of Bulwell had been dismissed from several coal mines for trade union activity.
9. Minutes, Nottinghamshire Miners' Association April 28th, 1884.
10. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council August 29th, 1884.
11. William Bailey (1851-1896) Secretary-Agent Nottinghamshire Miners' Association. Primitive Methodist lay preacher from the age of 15. Ardent Liberal and founder member of the Labour Electoral Association. A member of the Basford Rural District Council, and Nottingham City Council.
12. Souvenir of the Trade Union Congress held in Nottingham in 1908.
13. Nottingham Daily Express December 13th, 1910.
14. Horriben, Eric. p. 122.
15. Quoted in Griffin, A.R. Mining in the East Midlands 1550-1947 (1971) p. 114.
16. Nottingham Guardian February 2nd, 1892.
17. Evidence of F.C. Corfield Royal Commission on Labour 1892.
18. N.D.E. August 8th, 1892.
19. Redfern, Percy. Journey to Understanding (1946) pp. 19-20.
20. Mins, N.T.C. September 9th, 1893.
21. Mins, N.T.C. October 4th, 1893.
22. Rothstein, Theodore. From Chartism to Labourism (1929) p. 266.
23. Trade Union Congress Report 1888.
24. T.U.C. Report 1889.

25. N.G. November 29th, 1890.
26. Workman's Times December 8th, 1890.
27. Labour Leader December 5th, 1891.
28. Broadhurst, Henry. The Story of his life from a Stonemason's bench to the Treasury Bench (1901) p.243.

THE HOSIERY WORKERS

1. Nottingham Chamber of Commerce Annual Report 1860
2. Wells, F.A. The British Hosiery Trade (1935) p. 146
3. Hosiery and Lace Trades Review, May 1891, quoted in Church, R.A. Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town (1966) p. 264
4. Report of the Nottingham Chamber of Commerce, reproduced in Felkin, W. History of the Machine Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufacturers (1867).
5. Evidence of George Kendall, Report of the Factory and Workshops Commission 1876, XXX. I, p. 401.
6. Nottingham Review April 17th, 1868.
7. Leicester Chronicle, September 6th, 1868. Quoted in Armytage, W.H.G. The Liberal Background to the Labour Movement (1951) p. 23.
8. N.R. October 16th, 1857.
9. Quoted in Armytage, p. 32.
10. Quoted in Armytage, p. 33.
11. Broadsheet in Nottingham Public Library.
12. Nottingham Daily Express November 20th, 1868.
13. N.R. March 20th, 1868.
14. Webb Trade Union Collection, Section C, p. 63.
15. Nottingham Association of Organised Trades Annual Report 1880.
16. Trades Union Congress Annual Report 1883.
17. Minutes, Basford and District Hosiery Trimmers Union August 17th, 1898.
18. Horriben, Eric. Hucknall p. 119.
19. Workmarks Times December 26th, 1890.
20. W.T. June 26th, 1891.
21. W.T. July 10th, 1891.
22. W.T. July 24th, 1891.
23. W.T. August 21st, 1891.
24. W.T. October 31st, 1891. "Mr Broadhurst M.P. gave an address on the miners' eight hours question...the address was one of the worst I have ever heard him give, chiefly made up of sarcasm and inuendoes on Councillor Bailey."
25. W.T. April 9th, May 7th, 1892.
26. Evidence of Arthur Bonser and Samuel Oscroft, Royal Commission on Labour 1892 pp. 77-89.

27. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council November 2nd, 1892.
28. Evidence of Samuel Bower, Royal Commission on Labour 1892,
qq. 13,036, 13,037.
29. Webb Trade Union Collection, Section A, p. 128.

WOMEN WORKERS

1. Quoted in Church, R.A. Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town (1966) p. 278.
2. Webb Trade Union Collection, Section C. Vol. 21. Evidence of Samuel Bower.
3. Workman's Times August 29th, 1890.
4. W.T. August 29th, 1890.
5. 'A Working Womans Speech' quoted in The Nineteenth Century May, 1899, pp. 667-671.
6. W.T. November 21st, 1890.
8. Minutes Nottingham Trades Council September 1st, 1890.
9. W.T. October 29th, 1892.
10. The Clarion January 9th, 1892.
11. Rowbotham, S. Women Resistance and Revolution (1972) p. 113.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

1. However, there had been a strong branch of the First International in Nottingham which, under the leadership of Thomas Smith, had tried hard to keep the ideas of socialism alive. See Collins, Henry, and Abramsky, Chimen, Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement (1965) p. 248, 255, 269, and 275, and Harrison, Royden. (Ed) The English Defence of the Commune (1971) pp. 239-277.
2. Labour Standard July 23rd, 1881.
3. Evidence of William Mansell, Second Report of the Royal Commission on Depression of Trade and Industry Appendix II 1886.
4. Evidence of Henry Collier, Royal Commission on Trade and Industry 1886.
5. Evidence of William Flint, Royal Commission on Trade and Industry 1886.
6. Justice August 9th, 1884.
7. Snell, Henry. Men Movements and Myself (1936) p. 63.
8. Justice June 6th, 1884.
9. Justice September 26th, 1884.
10. Justice October 10th, 1884.
11. Justice November 7th, 1884.
12. Justice November 14th, 1884.
13. Kent, William. John Burns: Labour's Lost Leader (1950) p. 22.
14. Burgess, J. John Burns: The Rise and Progress of a Right Honourable (1911) p. 22.
15. For a full account of the difficulties faced by working class voters see Blewett, Neal. The Peers, The Parties and The People: The General Election of 1910 (1972) pp. 357-377.
16. Kent, William. p. 20.
17. Sunday Express January 2nd, 1927. Quoted in Kent p. 20.
18. Justice August 7th, 1886.
19. Nottingham Figaro August 22nd, 1885.
20. Nottingham Daily Express August 18th, 1887.
21. Pelling, Henry. Origins of the Labour Party (1976 edn) pp. 42-44.
22. The Owl April 2nd, 1887.
23. Justice April 2nd, 1887.
24. Justice October 18th, 1887.
25. Justice November 19th, 1887.

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

1. Mahon was involved together with S.D.F. militants in helping to establish a North of England Socialist Federation during the course of the miners' strike of 1887. See Pelling, Henry. Origins of the Labour Party (1976 edn) p. 54f.
2. T. Proctor to Socialist League, May 11th, 1886.
3. Proctor to S.L. March 5th, 1886.
4. Pelling, pp. 27-32.
5. Thompson, Edward. William Morris (1977 edn) p. 376.
6. A.Clifton to S.L. December 16th, 1886.
7. Clifton to S.L. December 19th, 1886.
8. Clifton to S.L. June 7th, 1887.
9. Clifton to S.L. June 20th, 1887.
10. Nottingham Daily Express November 2nd, 1887.
11. N.D.E. November 1st, 1887.
12. N.D.E. November 2nd, 1887.
13. During these years William Morris often visited Nottingham, see for instance, Snell, Henry. Men Movements and Myself (1936) p. 57.
14. Snell, p. 56.
15. Snell, p. 60.
16. Noah's Ark Freethought Advocate September 17th, 1887.
17. Proctor and Doleman to S.L. April 4th, 1888.
18. Clifton to S.L. June 7th, 1887.
19. John Burns diary entry, June 30th, 1888.
20. Burns diary, July 1st, 1888.
21. Commonweal May 24th, 1890.
22. Commonweal August 16th, 1890.
23. Workman's Times November 21st, 1890.

PART TWO

YOUNG TURKS AND THE OLD GUARD

1893-1914

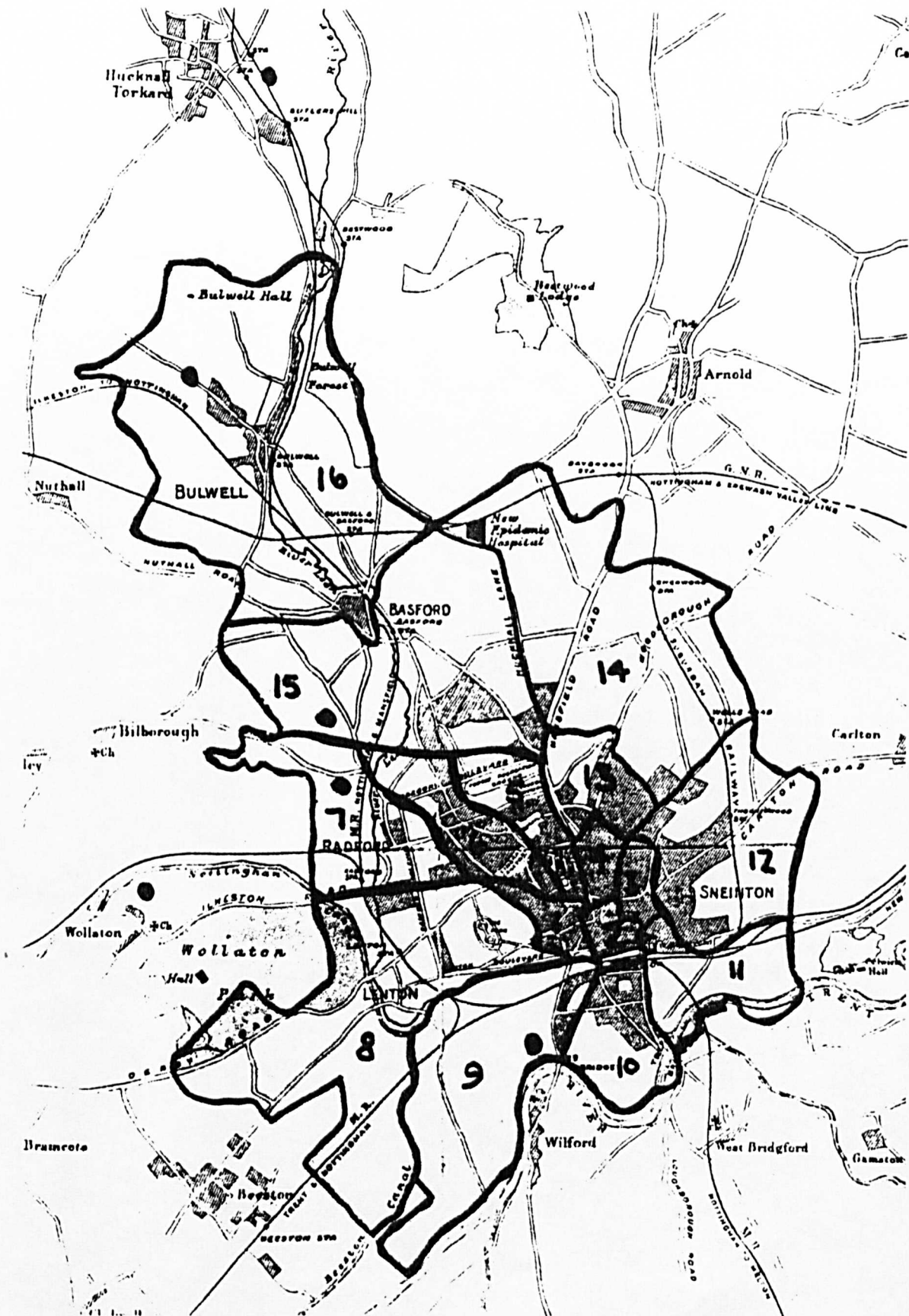
THE NOTTINGHAM ENVIRONMENT AND THE
HOUSING OF THE WORKERS

During the period between 1893 and 1914 Nottingham continued to grow although not perhaps at quite the same hectic pace as during the previous twenty year period. In 1906 the Borough contained 10,935 acres and at the time of the 1901 census there were 22 people to the acre. In the ancient districts of the town the streets were still often narrow and tortuous, but these were gradually being altered. In 1906 an insanitary area of slums to the north of the Market Place was cleared away and a number of narrow thoroughfares widened. Wide 'boulevards' were being constructed around the town and it was said that the streets were generally well paved and lighted and the "impression given by much of the city was one of abundant air space."¹

The Nottingham Corporation was also very proud of its record of providing relief for the rates. Property owned by the town produced an annual income of £30,000, and in 1906 the estate of the town freemen had been recently taken over yielding a ground rent of a further £6,000. The Nottingham water supply, from five different sources, also belonged to the town, together with drainage works, gas and electricity supply. The Town Council was also proud of its slipper baths, cemeteries, extensive markets, hospitals, lunatic asylum, and allotments. In the matter of open spaces the town was well supplied. Of these the Arboretum enclosed 17 acres to the north of the town centre. Beyond the Arboretum lay the Forest recreation ground a fine expanse of 77 acres which had been a race-course but which was now one of the major meeting places for the towns Labour Movement. Further north was Bulwell Forest a large open space secured in 1880 covering 135 acres which was often the site of the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association annual demonstration.

In 1906 the Corporation had recently acquired a new recreation ground covering 27 acres, and there were other smaller open spaces dotted around the

NOTTINGHAM AND NEIGHBOURHOOD ABOUT 1892



- Key
- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Market Ward | 2. St Mary's Ward | 3. Byron Ward |
| 4. St Ann's Ward | 5. Forest Ward | 6. Sherwood Ward |
| 7. Wollaton Ward | 8. Castle Ward | 9. Meadow's Ward |
| 10. Bridge Ward | 11. Trent Ward | 12. Manvers Ward |
| 13. Robin Hood Ward | 14. Mapperley Ward | 15. Broxtowe Ward |
| 16. St Alban's Ward | ● Collieries | |

town. By 1906 the electric tramway which had been built in 1901 extended to 16 miles in length, the distance between the two termini being some 8 miles in length. Workmen's trams were operated in the early morning, the return fare being a penny for any distance. Two canals served the town, the Nottingham canal which connected the town with Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and the Grantham canal which provided communication with both Leicestershire and Lincolnshire. The River Trent meanwhile was navigable from Nottingham to its mouth, and in 1906 some 155 canal boats were registered in the town. Four different railways served Nottingham. The Midland Railway operated a large depot near the centre of the town, and the Great Northern, North-Western, and the Great Central had passenger stations and goods sidings in various parts of the city.

Writing in 1909, Higgenbottom the I.L.P.'s full time organiser suggested that Nottingham's reputation as a progressive municipality might well have been responsible for undermining the efforts of the I.L.P. to get socialist councillors elected :

"Nottingham is a progressive city, owning many undertakings, including gas, water, trams, a fine university college, and a municipal farm. Its Corporation is also a large landowner, and has been able to provide the city with exceptional facilities in the shape of open spaces, parks, cricket and recreation grounds. I mention these facts because they have been urged as a reason against the need for an I.L.P. ... On the other hand the city is defaced by some 5,000 back to back dwellings, insanitary, stinksome, and degrading." 2

The writer Cecil Roberts, also made the point that despite its many advantages parts of the city were "blackened by chimneys and scabrous with coal mines which employ miners who are semi-savages without one bath to a hundred hovels."³ In 1909 a speaker from the National Housing Reform Council told a meeting of the Trades Council that Nottingham's slum problem "was of such magnitude that if the last six years of progress was repeated it would take 100 years to clear."⁴ These vivid descriptions make it clear that in the working class districts of Nottingham many workers still lived in very cramped conditions. That the town was very largely composed of what were called "the industrial

classes" was underlined by the fact that the proportion of domestic indoor servants to the total population was only 25 per 1,000, or 13 per 1,000 less than that for the total of the urban districts.⁵

These workers lived in housing which on the whole left a great deal to be desired. The older property comprised two main types, three-roomed "back to back" and five-roomed "through houses". The old back to back houses for which Nottingham was famous were built in a series of narrow courts and alleys and were three stories in height. The street door opened directly into the kitchen or living room and a stairway led to the upper rooms. The water closets were placed at the end of the court, from two to four serving about twenty houses. In 1906 the more modern type of three-roomed was plain fronted, built in red brick and arranged in terraces. The terrace contained about sixteen houses, eight built on either side of a paved courtyard which led to the main street. In the place of the courtyard the houses were sometimes provided with small front gardens. At the back was a fair-sized yard sometimes divided so as to give each tenant a separate space, although sometimes it was open and used in common. The houses were of two storeys, and comprised a kitchen and scullery on the ground floor and two bedrooms on the upper floor. In these houses the front door opened directly into the kitchen which was about 11 feet square. The scullery at the back of the kitchen occupied the full width of the house and was occasionally large enough to be used as a living room. Each house had a water closet and generally some cupboard or cellar accommodation for coals. These houses were occupied by labourers, colliers, and railway employees and in 1906 they were being let at rents of between 3s 6d and 4s 9d a week.⁶

Five-roomed houses formed the predominant type of working class dwellings in Nottingham. Their rents ranged from 5s. to 7s., the differences being chiefly accounted for by the variations in the position and construction of the houses. The five-roomed house was usually plain fronted and was built straight from the pavement line. It comprised a parlour about

12 ft. by 11 ft. and a kitchen on the ground floor, two bedrooms on the first floor and above these a fifth room which was sometimes an attic lit by a skylight. Here again the street door usually opened directly into the parlour. Behind the parlour was usually the kitchen and behind that was commonly a small scullery. As a rule there was a small back yard and back entrance, the water closet and coal house sometimes being in this yard. Four-roomed houses were mostly new and situated in the outlying parts of Nottingham. They had a frontage of about 12 feet and contained a parlour, access being gained directly from the street, with a kitchen on the ground floor, and two bedrooms on the first floor. A small scullery was sometimes built on from the kitchen. Each house had a water closet and separate back yard, with usually a coal shed built on the rear from the kitchen or scullery. Houses of this character were occupied by labourers and artisans who paid a rent of between 4s. 6d and 5s. 3d a week.⁷

Six-roomed houses were rented at between 6s 6d. and 9s. a week and varied in construction. They were occupied by foremen, insurance agents and other similar white collar workers. There were two main types, one of three which had three storeys contained two rooms on each floor whilst the other had two parlours and a kitchen but no scullery on the ground floor and three bedrooms on the first floor. The six-roomed house had a front door opening into a passage running through to the kitchen. The frontages were about 12 ft. The use of gas for lighting and cooking was on the increase in Nottingham. In 1892, 51 houses were installed with gas by the Gas Department. In 1894 the number was 1,321 whilst by 1901 it had reached 23,753. The numbers living in overcrowded conditions according to the 1901 census was 8,761 or 3.62 of the total population. This was a slight increase on the ten year period from 1891 to 1901 but was much better than the average for the urban districts in England and Wales which in 1901 was 8.90 of the total population. Sanitary conditions in the town were very poor, many houses were still without running water and the number of pail closets

and ash pits in the town was a continual matter of complaint from the Medical Officer of Health and the town's socialist pressure groups. ⁸

Taken overall there is no evidence to suggest that the standard of housing enjoyed by Nottingham workers was any better or any worse than that provided in other major centres of population. Improvements in urban transport, however did have the effect of enabling people to live further from their place of work, and from soon after 1900 until about 1910 a building boom on the outskirts of the old town encouraged a movement of population which had the effect to some extent of relieving the congested slums at the centre of the town. Unhappily this process did not continue after 1910. Several causes have been suggested but the one most often pointed to was the 1909 budget. Builders of small cheap houses, it is suggested, cut their profit margins to the bone, hoping to recoup themselves by the increment in the cost of land. The budget's threat to this it is claimed, destroyed the confidence of the building industry, so that by 1914 overcrowding was once again on the increase.

THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL INDUSTRY

During the period between the turn of the century and the outbreak of the First World War the decline in both the lace and hosiery industries played an important role in the process of politicising the Nottingham working class. The origin of the problems besetting the two industries stretched back many years but in this period they were forced into sharp focus becoming in the process a major preoccupation of both the industrial and the political movement. New machinery, new work, new ways of making traditional articles, all constituted a major threat, not only to the economic status of the workers, but to the pattern of the local community. In these circumstances it is not surprising that fear became an important factor in shaping the political developments in Nottingham during these years.

Throughout the 1890's the collaboration between employers and unions which had been such a feature of both the lace and hosiery trades became increasingly difficult to achieve as old arrangements and understandings were undermined by technical change and the effects of competition. This break-down was particularly marked in the hosiery industry where the unions' efforts to maintain the old price list was continually eroded. By December 1895, Bower the secretary of the Rotary Power Workers, told a joint meeting of the Rotary and Circular Unions that in the Rotary branch, where technical change was much more frequent, only two employers were still paying the 1886 price-list. Bower later wrote to the employers to demand a return to the 1886 list less 10 per cent "for the purpose of bringing about a uniformity of prices."¹ To obtain even this, however, strike action was necessary. Some firms were paying 20 to 30 per cent less than the agreed list and their resistance generated more trouble in April 1896 when the Rotary Union called out about one third of its members. This strike by about 200 men and boys was over within a month but the completely new list which was agreed contained reductions on the 1886 price-list of up to 20 per cent for the workers employed on the latest and fastest machines.

Even this agreement was rejected by some employers who were able to use non-union labour in order to keep their undertakings going. Later in 1896 at least three hosiery firms moved machinery out of the town, rather than accept the statement of prices agreed after the strike and this removal and others which followed it caused the number of both male and female hosiery workers to fall steadily. Opposition to the revival of joint regulation in the hosiery trade had been developing for some time and the factory owners told the Royal Commission on Labour in 1892 that "even if they were to agree to a Board tomorrow, the next day some of the members would run away from the arrangement." ² Difficulties of this kind were a factor of increasing competition in the trade, not only between hand and power, but between town and country. The advantage of the rural employer lay in lower wage costs and the manufacturers of the country districts did everything possible to retain their advantage by stamping out incipient trade unionism wherever it showed itself.

These trends continued in the hosiery trade after the 1896 price-list had been agreed. In January 1897, for instance, the firm of Cope and Company was taken over by a new firm who immediately began trying to run it with the so-called "free Labour" being organised by William Collinson, who was the prime mover of an organisation which offered to supply employers with blackleg labour. ³ The Trades Council immediately passed a resolution expressing the view that this attempt was "degrading to the interests of manhood" but despite this opposition the use of non-union labour continued. ⁴ Five months later the hosiery firm of Eden and Southern began removing machinery to Mansfield, where they refused to employ any member of the Hosiery Unions. Subsequently, the Nottingham Trades Council helped to organise a special meeting in Mansfield but this and other, similar efforts were really powerless to stop what was obviously part of a concerted attack by the employers on the living standards of workers in the industry.

The fear generated in the minds of the factory workers by these developments was considerable, but it was far exceeded by the anxiety suffered by those still trying to earn a living with the hand frame. Here the men's representatives had told the Royal Commission on Labour in 1893 that their trade was gradually being allowed to die and by January 1899 a deputation of hand frame knitters was appealing to the Trades Council for help. The men explained that they had been trying to re-establish an agreed price for the last ten months. It seems that for ten months of the year the workers were employed on Government contracts making pants, but were not able to earn a living wage whilst forced to accept less than 1s 9d per dozen. Many men, it was claimed, were earning only 15s or 10s a week. The deputation exhibited a pair of pants to the Trades Council delegates, explaining in detail the points which were to the disadvantage of the men, but really this was to no avail since the advance of mechanisation spelled the doom of the old skills. 5

The year 1899 was also the nadir of the Nottingham lace industry. In this year the employers demanded a reduction of 40 per cent in the wage rates of the curtain branch. 25 per cent in the Levers branch and 15 per cent off all other rates. A mass meeting of the men in the Mechanics' Hall refused to concede to these demands or to go to arbitration. As a consequence the workers were locked out and for several weeks 2,500 operatives were out of work. Eventually, following the intercession of the Mayor, agreement on a return to work was reached, pending an award by the Board of Conciliation which eventually fixed a 12½ per cent reduction. Giving evidence to the Parliamentary Commission on Home Work in 1907, Appleton and the Lacemakers' general secretary claimed that since 1895 there had been a constant attack on the part of the employers on the wages of the workforce. Agreeing that wage and profit levels had originally been very high, Appleton made the point that the introduction of modern machinery had gradually been bringing them down.

Asked for his views on the Board of Arbitration he claimed that "it has a chequered sort of existence; the men have generally termed it a Board of Reduction."⁶ When speaking of the price-list for male lace workers Appleton explained that it was :

"exceedingly complicated; I know of nothing more complicated. I may say that the rates may change with the introduction of a thread or a change in the character of the net and many other little things."⁷

He went on to complain about the activity of "middlewomen" before admitting that the men's union had no control whatsoever over the rates paid to out workers. This admission begs the question of whether the Lacemakers' Society really wanted to help other workers in the industry, or whether their craft exclusiveness persuaded them that their own interests were best served by ignoring other groups. In February 1900, for instance, the Lacemakers' Executive were visited by a deputation from the Trades Council who argued that the loss of members recently suffered by the unskilled Auxiliary Union was a consequence of "lack of interest on the part of the lacemakers." Earlier, in November 1897 there had been a lot of discussion about the desirability of admitting supervisory grades to the organisation. Eventually it was agreed that "it was illogical to drive them from the Society when by retaining them we could control to a certain extent their activities."⁸

In the case of other groups in the lace industry, however, specialist craft organisations seem to have developed without the Lacemakers' Society making any effort to build industry-wide solidarity. The Carriage Straighteners' Society, the Bobbin and Carriage Makers' Union, the Bobbin, Carriage, Comb and Dropper Makers' Society, the Amalgamated Society of Lace Pattern Readers, Correctors, Press and Piano Punchers, as well as the Lace Designers and Auxiliary Workers, all had separate organisations without there being any real effort to establish a unified approach to the problems of the industry's workforce. This failure appears all the more serious when seen against the background of

the way in which developments in the lace trade reflected deeper underlying trends in the British economy. As the marginal productivity of labour began to fall, the standard of living of the twelfthand deteriorated sharply and in the years 1898-1914 saw a reversal of the trend in real wages. On top of this, some of the troughs in the trade were very deep; in 1904, for instance unemployment in Nottingham was more than 21 per cent.⁹

As growing competition, from both home and abroad, forced the lace-makers to accept cuts there were many who were anxious to blame the lace-makers' union for this state of affairs. Late in 1900 one employer commented that "the lace operatives of Nottingham are lying on a bed of their own making."¹⁰ The half yearly report of the Operative Lacemakers' Society published in the same year showed both funds and membership on the decline. Over £1,600 had been disbursed as out of work benefit in the city, about double the sum expended in 1899. Despite these pressures, however, the union gave an outright gift of £550 to the Calais Lacemakers whilst lending their French colleagues the sum of £1,000. Meanwhile, however, the membership of the Nottingham Union had declined from 3,010 to 2,779. This drop was blamed by the manufacturers on "the cast iron methods adopted by the lacemakers' union."¹¹ This reference to obstructive shop committees, rigid rules with regard to meaks, restrictive practices, and an obsolete system of wage cards which involved a labyrinthine maze of figures and technicalities probably contained some truth and one employer claimed that "no employer who has a proper sense of dignity and wishes to maintain control of his own business can tolerate them."¹²

As the position of the trade continued to deteriorate, a good deal of tension between the different sections of the union began to manifest itself. In November 1904, for instance, a deputation came before the Executive to report on a mass meeting of lacemakers held on the Forest. This meeting had passed a resolution protesting at "the outrageous reduction agreed to by the General purposes Committee." It seems that during a period when real wages were falling the union had offered a 15 per cent cut on the rates of all new

machines erected in Nottingham. The unofficial meeting had gone on to demand that the General Secretary be asked to resign at once "and that he be paid all that is due to him." These demands were coming from the Levers section and they were only successfully deflected after the Executive Council had placed on record its own protest at the "slanderous and unscrupulous" attacks being made on Appleton.¹³ The General Secretary survived this particular attack but the tensions which had generated it continued as the industry in the town continued to decline. Arbitration proceedings in 1905 demonstrated that lace was continuing to expand in rural centres outside the town, where there were no fixed rates. In addition, lace factories in Nottingham itself were being turned over to other manufacturers including cars, jam and tobacco. It also became clear that despite allegations of restrictive practices, wages in the Levers branch had been little more than £1 a week with some twisthands being unemployed between three to nine months of the year. Real wages for those in full-time work were undoubtedly in decline at least from the turn of the century with the general trend. Charles Wardle, in presenting the union's case, declared that working conditions were very bad, with many twisthands able to earn only a poor wage on the machine provided. The modern Nottingham machine, declared Wardle, was 20 years old and besides this "the Long Eaton machine was a machine and a half."¹⁴ During this period it was claimed that there were 1,595 lace machines outside Nottingham, employing 2,409 men, of whom only 549 belonged to the union. Of 2,805 Nottingham members in 1905, only 2,214 were working and there is little doubt that, had it not been for the growth of tobacco, pharmaceuticals and cycle making in the town, Nottingham would have suffered serious decline.

ENGINEERS, COLLIERS, AND RAILWAYMEN

Of the industries which had established themselves in Nottingham towards the end of the nineteenth century, cycle making was perhaps the most important in the period around the turn of the century. In 1897 it was estimated that 5,000 were employed in the trade in and around Nottingham.¹ At this time some of the workforce were members of the A.S.E. whilst others belonged to the Filers' Union, or one or other of the labourers' associations. In 1897 the Filers' Union struck successfully for an advance and shortly afterwards a branch of the National Union of Cycle Workers was formed. So great was the response that two branches were quickly formed.

These developments were viewed by the manufacturers with alarm and they eagerly supported the action of the Engineering Employers' Association who, in opposition to the demands of the A.S.E. for the introduction of an eight-hour day, declared a national lock-out.

There was marked sympathy for the cycle workers and during the lock-out immense crowds hooted and jeered at blacklegs on their way to and from work. As a consequence of these incidents the employers prosecuted several trade unionists for assault but, despite the publicity which these cases attracted, support for the engineers continued to grow. At one stage the Nottingham Express inaugurated a "Nothing to Eat Fund" and the the Trades Council raised subscriptions and organised benefit concerts. In the end, however, the dispute ended in victory for the employers and the workers returned to work, even though some manufacturers offered lower rates than they had paid hitherto. Encouraged by this victory, the employers in the town hastened to tighten their grip. In April 1898 the Labour Leader pointed out that the employers in Nottingham were following up with better organisation. "They are bent on keeping the mastery" reported the I.L.P. newspaper, before quoting from a circular issued by Sir Ernest Jardine, the President of the Nottingham Engineering Employers :

"Your Committee have decided to keep a register of non-society men wanting employment. In order that this may be carried out all members are requested to at once report full particulars of all good men they may (from any cause) be discharging, also the same particulars of any likely men applying to them for employment ... the Committee feel that this register will assist greatly in keeping good free labour men in our district." 2

Part of the motivation which lay behind this circular was the employers' need to control the growth of militant attitudes amongst the engineering labour force. The public arguments during the lock-out had centred on the eight-hour day, but the crucial issue for the employers was the union's increasingly aggressive attitude towards technical change.

Rapid and fundamental change in the engineering machine shops of Nottingham began about 1890. The capstan and turret lathe, vertical, horizontal and later, universal milling machines, external and surface grinders, the vertical borer and the radial drill, all helped to face the fitter and the turner with the growing threat of dilution. Works engineers, planners, inspectors, rate fixers and progress men all appeared in these years, as did the introduction of detailed specification, close inspection and tighter supervision. All of these changes encouraged the growth of "speed up" as well as the use of the payments-by results system. In resisting these developments, members of the A.S.E. and other unions reacted by trying to strengthen their traditional defences, as well as attempting the complete banning of piecework. George Allcroft of the A.S.E. had told the Webbs in 1893 that the piecework system was always strongly objected to in the town. "No taskwork or piecework in any form whatever is now allowed in Nottingham" insisted Allcroft, before explaining that the local union's district committee had passed a special rule which they strictly enforced, not allowing any man to operate more than one machine. This evidence underlines the fact that the strength of the engineers in the town was firmly based on the work process having been divided by the workers on the basis of de-

marcated skills. Men like Allcroft sought strength through exclusiveness. For a time the location of the engineers in industries which were expanding enabled them to achieve a level of collaboration with the employers on the basis of perceived mutual interest. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, this began to break up, as competition and the introduction of new machinery forced their interests apart.

In these years there was a very sharp increase in the pressures on those factors around which the skilled engineer defined his identity within society as a member of a distinct section in opposition to other sections of the working class and broad Nottingham community. The men's concern to avoid encroachment was often seen best in their anxiety to protect their union and this is well demonstrated in the Nottingham A.S.E.'s attitude to the Cycle Workers' Union. In April 1897 the A.S.E. Number 4 branch wrote to the Trades Council protesting against the giving of assistance to the newly formed Cycle Workers' Union. The Trades Council, however, went on to hear Mr. Ward, the General Secretary of the Cycle Workers, before pledging to give the new union "heartiest support." A month later the Number 2 branch of the A.S.E. withdrew from the Trades Council in protest at this decision, but this development did not prevent the Trades Council from accepting the affiliation fees of the Cycle Workers' Number 3 branch in September. Six months later, however, it emerged that the Cycle Workers' Number 2 and 3 branches were now defunct. The Beeston Number 1 branch was also in difficulty and it was claimed that there were only 64 members remaining. These revelations sparked a major row and the Trades Council A.S.E. delegates moved a resolution calling for an enquiry into the financial position of the Cycle Workers' Relief Fund and its connection with the Nottingham Express "Nothing to Eat Fund." Later the A.S.E. questioned the veracity of statements made by officials of the Trades Council that the fund-raising work had been carried out without any

regard to mercenary conditions, but when their demand for an investigation was put to the vote it registered only seven votes.³

Meanwhile Sir Ernest Jardine and his friends in the Employers' Federation were busy trying to push home their advantage. Jardine was a virulent anti-unionist and over many years he did his best to break trade union organisation. In 1896, for example, a Trades Council deputation visited Jardine but later had to report that "Mr. Jardine was emphatic in his refusal to allow the men to join the Trade Union."⁴ Jardine was involved in the manufacture of lace machinery and at the end of April 1898 the Trades Council decided to call a special conference of trade unions with members employed by his firm. This took place a few weeks later, when twenty-seven societies sent representatives. After a long discussion the conference decided to ask the trade unions who were involved if they would be prepared to support a possible strike. The strike which followed was a messy affair; its object was to win union recognition, but by the end of November it was beginning to collapse. Jardine had been able to use blackleg labour and after several weeks about 30 of the men decided to return to work. Then the Bobbin and Carriage hands were forced back and although the Carriage Straighteners stayed out for a little longer, they too were eventually forced to call off the industrial action.

The struggle between the employers and the engineers continued in the form of sporadic engagements rather than a set-piece battle until the outbreak of the First World War. In October 1908 Jardine made it clear that he was as anti-union as ever when, at a dinner of Nottingham accountants, he advised all employers to "fight the trade unions to the death."⁵ Jardine's concern centred on the continuing growth of the engineers' organisation. In 1903 the A.S.E. had affiliated its fifth Nottingham branch to the Trades Council and for the employers there were worrying signs that the younger men in particular were coming under socialist influence. Even more worrying for

the employers, however, was the shift in opinion being expressed by the labour aristocrats who had been the backbone of the industry for so many years. Many of these old exclusive aristocrats were abandoning, in this period, any serious attempt at workshop control or collaboration with the management. In September 1905 one A.S.E. delegate to the Trades Council attacked the importation of American bonus schemes and the specialisation of labour :

"The system whereby a worker was kept at work upon part of a product was a Yankee importation, but it had taken an immense hold and in many a trade where formerly skilled men had to be employed the work was now divided into small portions which needed little learning." 6

The shift in attitudes which these changes were generating was very important. In time they would work their way through into the political field to play a crucial role in the electoral victories of the town's socialists from 1908 onwards.

Despite these political victories, however, the attitudes of many members of the elite craft unions continued to pose problems for the socialists. Writing in 1910 Harry Quelch complained :

"The English working class is not less able, less intelligent or more stupid than the working class in other European countries; but it is certainly more completely imbued with bourgeois ideas, less conscious of its own subject position as a class ... more reverential towards the master class than any other working class I know ... " 7

The Nottingham evidence suggests that this judgement contains a good deal of truth. Certainly, the relatively slow development of the political labour movement in the town had something to do with these factors. By the years around 1908, however, they were beginning to break down. George Hodgkinson, for instance, remembered that the collapse of the Humber Cycle Company, the main engineering employer in Beeston, in 1908, after financial gambling and share rigging, threw hundreds onto the labour market, helping to politicise many workers. The men put out of work by this closure were not comforted by the knowledge that the

scions of high finance involved were also pillars of the local church. The management of the Beeston Foundry Company also enjoyed a reputation as poor employers. The Pearson family dominated the Board of Directors and the type of management which they advocated was that of the "benevolent despot, and not too benevolent at that." ⁸ Many of the key personnel of this firm, the foremen and chargehands, were said to be "pillars of the Tory Party" and there little doubt that this was repeated at many other Nottingham factories, with the consequence that the management structure also played its part in helping politicise many workers.

The political significance of these changes in attitude was well demonstrated in 1908, the year in which Ernest Gutteridge became the town's first I.L.P. councillor. In May a deputation consisting of three A.S.E. members, two Bobbin Carriage Makers, and two others, attended a meeting of the Trades Council, in order to ask if it were true that a Trades Council nominee was about to contest Robin Hood Ward. The concern of this deputation was that their employer, Mr. Pycroft, was also about to contest this ward as a Liberal nominee. The deputation proceeded to explain how good an employer Mr. Pycroft was before trying hard to persuade the Trades Council delegates to abandon their own plans. This episode demonstrates that some engineers at least were still firmly in the political as well as the industrial grip of the employers; that the deputation was unrepresentative is indicated by the intervention of the A.S.E. District Committee which followed. The deputation insisted the District Committee were "private individuals and not official." Furthermore, a workman who had questioned the right of the deputation to approach the Trades Council had subsequently been victimised. After A.S.E. protests the discharged worker had been re-engaged but he had been told to find other work. ⁹ Only five months later the Nottingham socialists won their first Council seat and it is likely that the socialists had increased their influence amongst the engineers by putting themselves in the forefront of aggressive opposition to technical and organisational change.

(2)

The politicisation of the Nottingham miner throughout this period was moving at a much slower pace than that being experienced by the engineers. Throughout the period under review many colliers lived in parts of the city, the dense terraces of which were still only a few minutes from the open fields. In the mining community of Hucknall 1,700 allotments were under cultivation in 1901. This was repeated in other parts of the city with the result that many county habits remained and it is clear that the radicalisation of many miners was slowed by the rural cast of mind which they retained. In addition the Nottingham miner often lived cheek by jowl with other groups of the local workforce. As a result the characteristic life style which, in other parts of the country, came to be such an important factor in building the habit of solidarity, merged and was diluted by the habits and characteristics of other more conservative groups. The pattern of living generated by factors like these helped to ensure that for most of the period up to the First World War the idea of "community" was stronger than that of "class". Certainly the Lib-Lab. leadership of the Nottingham miners appear often to have felt a stronger pull of allegiance towards the wider community than to their class. The key value expressed by those trying to build and hold the community together was the need for "co-operation" and this view was often expressed by miners' leaders such as Bailey, Hancock and later, Spencer. The connections between the different Nottingham power groups really represented a linked network which was at the root of the late Victorian and Edwardian bourgeois social formation, the success of which amongst the miners lay in the fact that the collier at the bottom could somehow feel connected with the coalowner at the top.

The process of radicalisation amongst the Nottinghamshire colliers was also slowed by the pragmatic and opportunist atti-

tudes which prevailed during the years of relative prosperity. These attitudes were well expressed in the official leadership of the N.M.A., firstly by William Bailey who died in July 1896 and then by John George Hancock. At one level, Bailey was an effective leader. He worked hard to build the membership of the N.M.A. and to put it on a sound footing. Beatrice Webb writes of him at the Miners' Conference in 1896 "in a perfectly clear speech" arguing the case against involving workmen in responsibility for the safety of the mine. For Mrs. Webb, Bailey was an "excellent speaker" but she did not exclude him from her criticism of the miners' leadership:

"Though they abound in common sense they have very little intellectual initiative, their very self-complacency is of a passive character. Revolution to these men would be impossible ... step by step reform is difficult ... they are barring a traditional radicalism intensely conservative and slow to move or convince." 10

Hancock if anything was even more pragmatic. Like many other Liberals he seems to have formed the habit of forever genuflecting toward those he considered his social betters. A Gladstonian Liberal in politics, Hancock was a Methodist lay-preacher and active temperance worker. He and other leaders like Aaron Stewart played a crucial role in the local Liberal Party establishments efforts to win working class support for Liberalism.¹¹ Liberalism in this period was anxious not only to win the votes of the working class, but also elevate it. Cecil Roberts who, as a boy, had lived in the Meadows District, recalls one seemingly insignificant incident which tells us a great deal about the psychological forces which generated Liberal nonconformist aspirations.

"Then a boy of twelve, I had seen the seventh Duke (of Rutland), an old gentleman of 86, sitting in the window of the Borough Club. As we passed my Father told me to raise my cap. The old gentleman bowed to us. "

After the death of his Father Roberts lived with his Mother in Wilford Grove where they:

"kept aloof from the neighbours. They thought we were stuck up. We were. The men sat around in their shirt sleeves and women were bedraggled, the children had untidy hair, dirty faces and run-down stockings ... on Sundays the family moved into the front parlour, which was unoccupied all the week and had newspapers on the floor."

The whiff of carbolic which clings to the memories of Roberts was very pervasive in its day. Certainly, 'respectability' and all that the word implies was the objective of major groups in all classes of society. The Roberts family seem to have been slightly better off than most and could afford a daily help :

"a middle-aged woman, Carrie, who, for half a crown, did the day's washing. She was sturdy and deaf, a good natured worker but a disreputable character. For Carrie, unmarried, lived with a coal miner in the forbidden land. She represented 'sin'. Her life was stormy. She arrived on various occasions with blue bruises on her arms and face. Sometimes she had a black eye."

Roberts is here betraying a common view of the miners and the "rough" elements among the working class. The miners Roberts had in mind were those who worked at Clifton pit. They lived in the district behind the pit in what Roberts described as "an eczema of mean terraced houses." The pit workers, according to him, were "a rough, swearing, heavy-drinking community, hard driven, underpaid, living like animals and treated like helots. The result was that the district was shunned as a blot on the landscape. Since it adjoined the Meadows, indeed was a part of it, there was a dividing line between chapel going respectability on one side and coal grimy heathendom on the other." ¹² Despite the dismissive views of Liberals of the Roberts type there remained a great deal of support among the miners for Liberalism. Popular support amongst the miners for the Liberal Party rested partly on their deeply held dislike of the landowners but it was also sanctioned by a much wider concensus which was based on religion and popular morality. The religious expression of the Liberal ethic was, of course, nonconformity

and the very long cultural shadow cast by the nonconformist denominations played a central role in helping to retard the growth of socialist ideology. Lay preachers like Bailey and Hancock used the sermon to reinforce the choir, Sunday School, temperance and nonconformist education.

The cultural dominance of Liberal nonconformist ideology was underpinned to some extent by the way in which mining in the Nottinghamshire coalfield was organised. The main characteristic of the job of digging for coal in the Nottingham pits was the manner in which sub-contractors or 'butties' acted as the leading man in a work group, virtually becoming a small master employing a subordinate group of hewers. Although the butties sometimes operated a whole face or even a complete pit their status in the period under review was declining to the point where they ranked as superior workmen rather than employers. They were, however, the driving force behind the union, electing checkweighmen and dominating policy. An influx of day wage men in the years around the 1893 lock-out began to change the union's outlook on wages. From this time the N.M.A. began to seek increase for the "banksmen and an agreed price-list for the 'boys'" ¹³ Nevertheless, the butties retained a great deal of power and influence within the union.

Despite the changing status of the butty the politics of the N.M.A. remained firmly wedded to the Liberal Party. Indeed, amongst Nottingham miners a kind of "shared incoherence" is the most striking feature of the politics of the N.M.A. during much of the 1890's and early twentieth century. Compared with the miners of Derbyshire, for instance, the Nottingham colliers with at least one strong constituency and another where careful planning could have won the seat, were only able to return Hancock to Parliament and his victory was in a Derbyshire constituency. ¹⁴ Very few miners seem to have played any significant role in either the I.L.P. or Clarion organisations and one is forced to conclude that the conservatism of men like Hancock, Stewart and Bunfield

had a strangle hold on the politics of the N.M.A. which would not be broken for many years. Certainly the itinerant propagandists of the I.L.P. found it difficult to make any significant political progress amongst the Nottinghamshire miners. Bruce Glasier wrote of Hucknall in his diary in 1896: "it is about the poorest miners' town in all the land ... wages do not average 10 s. a week." Two years later the Labour Leader reported that at the Nottingham collieries "some men are only getting two days' work a week and an application to the union for relief from union funds was refused."¹⁵ A month later the I.L.P. newspaper was reporting that "the miners of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire want 10 per cent or nothing" but, despite the potential unrest which these reports indicate, there is little evidence of any shift in the political attitudes of the mining community.

In industrial terms, however, there is plenty of evidence that the N.M.A. was increasingly recognised as an important element of the Nottingham Labour movement. By 1894 the union had four delegates on the Nottingham Trades Council and in 1896 Hancock was elected its president. The Union fought hard to maximise their industrial strength and in 1894 a group of 24 men at Newstead colliery refused to work with a non-union man. During disputes or at other times of need the union was not slow to offer a helping hand to other trade unions. In 1894, for instance, it gave £10 to a fund for those put out of work by a Basford Factory fire. In 1895 its balance sheet showed that alongside lock-out pay of £770 and strike or victimisation pay of £112, it had also made grants of £49 to other unions. In 1896 it gave the lace-makers £20 as well as paying the Trades Council an extra quarter's affiliation fees to help "defray the cost of defending trade union principles." In 1897 it paid £5 a week to the locked-out cycle workers for several months, as well as making big donations to the Nottingham Express "Nothing To Eat Fund."¹⁶



Aaron Stewart became the secretary of the N.M.A. in 1895. Stewart went to work in the pit when aged only seven. In 1884 Stewart was made Agent of the N.M.A. but, owing to "certain difficulties", quickly resigned. In 1905 Stewart unsuccessfully contested a seat at Broxtowe for the Board of Guardians.

The collier's pride in his trade union and the part it played in his life was made manifest at the annual demonstrations, when, with bands playing and banners flying the miners would assemble on Bulwell Forest, or perhaps at Basford or Hucknall, to hear their leaders and invited speakers. The Council of the N.M.A. at one stage lent the Clifton colliery lodge £23.5.0. with which to pay for a new banner, so that it could take its place alongside other banners at trade union demonstrations as a symbol of the miners pride in their union and determination not to allow it to be demeaned. Ironically, however, the annual demonstrations of unity and solidarity served also to underline the political confusion and incoherence which marked this period of their history. In 1894, for instance, the Executive of the N.M.A. invited as guest speakers for the annual demonstration on Bulwell Forest, John Burns, Samuel Woods, A. Stanley, John Weir, J.E. Ellis, James Yoxall and Tom Mann. ¹⁷ This platform, comprising a Liberal Member of Parliament, a local coalowner and a well-known socialist agitator, serves as a symbol of the state of mining politics in Nottinghamshire throughout the 1890's.

All of which is not to say that the miners failed to realise the importance of winning political power. In November 1894, for instance, the N.M.A. heard that Hancock was "being pressed to stand as a candidate for Rural Councillor for Basford! In addition the agent had been asked to stand in Newthorpe Parish "in the mining interest". These posts recorded the minutes "are very important ones, as the poor amongst our miners need and deserve more considerate and sympathetic treatment than they at present get, from the class of men who, by their property vote, have been elected as Guardians in the past." The vote giving the required permission registered 213 in favour and 61 against and this is a useful indication of a growing awareness of the need to win political influence. So is the view expressed by the Executive in July 1895 when the delegates "heartily approved of the political work done in the Borough and County as reported by the agent"

before going on to give the agent and secretary "full liberty to continue their support for the following progressive candidates: Yoxall, West Nottingham; Morley, East Nottingham and Maude, South Nottingham." 18

In May 1894 the N.M.A. agreed to be represented at the Labour Electoral Conference, due to be held in Bradford and it also decided by 199 votes to 73 to make a grant of £5 to the Labour Electoral Association. In 1898, however, the N.M.A. wrote to the Trades Council to explain that they could not make a grant to the Council's electoral fund but would render "all the voluntary financial and moral assistance possible toward obtaining more labour representation on local governing bodies." These decisions indicate that very slowly, political awareness amongst the miners was beginning to develop. Amongst the men who earned a precarious living in the bowels of the earth there was developing a determination to exploit their electoral strength. Some amongst the miners were at long last beginning to realize that Lib-Lab politics were a blind alley.

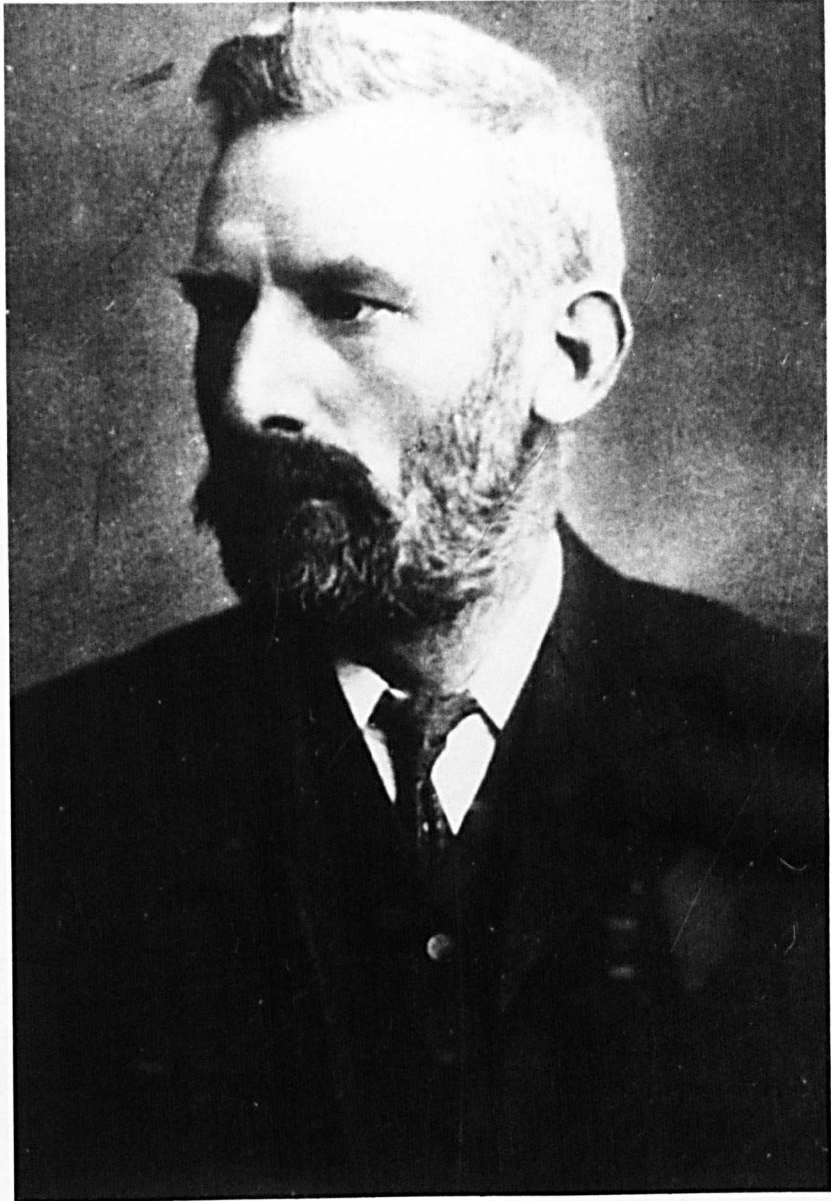
Between 1900 and 1902 a major change in the policy of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain took place. A ballot in 1900 decided to set up an election fund. In Nottingham, however, there were still some years to go before the link with Liberalism could be broken. The Nottinghamshire coalfield worked mainly for domestic consumption and was highly profitable and the attitudes of the leadership of the N.M.A. remained highly collaborationist. Weaning the miners away from support for the Liberals was an uphill task. During the 1906 M.F.G.B. ballot on affiliation to the Labour Party, only 1,806 Nottingham miners voted in favour, whilst 9,492 were against the suggestion. The miners were the last major union to affiliate to the Labour Party in 1908. In Nottingham, however, many of them were still so imbued with liberalism that their adherence had the effect of weakening the emerging political movement. The weakening of the Liberal grip on the miners' vote was underway, however, and in the period of industrial unrest which was a feature of the years immediately after the decision to affiliate, this process began to accelerate.

During the course of 1909, for instance, a long dispute at Clifton Colliery provided an ideal opportunity for the Labour Party to demonstrate support for the miners. In December 1909 the Labour Party and the Trades Council came together to raise funds for the 820 children of the men involved. The miners were eventually on strike for over a year before the dispute over the introduction of new machinery was settled by arbitration. The N.M.A. were supported throughout by Arthur Richardson, the Lib-Lab. Member of Parliament for South Nottingham, but there is little real doubt that the political consequences of industrial disputes of this kind were to the disadvantage of the Liberals who claimed to represent the working class whilst many coalowners were also Liberal politicians. During the Clifton strike a great deal of bitterness was generated. At one meeting in the Wilford Road chapel, Joseph Jones, the pit's checkweighman, said of the coalowners :

"They would stand at nothing so long as they could gain their own ends. If ever there was a lot of liars between here and heaven the miners' representatives had to meet them last Thursday and Friday." 19

George Spencer who, at this stage was a member of the I.L.P. and running for the post of assistant secretary of the N.M.A., advised the colliers that "the paralysing of trade was the workers' remedy." Against this background the miners at nearby Gedling, after hearing an address by their checkweighman on the implications of the Osbourne judgement, demonstrated a growing political awareness by deciding to persist in setting up a voluntary system of contributions to the N.M.A.'s political fund.²⁰

In February 1912, 1,000,000 miners came out in the biggest strike the world had ever seen. The dispute was part of the M.F.G.B.'s attempt to establish a minimum wage. In Nottinghamshire the strike was characterised by the newspapers as a "friendly strike." The Leen Valley men had "no quarrel with the owners ... but work must be suspended in accordance with the general movement." Spencer, now the president of the N.M.A., appealed to the men to act peaceably so as not to alienate public sympathy.²¹ The Minimum Wage Bill which the Government introduced



Charles Bunfield was born in 1861 in a Norfolk village. After working in a brickyard he made his way to Nottinghamshire and obtained work at Newstead Colliery. He later moved to Annesley Colliery where he worked a stall for twenty years. After illness he worked on the bank before beginning to assist in the offices of the N.M.A., of which he later became President.

in order to settle the dispute set up district by district joint boards led to a series of hearings by a Nottinghamshire Joint District Board between April and June 1912. The Board was unable to agree on a minimum rate which was, therefore, fixed by the independent Chairman. The outcome of this dispute was then, in many ways, indecisive. The strike had lasted for about six weeks. It had been undertaken on a simple issue of principle and fought for a minority of underground workers. It ended for many pitmen with a feeling of betrayal. Politically, it generated a great feeling amongst many colliers of revulsion for Asquith and the Liberals, for whom a majority of the miners had voted only 15 months before. From Paris, Lenin commented that since it was now "obvious whose interests the Liberals were defending", that the English miners "cannot but realise how important a political organisation, a political party is for them." ²² Despite the "friendly strike" and notwithstanding the political antics of leaders like Hancock and Spencer, the signs are that, as the First World War approached, Lenin was right.

(3)

Of the remaining groups of Nottingham workers in this period the railwaymen were the most significant. In 1906 it was estimated that something over 3,000 lived in the town. Four different railways served the city. The Midland Railway had a large depot in the town and the Great Northern, the North Western and the Great Central had passenger stations and goods sidings in various parts of Nottingham. The railwaymen had been very slow to organise industrially. Many of the early recruiting meetings were undertaken by the Trades Council and it was not until 1892 that a branch of the Railway Servants affiliated to the Trades Council. Politically the railway workers were even more backward, conservatism and traditionalism seem to have been at the centre of their thinking, reinforced by the knack of deference which was such an important qualification for many of the uniformed working class.

The railway companies, of course, were particularly hostile to the growth of trade unionism. In November 1887, for instance, Tom Ball of the Nottingham branch of A.S.L.E.F. was sacked by the Midland Railway Company for having been one of a delegation of engine drivers. He was later to become the first full time officer of the union. To break the men's organisation the employers subsidized compulsory friendly societies and operated a severe disciplinary code. The companies also insisted on dividing their "servants" into elaborate grades and made a point of paying gratuities to the most "loyal" of their employees. In the face of the combined resistance of the companies the Railway Servants could do little. Drivers, firemen, guards and signalmen were the most active but even the strength of these key workers was too patchy to sustain a general movement. As a consequence the mensrepresentatives were reduced to forming respectful deputations in often unsuccessful attempts to improve the pay and conditions of the men. The authoritarian nature of the Victorian and Edwardian railway companies, when superimposed on the economic insecurity prevalent in these years, had no real difficulty in producing a more or less neutered generation of union leaders.

All of this was well demonstrated in the Nottingham branch of the Railway Clerks' Association which was founded in 1897 with 68 members. The branch which met in the Mitre Temperance Hotel seems to have been riddled with the habits of deference. Nottingham was the pioneer branch of the Clerks Union, but its black-coated members seem to have been of very doubtful spirit. In January 1898, for instance, the branch was worrying itself because Sir John Turney, a local employer and Liberal town Councillor, had not replied to their invitation, asking him to become the president of the branch. A year later, Thomas Edney, the branch secretary, reported with much regret that he had to

report that the previous day he had had a very stormy interview with Mr. Viner, the Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Viner had informed him that he was of the opinion that he was not a fit person to be in the Company's employ as "he was a very dissatisfied fellow himself and tried to make others dissatisfied." Edney was told that he would be reported to Euston with a recommendation for instant dismissal and two weeks later he was forced to resign "because of recent events."²³

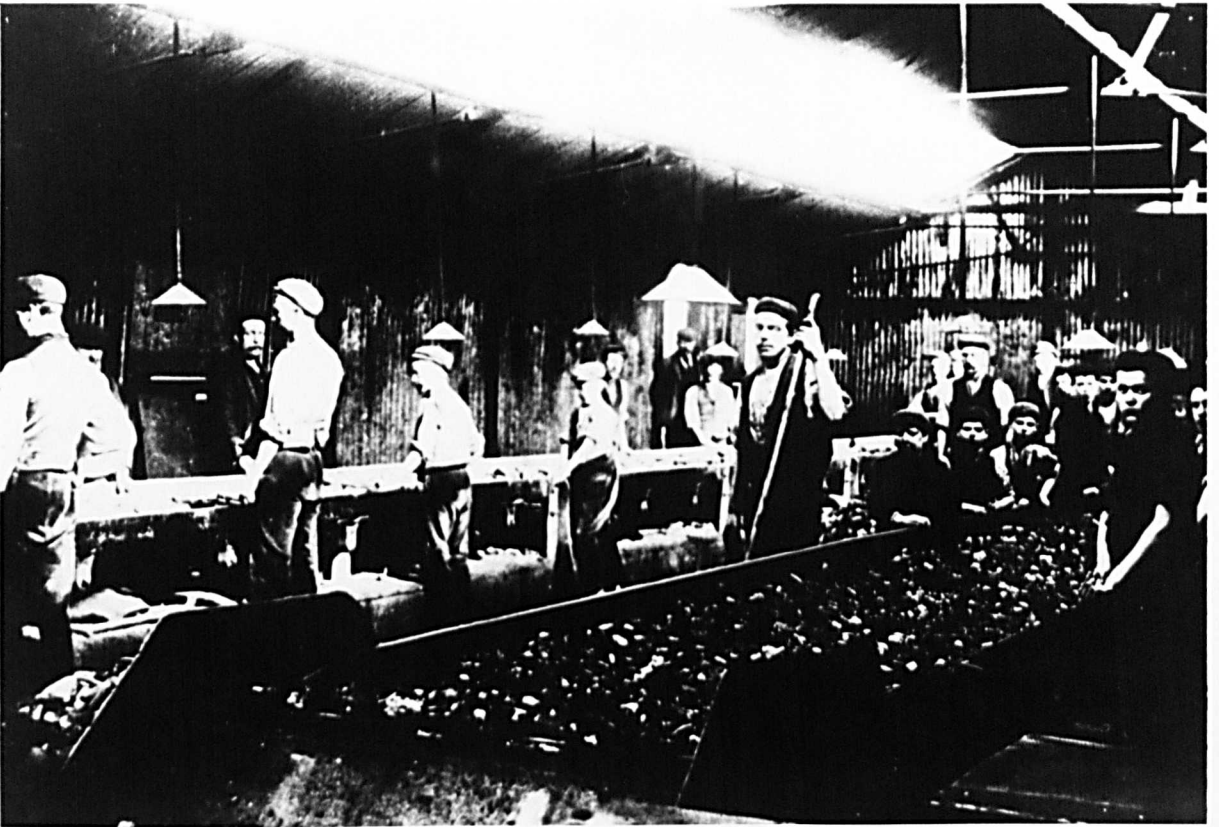
A year later the membership of the branch was 90. Many of the recently recruited members wanted to improve their status and living standards and during a discussion on pay and conditions there seems to have been some disagreement. The chairman of the branch considered that it was time that more pressure was brought to bear, but A.G. Walkden, who later became the Association's General Secretary, recommended "cheerful patience." A week later the Committee of the Nottingham branch was expressing the view that it was the duty of the membership to enroll honorary members.²⁴ This series of minutes help to demonstrate just how deep the subjection of this group of Nottingham railway workers was in the years around the turn of the century, the passive subservience which they indicate being almost worthy of Mr. Pooter in its eagerness to please.

Other groups of railwaymen in the town found it very difficult to make either industrial or political progress. In January 1899 the Railway Servants, for instance, wrote to the Trades Council, complaining about victimisation and expressing "alarm and regret at the action of several railway companies in dismissing their employees without adequate cause."²⁵ The union went on to claim that these men were discharged chiefly on account of their activity as members of the A.S.R.S. Nine years later, in 1908, the Trades Council condemned the Midland Railway for the sacking of 100 guards, which it saw as yet another "vindictive attempt to crush the spirit of the railway workers."²⁶ Against the background of this kind of harassment and systematic

victimisation the railway workers seem to have retreated into a political ghetto of their own and throughout the years up until the First World War it is rare to find individual railway workers involved in the life and work of the wider Labour movement. By itself this might have something to do with the pattern of the railwayman's working day, broken into as it was both by shift work and the need to travel long distances, often necessitating periods away from home. The Conservative posters which appeared in the windows of the Meadows where many railway workers lived suggest, however, that the political attitudes of this group of workers were also shaped by other factors.

Traditionally, the railway companies controlled their employees by a judicious mixture of hard discipline and paternalism. When superimposed upon the generally authoritarian nature of the Victorian and Edwardian family dominated by the healthy male breadwinner, this system of control often produced individuals whose primary aim in life was to maintain and improve their own "status". The pattern of railway work itself was always conducive to the maintenance and strengthening of the traditional values which the Conservative Party drew on for much of its support. Even where individuals were active enough to become potential socialist recruits many remained tied to the old and often Conservative belief in self improvement, order and respect for one's 'betters'.

Paradoxically it was the drive for self improvement which often produced the most progressive of the railwaymen's leadership. George Smith, for instance, the secretary of the Beeston branch of the Railway Servants, gave copies of Ruskin's Unto This Last and The Seven Lamps of Architecture as birthday gifts to his future son-in-law, George Hodkinson. During the 1911 national railway strike Smith's home was turned into a battle headquarters for the striking railwaymen. According to Hodkinson, the Co-operative movement, political organisation and the trade unions were always the main topics of conversation



Boys as well as men were employed above ground at Clifton colliery in the Meadows district of Nottingham. Here they are working on the screens, picking stones from the coal. After falling from the moving belt in the foreground the coal is sorted into sizes ready for sale. Clifton colliery was sunk in 1868 and closed in 1969.

at meal times in Smith's home. Smith had been shaped, however, not by the militants of the S.D.F. or the syndicalism of Tom Mann but rather by religion and regular attendance at the Beeston Adult School. Hodkinson who often accompanied his father-in-law to these meetings, remembers them as providing a forum for a wide variety of topics. The membership included, besides Smith and other railwaymen, a managing director, a school teacher, an organ builder, blacksmith, carpenter, draughtsman, solicitor and a number of engineers. 27

Smith was also a deeply religious man and it is likely that he came to see like many others, his trade union work and his work for the church as the twin expressions of a fervent belief in the need to change the world. His first real opportunity came in 1911, when the pent-up anger and frustration of a generation of railwaymen flared up into the first national rail strike. The origins of the strike related first of all to the pressure of falling real wages, but opposition to the long-winded conciliation was also an important factor. Strike action was initially taken unofficially and throughout the strike a mood of what one writer has called "proto-syndicalism" seems to have been widespread. In the Nottingham area miners held up trains still operating on the Mansfield branch of the Midland railway, whilst the Trades Council organised solidarity action and protested at the Government's action in sending troops to Nottingham during the dispute. 28

The direct result of the strike was the setting up of a Royal Commission, to examine the railwaymen's grievances and the working of the Scheme of Conciliation that had been agreed upon in 1907. The Commission held nearly 30 meetings and finally approved a scheme whereby the men's most outstanding irritations were modified. The recommendations of the Commission, published in November 1911, did little to deflect militancy among the railwaymen and it seems certain that many of them learnt deep political lessons as a result of the experience. Certainly the 1911 strike produced little in the way of

material advance. Politically, however, it helped to break thousands of individual railwaymen from the ties of conciet and its political expression Lib-Labism. It was from this time that areas like the Meadows in which high percentages of railwaymen lived, finally slipped from the grip of the established political parties, to become the Labour Party strongholds which they were in the years between the two World Wars.

WOMEN WORKERS

In 1905 the birth rate in Nottingham was the lowest on record and in each of the five years since 1901 it had been below the average rate for the 76 great towns. The general death rate for 1906 was also the lowest on record for the town although this and the infant mortality were consistently above the average for the great towns, Nottingham coming 4th in the national table. Comparing the average infant mortality in Nottingham between 1896 and 1901 which was 181 per 1,000 the position in the town was considerably worse than in other Midland towns. These figures were a reflection not only of the living conditions of the working class in Nottingham but also of the pattern of employment in the town and in particular, of the very high number of women working in the lace and hosiery trades. The most prominent feature of Nottingham during these years from an industrial point of view was its employment of female labour. The percentage of women at work in 1906 was 67.7 of the total female population. The streets in the Lace Market in particular were a striking sight at dinner time when the girls and women trooped from the doors of the lace factories and other work-places. There were over 14,000 women employed in the lace trade, besides another 11,000 who were occupied in the manufacture of hosiery, shirts and tobacco as well as those engaged in dressmaking and millinery. Because of its fame as a town with plenty of opportunity for female labour, the number of women in Nottingham outnumbered men, there being 114.6 females to every 100 men. At the time of the 1901 census the number of women between the ages of 15 and 25 numbered 27,819. Of these, 21,566 were engaged in some occupation, 7,942 were employed in lace and hosiery alone, and a further 6,211 of the total number of employed women between the ages of 25 and 45 (14,489) were also engaged in these two trades.¹

The domestic finishing trades associated with lace and hosiery were notorious for their sweating. Living in insanitary houses in Sneinton or the Bottoms many of the women and girls trying to make a living in these trades

were paid only between 2s. and 6s. a week. Whilst giving evidence to the Committee of Inquiry on Home Work in 1907, Appleton, the General Secretary of the Lacemakers, estimated that there were between 20,000 and 25,000 women engaged in making articles out of lace and in the finishing trades associated with it. The Labour Leader, reporting the evidence of Miss Squire, a woman inspector of factories before the same Committee, made it clear that :

"The hideous thread of child and even baby labour is woven into hundreds of thousands of the soft, filmy yards that are offered for women's purchasing in the gay shop windows of the day ... it is a common thing at the dinner hour to see children busy with lace work without having stopped to take off hat or jacket ... it is said that children started work as early as four years old. Miss Squire herself had seen them working at six years old ... many little children have suffered from enlarged and inflamed thumb joints, the result of using scissors for cutting away the muslin from the lace edge at the rate of one penny for a hundred yards. Of such is the beauty of lace ... made for profit." 2

Other Nottingham witnesses claimed that in going about amongst the town's lacemakers, the first difficulty that had to be overcome was the abject sense of apathy that existed among them.³

The conditions suffered by the women and girls employed as outworkers were truly appalling and cried out for political and industrial action. Mrs Bartlett, a Nottingham lace worker, talking to Sidney and Beatrice Webb, explained that most lace manufacturers gave all or most of their work out through middle men or women who acted as agents. "These 'sharks' usually hire a small ill-ventilated and insanitary workshop into which they squeeze far too large a number of girls and women ... their hours are dreadfully long and the Factory Acts are being systematically ignored."⁴ Against this kind of background the puny efforts of the male-dominated trade unions and political groups like the Independent Labour Party were pathetically inadequate. During the early 1890's the Lacemakers'

Society did spend both time and money on efforts to establish a Female Lace Workers' Organisation, but their attempts were never more than half-hearted. According to the Webbs the women's union was totally controlled by the male lace workers, the Secretary of the women's organisation being a member of the Executive of the men's organisation. Its committee consisted of 9 elected women and 3 members of the Executive of the men's union. Effectively, however, the organisation was run by men, "the women members hardly ever speak and never vote against proposals made by the men."⁵

In the early 1890's the Webbs estimated that 3,000 women and girls were available to join the Female Lace Workers, 327 did so. Many more might have done so but for the problems of status and respectability which did so much to weaken male as well as female trade unionism. Outlining this problem, one of the Webbs' informants made the point :

"The warehouse girls consider themselves to be respectable and too much above the factory hands to join any union, although as a matter of fact the factory hands earn considerably ⁶ more money than the warehouse hands do."

Similar problems existed in the hosiery trade. Established in 1890, the Women Hosiery Workers' Union had only 400 members. By the time the Webbs came to examine it there was "very little life and 'go' in the society ... the members take little interest and it is impossible to get them to manage it themselves." In fact the Women's Union had been formed basically by Sam Bowers, an I.L.P. activist. Bowers had set out to organise the Women's Union during a period of favourable trade, but by 1893 he was telling the Webbs that the members of the male hosiery unions were "quite unable to do anything to improve the position of women in the trade."⁷ Progressive and industrial militant though he was, Bowers was also firmly rooted in his time and he provided the real key to an understanding of the failure of women's trade unionism when he told the Webbs, in a very revealing comment, that women were

not admitted into the men's organisation "or recognised at all", before going on to admit that he would "especially like to stop married women from working in factories." 8

These efforts to organise female labour were really part of the impulse which generated "New Unionism." In Nottingham, however, the fundamental error of trying to organise women workers separately from men was compounded by the dilution of women's energy by allowing the formation of several small unions rather than one large unit. The Female Lace Workers' Society of Nottingham, the Nottingham Trade Union of Women Workers in the Lace Trade, the Nottingham branch of the National Federation of Women Workers and the Lace Finishers branch of the National Federation of Women Workers, as well as the Female Cigar Workers and the Women's Hosiery Union, all competed for membership with predictable debilitating effects.

As both the lace and hosiery trade continued to decline, the problems of organising women workers became more acute and indeed, it is reasonable to assume that as unemployment increased latent chauvinistic hostility to the idea of female trade unionism became more of a problem. In November 1905, for example, Mrs. Brooks and Mrs. Clifford attended the Trades Council on behalf of the Female Lace Workers, to ask for organisational help, but nothing seems to have happened whilst, during the course of a Trades Council discussion on unemployment in 1905, a delegate from the A.S.E. opposed the introduction of female labour into the engineering industry. 9 Although an examination of the Trades Council Minute Books for these years reveals occasional reference to the 'problem' of women workers, there is no real evidence of any widespread recognition of the need for women to organise themselves into trade unions. By the end of 1908 indeed, the Trades Council itself estimated that there were "not more than 1,000 women workers organised in the city." 10 This estimate followed a meeting at which Julia Varley, a member of the Bradford Trades Council and a Clarion writer, had urged the need for female organisation.

Miss Varley's visit to Nottingham was part of a tradition in which prominent women activists visited Nottingham in order to generate enthusiasm amongst both men and women for the idea of female industrial and political organisation. In 1895, for instance, Beatrice Webb recorded in her diary :

"Three days at the women's conference in Nottingham. This National Union of Women Workers sprang out of a sort of federation of philanthropic societies to befriend young girls. Louise Crighton, with great energy and considerable capacity, has organised it into a somewhat incoherent federation of all societies of women dealing with industrial philanthropic and educational matters. Its chief function is to hold an annual conference to which all women are invited to listen to papers on any conceivable topic ... resolutions are not allowed. Hitherto it has been dominated by Bishops' wives and deaconesses." 11

Two years later a rather more aggressive group of women were reported in the Labour Leader as being in Nottingham, trying to strengthen the organisation of female lace workers. "Miss Barry went down for a week's canvassing which began with Enid Stacy's meeting in the Labour Church and ended with a mass meeting of lace workers at which Miss Tuckwell spoke. ¹² The trouble with this kind of activity was that it took place in a vacuum since the local movement had not succeeded in establishing any deep-rooted realization amongst the men and women workers of the town of the vital necessity of organising the female workforce.

Since the established Labour movement failed to organise women workers effectively it is not surprising that in the political field too there seems to have been little realization of the legitimate demands and aspirations of the female population. The total exclusion of women from the electoral registers was actually supported by many men and this, together with the low economic status of much women's work, made the female population highly vulnerable to "deferential pressure." In 1909, for instance, Higginbottam, the I.L.P. secretary, reported his distress after wandering through the slums on a hot day and seeing women workers "sitting at the doors of their hutches, manipulating lace heaped on the filthy pavement." ¹³ This state of affairs

undoubtedly helped to reinforce the conservatism and traditionalism of much of the working class. This was demonstrated at a Trades Council meeting in June 1906 when a letter from the Women's Social and Political Union asking for help was simply allowed "to lie on the table."¹⁴ As late as 1913 a letter from the W.S.P.U. protesting at the introduction of the 'Cat and Mouse' Act was ignored by the Trades Council delegates and a later offer by the Suffragettes to provide the Trades Council with a speaker was rejected by 56 votes to 34.¹⁵ Even the reports of the I.L.P. activity in Nottingham smack of a rather patronising attitude whenever they mention women members and it seems likely that even progressive elements found it difficult to accept that women were entitled to equal political and economic status. The leaders of the Women's Suffrage Movement often spoke in Nottingham but there is little evidence that their appeal made much impact on the working class women of the town. In 1910 the Nottingham branch officers of the Women's Suffrage Society described themselves as being "of liberal views," but by itself this did not guarantee that the organisation would make any real effort to recruit members of the working class. An examination of the branch records suggests that just over a hundred members were living in working class areas of the town, but it is impossible to estimate just how many of these were potential activists in the working class movement.¹⁶

In the period of mounting industrial unrest around 1910 - 1911 there are one or two signs in the town of an increasing willingness to try and help women establish themselves as trade unionists. The Trades Council during 1910 collected £45 for striking members of the Female Cigar Workers and in November 1911 the Trades Council agreed to give assistance to the Nottingham Branch of the Women Workers Federation in organising an open meeting. This followed an appeal from Mrs. Young and Mrs. Gosling who asked the Trades Council to support locked-out lace workers. It seems that some 200 members of the newly formed Women Workers' Union were in dispute with the employers after refusing to sign a

'contacting out' form agreeing not to demand the new lace finishing rate fixed by the Board of Trade until the compulsory implementation date.¹⁷ During the course of the Trades Council discussion it was claimed that 2,000 women had joined the union and even allowing for exaggeration this report indicates that industrially at least, things were at last beginning to move.

In the political field, however, apart from the Suffragette agitation women's political status at the start of the First World War was still that of second class citizens. Obviously in Nottingham the very high numbers of women workers must have had some political effect. The relatively high "family" income which female employment ensured must have affected the type of community and family life which developed, and in turn this must have influenced the atmosphere in the home and the role of women in relation to men. This failure of the trade unions to organise female labour insulated women from political discussion in the trade unions and played a crucial part in helping to retard the gradual politicisation of the town's working class. Despite the high numbers of women at work and the relatively high family income which in other circumstances might have been expected to encourage political radicalism, the Nottingham experience seems to indicate that the position of women workers in the town helped to underpin the conservative tradition.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRADES COUNCIL
AND ITS RESPONSE TO UNEMPLOYMENT

Throughout the 1890's and well into the new century the British trade union movement faced a great deal of hostility from the employers, the press and many middle class elements. In Nottingham this hostility made the task of organising unskilled workers and female labour particularly difficult. The Trades Council found itself and the whole of the working class movement in a world in which the accepted position for which they had fought so hard was being rapidly undermined. The hostility of the anti-union elements was well expressed in 1894 when, during a bitter strike of hosiery at the firm of Blackburn and Halgates, the Trades Council found it necessary to mount a strong protest at the use of the local police force to break up the unions picket lines. A month later Samuel Bower, the hosiery workers full time secretary complained that the union was faced by 35 different summonses for intimidation whilst the men he claimed were having to "fight the police and the magistrates".¹ Bower clearly believed that in this period the unions in the Nottingham hosiery industry were faced by a determined effort to break the men's organisation. Earlier whilst talking to Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1893 Bower told them that since the end of the 1870's there had not been a single month in which the union had not had to engage in at least one or two strikes. These disputes claimed Bower were generated not primarily by trouble with the manufacturers, but instead with the "bagmen" or "bagwomen" employed as agents by the hosiery firms. These strikes according to Bower were so frequent as to almost make him believe that there was a conspiracy designed by the employers with the objective of keeping the union poor.

Several other unions seem to have been experiencing similar difficulty. The Farriers Society, for instance, reported in 1896 that they were

having great difficulty with the Clifton Colliery Company, whose foremen appeared to have been instructed to "have nothing to do with the Society men". In April 1897 the Bestwood Iron and Coke Company sacked 11 men for alleged "neglect of duty". The Gasworkers Union, however, claimed that the men had been sacked "owing to a desire of the men for better conditions of labour, having become known to the management." Later, 183 workers came out in support of the sacked men, being paid 10s. a week after Will Thorne had appealed to the Trades Council for help. Faced with difficulties like this, many unions reacted with a policy of centralisation and the creation of a strong officialdom. The rank and file, however, felt that they had no alternative but to resort to coercion and intimidation to hold their organisation together. In 1897, for instance, the engineers' lock-out generated a good deal of hostility on both sides of the argument. The Trades Council had set up a special committee to co-operate with the engineers and in September 1897 this committee found it necessary to protest at the "brutal treatment of men and children, and the general offensive and overbearing attitude against legitimate picketing." The Trades Council went on to demand "an immediate and searching enquiry by the Chief Constable and the Watch Committee."² In January 1898 Edward McLease, a Nottingham ironfounder, found himself in court for intimidating and assaulting George Simpson, a non-unionist engineer working for Blackburn and Sons. McLease had gone to Simpson's house, called him out and then

"made some remarks about Simpson being a 'knobstick' and a 'blackleg' and then struck him a violent blow in the mouth, so violent that it had the effect of loosening two of his teeth."

This report also refers to strikers following blacklegs "in a disorderly manner" and it is clear from other reports that feelings were running very high. In the same period a lace trade picket found himself before the bench charged with seriously assaulting "a free labour twisthand."³ In May 1898 the Trades Council was supporting an appeal for the secre-

tary of the Tailors' Society, who had been "Victimised on account of official trade union action."

The long established trade unions often responded to pressure from the employers by insisting on the maintenance of the strict rules which they had developed over the years. The Lacemakers, for instance, told the Webbs in 1893 that they enforced a formula which ensured that there was never more than one learner to seven journeymen. The minute books of the lacemakers abound with examples of the internal discipline which the union maintained. In February, 1898, for instance, Brother Lamb appeared before the union's council to ask their protection against Mr. Pugsley whom, he stated, had charged him with working untimely hours and telling tales to the employer." In May Brother Arnoult appeared in answer to charge that he worked on Easter Tuesday, that day being a general holiday. Arnoult was "severely censured and cautioned as to his future conduct" and at the same meeting Brother Hill was "severely censured and warned as to his future conduct" after having been accused of using insulting language to the chairman of a General Meeting. This kind of internal discipline was perceived throughout the 1890's to be in the best interests of all the union's members. Indeed, the union even managed to extend its means of control during these years of increasing competition. Hitherto, some of the men had employed a number of boys, thus enabling themselves to operate several machines. During the 1890's, however, the union imposed a restriction which insisted on a four-year apprenticeship and limited the number of machines to two per man.

Psychologically it seems probably that a great deal of the anti-union propoganda of these years might well have been counter-productive. Talk of the benefits being gained by the trade unions, even though denounced as selfish, might well have had the effect of persuading pensive men and women to mull over the notion that perhaps they ought to join. Minor victories of the kind which in 1893 won for

Nottingham bricklayers an agreement which required "that there shall be a lock-up shop provided for workmen to get their meals in ... " must have helped. So must the situation explained to a Royal Commission in which it was claimed that during the 1890's Nottingham employers "paid fines of up to £50 for transgressing union rules on apprenticeship and demarcation." ⁵ Certainly the evidence of the Trades Council Minutes suggests that many unions continued to grow throughout the 1890's, even though the national statistics indicate that trade union growth was very slow in these years. In 1894, for instance, the A.S.E. affiliated a Beeston branch which had recently been formed and in June the Gasworkers of the Bulwell branch joined the Trades Council. In October 1894 the Designers and Draughtsmen of the lace industry seem to have organised for the first time and throughout the 1890's the Trades Council seems to have continued growing in size.

This growing size and strength was often demonstrated in the support which the Trades Council organised in support of unions in dispute. In January 1894, for example, the Trades Council handed over £69. 3. 7½d. to the N.M.A. who had been involved in the 1893 lock-out; the Trades Council also raised £27. 19. 0½d. in the same period for a special appeal for Mrs. Briant of the Female Cigar Makers who had been taken ill. In 1896 the Trades Council sent £137. 7. 9d. to help support engineers on strike on the Clyde and in Belfast and in 1897 it involved itself in a big row about the placing of the police clothing contract with unfair firms. This dispute involved the Trades Council Executive in meeting in the Council House lobby at 9.30 a.m. in order that they could 'interview' Council members as they arrived. This campaign eventually succeeded in getting the City Council to withdraw the contract from the non-union firm by 23 votes to 21. This was achieved by using Lib-Lab. Councillors like Skerritt and Adams, although the Trades Council later had to hand over its documents on the case when the non-union firm tried to sue the Nottingham Express for

alleged libel. ⁶ In the same period the Trades Council joined with members of the Building Trades Council to lobby the members of the Board of Guardians on the question of contracts for a projected new workhouse. Subsequently, the Guardians agreed that only Trade Union rates would be paid. 1897 was also the year in which the Trades Council fully involved itself in solidarity action in support of the locked-out engineers. In October the Council organised a demonstration on the Forest which succeeded in raising £80 for the A.S.E. John Burns was the speaker and during his speech he made the point that the demonstration was a good example of the "poor helping the poor". Despite the demands of the lock-out which involved the Trades Council in a great deal of work, £22. 2. Od. was raised in the same period for the widow of William Bailey, the first full time agent of the Nottingham Miners' Association. ⁷

Once the century had turned the Taff Vale decision and political developments in the wider labour movement seem to have played their part in accelerating the growth in size and importance of the Trades Council. In April 1903 a delegation of representatives from the Building Trades Council attended a Trades Council meeting and agreed to set up a system of joint Executive Council meetings. This breakdown of industrial sectarianism was an indication that the Labour movement was at last drawing together and this was underlined in February 1903 when the Trades Council, the Building Trades Federation, the I.L.P., the Labour Electoral Federation and the Lenton and Nottingham Co-Operative Societies all came together to invite the Penrhyn Choir to the town. The concert which followed was in aid of the Penrhyn quarrymen; it took place in the Clarion Club and was a great success, raising £57. ⁸

In the same year the Beeston Trades Council affiliated its membership to the Nottingham Trades Council. The increase in membership which followed increased the calls on the resources of the



Oscar Johnson was born in 1876 at Kettering. He came to Nottingham in 1897 and became secretary of the Nottingham branch of the London Order of Bricklayers in 1900. During 1905 he visited America and was employed for five months in New York. Johnson was forced by means of the "boycott" to leave England for Australia in 1912.

Council which were already fully stretched. In January 1903, for instance, the Council agreed to support miners from the Denby and Cadeby colliery branch of the Yorkshire miners and later in the year it was reported that Trades Council pressure on the Town Council had resulted in the lamplighters receiving an advance of one shilling a week. This success had not apparently been reported to the Trades Council officially, with the consequence that the Trades Council, very much on its dignity, wrote to Sir Samuel Johnson, the town clerk, to complain of his lack of courtesy. 9

During the years under review the concept of what were legitimate issues for the trade unions was the subject of constant debate. The left, of course, were trying to redefine this around more aggressive policies and the taking up of a wider range of issues. In November 1904, after a militant speech from Mr. Young of Ruskin College Oxford, the Trades Council agreed to support the College financially and in January 1905 the Gasworkers were urged by Pete Curran of the Gasworkers at a meeting with the Trades Council secretary in the Chair, to work to "make trade unionism in Nottingham much stronger." 10 Perhaps taking this view to heart, Gutteridge of the I.L.P. two months later was helping to form a Jewish Tailors' trade union, as well as arguing at a Trades Council meeting that whenever anything of importance to labour was to be discussed by the City Council, consultation 11 between the Trades Council and the 'progressive section' should be held. As a result of this decision the Trades Council soon became involved in more argumentation with the Town Council over the placing of the police clothing contract and at the end of April, at the request of the Gasworkers, they were protesting at the breaking of contracts by the Gas Engineer.

By 1905 the Trades Council had five members on the Board of Guardians and Trades Council support for union candidates in School Board and Board of Guardians elections continued to be a feature of the

Meetings held every Fourth
Wednesday, in the People's
Hall, Heathcote Street.

ESTABLISHED 1890.

An Amalgamation of the old
Organised Trades Council, the
Federated Trades Council, and
the Building Trades Federa-
tion.

Nottingham & District Trades Council,

WITH WHICH IS AFFILIATED
THE BUILDING TRADES FEDERATION.

PRESIDENT:

G. BELL (Ironfounders).

VICE-PRESIDENTS:

G. M. SADLER (Letterpress Printers)

A. HAYDAY (Gas and General Workers).

TREASURER:

G. ALLCROFT (Engineers).

SECRETARY:

GEO. E. THUNDERCLIFFE,

9, Hedderley Street,
Union Road,
Nottingham.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

W. ASKEW (Notts. Miners' Association).

A. V. GUY (Carpenters and Joiners).

E. CORBEY (Painters).

C. WARDLE (Lace Makers).

A. EATOUGH (Amal. Railway Servants).

G. T. W. BUTLER (Certificated Teachers).

W. HARTSHORN (Power Frame Knitters).

March 27th. 1912

Resolution

This Council places on record its sincere appreciation of the service rendered to it, the Building Section and the whole labour movement by Mr. Oscar C. Johnson.

It also expresses regret that by means of the "Boycott" he is compelled to leave England for Australia, and wishes his health & prosperity in the land of his adoption, and further, we commend him to the friendly consideration of our members over the sea.

President-
Treasurer
Secretary

Oscar Johnson was a central figure in the leadership of the Nottingham building workers from 1900 until in 1912 he was forced as a consequence of the "boycott" to emigrate to Australia.

Council's policy. During 1906 the Trades Council organised a large meeting in furtherance of the demand for Old Age Pensions and this is evidence of an increasing concern for the well-being of the wider working class as well as for the role of Labour in the civic life of the period. In January 1906, for instance, a resolution was passed, calling on the library committee to :

"obliterate all horse racing news from the press as we consider it to be in direct opposition to the good morals of our city." 12

In March 1907 the delegates to the Trades Council protested at the making of a City Council grant to the Nottingham High School, before deciding to invite the town's M.P.'s to the next meeting, for a discussion about the educational opportunities in Nottingham "for poorer people." At the same meeting voices were raised again at the use by the Corporation of "sweated labour" and a month later it was agreed to give £10 to each trade unionist standing for the Board of Guardians as well as issuing a joint manifesto. By now, of course, Arthur Richardson had been elected as Lib-Lab. M.P. for South Nottingham and it is significant that Richardson tried very hard to maintain his links with the Trades Council. In April 1908, for instance, Richardson attended a Trades Council meeting in order to ask "for instruction" on how to vote on the Government's Budget Bill which contained provision for the introduction of Old Age Pensions and the retention of the sugar tax. After a long discussion, Richardson was told to put Old Age Pensions first and to leave the problem of sugar tax until later. 13 Richardson undoubtedly recognised the growing importance of the Trades Council. During the course of 1908 five additional trade union branches affiliated, so that the Annual Report could claim that the Trades Council now represented 40,000 workers in 77 branches of 65 different trade unions. 14 Late in 1908 the Building Workers wrote to the Trades Council asking for a meeting to discuss possible amalgamation and it seems that after some discussion the two organisations merged their interests.

Throughout this period Richardson continued to attend Trades Council meetings and he may have been at the December 1909 meeting which called for abolition of the House of Lords as "a lot of screeching monkeys." ¹⁵ The sentiments which lay behind this resolution were also involved in persuading the Trades Council to put its weight behind the yellow van campaign demanding land nationalisation which took its stand at Trent Bridge and in Bulwell Market Place in July.

During the course of 1910 the Trades Council raised £48. 14. 1d. for the striking miners at Clifton Colliery and in October they were involved in organising a propaganda meeting for the Nottingham bakers who were demanding a 54 hour working week. Thundercliffe told this meeting that :

"So far as the Nottingham bakers and confectioners were concerned there were some very bad places ... machinery was displacing men and steps needed to be taken so that there were fewer working hours a day." 16

Both of these disputes were part of a national wave of industrial discontent which was then sweeping the country. Richardson, the Lib-Lab. M.P. told the Bakers' meeting that "wherever there were civilised men there was unrest among those who were called the working classes." A week later the Nottingham Express reported that in Nottingham a number of disputes were under way :

"Several thousand workmen attached to a number of different trade unions were involved ... the plumbers were on the verge of a lock-out, the joiners have given and received six months' notice to terminate their engagements ... the printing and allied trades are taking a ballot on the question of handing in their notices and the bricklayers' union are said to be greatly dissatisfied with the recent arbitration award and threatened to strike if its provisions are enforced." 17

During the course of 1911 the rising tide of industrial unrest continued. During the year the Nottingham bricklayers came out on strike and the Trades Council sent various sums of money to other workers in

dispute. Throughout the period stoppage after stoppage made it clear that a widening social gulf was opening up between the workers and the rest of society.

At one level this gulf manifested itself in a letter which the Trades Council received from the Mayor of Nottingham. This letter explained that even though the Trades Council had been meeting in the Exchange Building for the previous nineteen years, permission would now be withdrawn "unless the Trades Council abandons the discussion of political questions."¹⁸ In June of the same year the Trades Council was forced to decide that in view of an injunction granted against the N.M.A. forbidding it to use its funds for political purposes, the Trades Council would not itself be able to seek contributions from affiliated societies for political campaigning. The reaction to these two straws in the wind indicate that beneath the outward prosperity of Edwardian England a deeply felt unrest was growing in the hearts and minds of the local Labour movement. For a time it seemed that no section of the working class was immune from the agitation which characterised these years. In September 1911, for example, it was reported that Nottingham school boys were on strike, demanding that the school-leaving age should be lowered to 13. In October Will Thorne and Arthur Hayday set up two new branches of the Gasworkers union, one for engineering labourers, the other for general and chemical workers and in December 1911 the Trades Council appointed a deputation to ask the corporation for a 2s. a week increase in the pay of school caretakers.¹⁹

During the course of 1912 the Trades Council organised a missionary week which seems to have been very successful. The Trades Council expressed the view that "the employers are determined to reduce the workers to a state of servility."²⁰ During the course of the year 40 million working days were lost. Many of these were the consequence of the national coal dispute. In February the Trades Council expressed

keen sympathy with the miners who were involved in efforts to secure the recognition of the minimum wage principle and this led on, in March, to a long debate about the nature of syndicalism. This discussion began with a resolution which wished every success to Brother Oscar Johnson who was leaving for Australia after having been blacklisted by the building trade employers. Later there was an animated argument about the imprisonment of Tom Mann. This generated a resolution which condemned the persecution of :

"men of advanced views on industrial and political matters, merely because they appealed to the sons of fellow workers in the Army not to maim and murder their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters during any dispute between labour and the forces of capitalism." 21

In the discussion which followed, Staton, of the tailors, said that it would be a disgrace to the working people if they did not pass the resolution. He did not believe in syndicalism, but so far as the expressions with reference to the advice given to the soldiers he associated himself with them in full. Later Mr. Garness wanted to know "who sent for troops for Nottingham during the railway strike" before going on to say "Tom Mann was known throughout the length and breadth of the land; he wished we could get a few more like him." Later Hayday, who spoke against the background of the knowledge that 2,300 of the 3,300 Nottingham gasworker members of his union were out of work because of the coal strike, wound up the debate by declaring "Syndicalism was justified. It was using the power of their organisations to force the conditions their members were entitled to."²² This discussion seems to indicate that even though only a tiny minority were actively involved in propagating them the theories of syndicalism were beginning to influence a growing number of trade unionists. A diligent search of the Nottingham archives has, however, failed to unearth any real evidence of an active group of syndicalists in the town. Possibly the town was too far from the ports, and its labour force too static for there to be any real chance of syndicalist propaganda really taking root. Only a few individuals like Tom Mann or James Larkin could be positively identified; many others, however, without having

seriously studied syndicalism, were directly influenced by its vision. One such was probably the ex Ruskin College student who in December 1909, after addressing the Trades Council on the "Shortcomings of Ruskin College from a Labour Standpoint", persuaded the delegates to support the new Central Labour College.

In May 1912 the Trades Council joined with the B.S.P. in a protest meeting which wrote to the Home Secretary demanding the release of Tom Mann and later in the year it joined with the I.L.P. and the Fabian Society in a "War Against Poverty" campaign. Throughout the year the organising work of the Trades Council was very successful and the Annual Report for the year noted "increased activities and increased membership for many unions."²³ The Gasworkers in particular seem to have been making considerable progress by "energetically organising the labourers in the engineering trades."²⁴ The recruiting work of the Gasworkers was frustrated to some extent, however, by the determined efforts of one firm who, by systematic victimisation, were attempting to stop the growth of the union.

During the course of 1913 two Trades Council delegates reported that they had seen men harnessed to a plough in the grounds of the Basford workhouse and there seems little doubt that the horror with which their fellow delegates heard this report helped to underline the breakdown of the domestic detente which had helped to sustain the economic and social system. In October, 140 members of the Basford Trimmers, Dyers and Auxiliary Workers were thrown onto the funds of their union by a bitter strike at Murray Brothers. Like all the other Nottingham strikes of this period, this dispute seems to have had its origin on the factory floor. Like other strikes too, this one generated a great deal of anger, indicating that as the First World War approached, both sides of the industrial divide was coming to believe, if only subconsciously, that those on the other side really were in some sense engaging in a deliberate and immoral conspiracy to achieve essentially wicked aims.

(2)

Throughout the period from 1893 until the outbreak of war in 1914 unemployment was the single biggest issue concerning both the industrial and political Labour Movement in Nottingham. Before the 1890's this was not a matter in which any but the S.D.F. was particularly interested. From the 1890's, however, a gradual change began to take place. In April 1892, for instance, the Nottingham Trades Council's concern at rising unemployment persuaded them to agree to co-operate with the Blackburn Trades Council in any move to "check the wholesale introduction of destitute foreigners into the country."²⁵ A later meeting went further and decided to formally ask Parliamentary candidates at the next General Election :

"Will you, if returned to Parliament, support a measure or any enquiry that might be made by our Government into the wholesale immigration of destitute foreigners?"²⁶

The fear which lay behind this concern was mainly directed at Jews who were coming into the country from Russia; some of the feeling being expressed was perhaps, anti-semitic, but there is little doubt that most of its inspiration was generated by a deep-rooted fear of being out of work.

Much the same could be said for the arguments within the Trades Council which centred on the need to maintain union organisation. In July 1892, for instance, Cheetham, the secretary of the Typographical Society, attended in order to complain that the Nottingham miners were using non-union printers. Bailey, the secretary of the N.M.A., defended the union on the grounds that the men working for the firm being used received a set wage which, in his opinion, left the men better off than if they were only paid for the time worked. Despite this explanation the Trades Council went on to pass a resolution which "deeply regretted the action of the miners" and it seems likely that it was the implied threat to the employment of trade union printers which lay at the back of the minds of the Trades Council delegates as they raised their hands to condemn the Executive of the Nottinghamshire Miners.²⁷

More specific concern at the increasing numbers of unemployed occurred in January 1893 when, after a long discussion on unemployment, the Trades Council appointed a deputation to see the Mayor and Corporation officials about the problem of rising unemployment. Although the Mayor insisted that there was "No distress in the town that could not be dealt with by existing charitable organisations" he and the Town Council subsequently passed £20 to the Trades Council. This money was part of a donation of £100 given by Col. Seeley, the local Liberal M.P., for the relief of unemployment. This money was subsequently used by the Trades Council to organise a demonstration of unemployed which was successful in forcing the Town Council to open a special office which, in the space of two days, recruited 400 men for work in the town's parks. ²⁸

Concern for the unemployed expressed itself too in a special conference on the provision of Old Age Pensions. It seemed inhuman to many trade union activists not only that men and women should be forced to continue working well into old age, but that this state of affairs helped to ensure the continuation of the unemployment problem. A large number of delegates attended the special conference organised by the Trades Council in May 1899 and they unanimously called on the Government to provide from the imperial exchequer a pension for "every deserving man and women who has attained the age of 65." Notwithstanding the failure to decide how an individual would be designated "deserving" support for Old Age Pensions continued to be strongly and actively canvassed not only as a worthwhile reform in its own right, but also as a means of holding down the numbers out of work. ²⁹

During the winter of 1903-04 unemployment again became a major issue. Like many other Trades Councils, that in Nottingham was active in agitation for the introduction of public works schemes, as well as supporting the local Right to Work Committee, which was set up in the following period on the initiative of the S.D.F. By December,

Gutteridge, the I.L.P. activist, moved that the Trades Council demand a Town Meeting to enquire into cases of exceptional distress. Much of the sympathy for the unemployed which began to express itself during this period was motivated less by a genuinely altruistic concern than by a real fear that working class poverty might breed revolution and the abnormally high levels of unemployment being experienced in these years did indeed, at times, seem to carry that risk. The Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 set up local distress committees to survey the situation and to initiate remedies such as the setting up of labour exchanges. In Nottingham this development seems to have met with a good deal of suspicion and although an employment register was set up, the number registering seems to have fallen far short of the number actually out of work. ³⁰

In February 1906 an unemployed march organised by the I.L.P. entered Nottingham on their way to London, "the Socialist Hall being made a hotel for them." The Nottingham Distress Committee later recommended 13 of the unemployed for emigration and indeed it seems that many people's ideas for dealing with the problem went no further than trying to send it away. In May 1907, for example, the Trades Council passed a resolution expressing the view that the "Unemployment Act was a complete failure as far as Nottingham is concerned" but then went on to press the City Council to continue the work of the Labour Bureau and Distress Committee. ³¹ In the same period the S.D.F. was inviting Trades Council support for a mass demonstration of unemployed, as well as agitating on the question of "underfed school children." ³² This agitation continued into 1908 and at the end of several months' activity one delegate at the Trades Council meeting in November attacked the Council's attitude to the Right to Work Committee, arguing that it was time for the Trades Council to "take a more militant attitude and not play with the question of unemployment as the Liberal Party was doing." ³³ Two weeks later a group of Newcastle Hunger Marchers

passed through Nottingham and the Trades Council payed for the group's lodgings as well as providing a breakfast. Early in 1909, however, the Nottingham Right to Work Committee was suddenly closed down and it appears likely that Trades Council suspicion of the political objects of the Committee was the reason for its demise. During the course of 1908, 150 of the town's out of work had marched to London, but disagreement amongst the political and industrial elements involved seem to have undermined what could have been a truly united movement.

During the course of 1909 William Beveridge wrote that unemployment was fundamental to the whole question of poverty:

"Workmen today are men living on quicksand, which at any moment may engulf individuals, which at uncertain intervals sinks for months or years below the sea surface altogether." 34

Many Nottingham Trade Unionists would have agreed with this description and the 1909 annual report of the Trades Council made the point that unemployment needed much time and attention. Unemployment, according to the Trades Council, was "without doubt the question of the day." During the year the Mayor was forced to open a special Unemployment Fund and Trades Council agitation secured the revival of the town's Distress Committee. In many ways, solutions of this kind were really no different from those being used twenty years before. In the remaining years before the outbreak of the First World War, however, many members of the local Labour movement came to realize that unemployment was more a social than an individual problem and that it must be dealt with by society as a whole. In this realisation lay the seeds of many of the developments within the post-war Labour movement.

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE I.L.P.1893 - 1899

If the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League were the first truly Socialist organisations to try to recruit the Nottingham working class, it was the I.L.P. which drew many threads together. The first signs of the emergence of this new political party are to be found in the gradual change of outlook which had begun to develop amongst Nottingham's younger trade unionists at the end of the 1880's. This group had been exposed to socialist literature and propaganda in their formative years and at the beginning of the 1890's their demands for independent labour representation began to dominate Trades Council meetings.

Against this background three Nottingham delegates travelled to Bradford in January 1893 for the founding conference of the Independent Labour Party. Of these, Staton of the Tailors' Society was one of the eleven delegates of the Fabian Society. The other two, George Smith and G.S. Christie, had both been active socialists for a number of years. During the debate on the objects of the new party, Christie made the point that he thought that "the conference ought not to bind people who were not then represented to any policy whatever."¹ Their purpose and duty, according to Christie, was simply to "organise themselves". Christie had been a member of the First International and later in the conference he was elected to the National Administrative Council as the representative for the Midland Counties. According to the Workman's Times, Nottingham had good reason to be proud of Christie, who was "an earnest worker in the cause of labour and has been for years."²

By March 1893 the Nottingham branch of the I.L.P. was well established. Its first secretary, Frank Kennedy, was the manager of a local hosiery factory, and he, together with Christie and a small group of activists, quickly began to organise propaganda meetings. At this stage in the history of the I.L.P. many of its members seem also to have been members of the Fabian Society and in July this organisation was reported to be holding good meetings. Bower, the secretary of the Rotary Power Hosiery Workers, seems to have been one who was active in both organisations and at the beginning of July he was reported as saying that "we intend making these meetings a great feature of labour and socialist propaganda."

At the beginning of July the newly established Nottingham branch of the I.L.P. suffered something of a setback when Jones, its first president, suddenly died. Jones had been a miners' delegate to the Trades Council and only a day or two before his death he had taken part in a debate on the question of the recent grants to Royalty during the course of which he had "made pathetic appeals on behalf of the poor."³ Despite this setback both the I.L.P. and the Fabian Society were holding "splendid and enthusiastic" meetings. Some of these are vividly remembered by Percy Redfern, a young Nottingham shopworker:

"In the dark of the evening, after eight o'clock, I packed myself with the crowd, whilst Socialist lecturers simplified everything. Eloquent hands pictured the round cake of the national income. The Workers made it: the Capitalists and Landlords took it. One slice only, a mere third, they gave back to the worker, just to keep their slaves alive! Thus did Marxian doctrine and Fabian diagrams reach the people."⁴

At the end of July and into August A.G. Wolfe held propaganda meetings at Trent Bridge every night for a week with a further three meetings on Sunday to wind up. This first flush of enthusiasm carried the I.L.P. through the summer and at the end of August the newly established party announced that Sam Bower would stand as their candidate for Wollaton Ward in the municipal elections. At this stage the activists who had

joined the I.L.P. felt convinced that they could win a municipal seat and they underlined their determination by announcing: "We are going in for winning this time." ⁵

The I.L.P. campaign seems to have begun well with "two splendid open air meetings, there being between 600 to 700 persons present." ⁶ At this stage the I.L.P. had just opened a club which was open every evening and it was reported that the I.L.P. was making members very fast. The confidence which these developments generated was reflected not only by the candidature of Bower, but also by the keenness of the local branch to fight a Parliamentary campaign. This eagerness to fight the established political parties came to a head in late September when, after a meeting at which Cunningham Graham had addressed a large meeting in Bulwell Market Place, the I.L.P. passed a resolution resolving to do everything possible to get Cunningham Graham elected for the West Nottingham seat.

By October the I.L.P. was in the thick of the fight to get Bower returned for Wollaton Ward. According to the correspondent of the Workman's Times "a fine time of it" was had by Bowers' supporters since although he was the vice president of the Trades Council, his candidature was actively opposed by Hardstaffe, the Trades Council president and Skerritt, another leading member. As the election drew near the Liberal campaign against Bower began to gather pace. Three or four days before the poll a Nottingham Express editorial said of Bowers :

"Mr. Bower is a man of ideas, of progress, a socialist ... but is he built of straight timber? ... we have a deal of sympathy with Mr. Bowers ideas, we think the section he represents has not always found the elbow room inside Liberalism that it ought to have had ... but he will not gain it at all unless by very candid talk and consistent action he leads a wider circle of citizens to believe in him." ⁷

The same newspaper later added that Bowers' faults were "all writ large on the surface of him. He loves a fight and is inclined to hit pretty nearly everybody with the handiest weapon."⁸ Certainly there seems to have been a good deal of truth in this judgement, but it needs to be remembered that politics in the 1890's was a rough and tumble business. In the campaign under consideration, for instance, Charles Smith, the Liberal candidate, waited until his Eve of Poll meeting to publish dire warnings against Bowers' religious views.⁹ This charge against Bowers had been put about by Liberals during the campaign and it is evident that the Liberals were worried that they might lose the seat. During the course of one outdoor meeting Bowers earnestly contradicted the reports that he was an 'infidel' arguing that there was a great deal of difference between "Churchism and Christianity." Later at the same meeting Bower set out his election programme, which included :

1. Eight-hour day for all Corporation employees.
2. Evening sittings for the Town Council.
3. Public committee meetings.
4. Abolition of contract system.
5. Municipal colonisation on the democratic and non-competitive basis for the unemployed.
6. Municipal hospitals.
7. Abolition of slums.

10

This meeting ended with an attack on the brewing interest. If publicans prospered, according to Bower, "the working man could not thrive."¹¹ This claim was probably motivated, not just by a belief in temperance, but also by the realisation that the publican of the 1890's often played a crucial political role on the side of the establishment. Certainly, this had been the case in Wollaton Ward and the result when it came indicated that it probably had been again :

C. Smith (Liberal)	1,241	
S. Bower (I.L.P.)	919	
Majority	322	12



He carried the plight of the unemployed to the House of Commons. Cartoon by "Jordie" (J.S.Christie) from The Labour Leader 1894.

An old supporter of the First International Christie was a member of the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P. and a leading activist of the Nottingham branch in its early years.

This result was close enough to worry the Liberals and it caused a good deal of press comment. "One of the features of the 1893 election" according to the Nottingham Express "is undoubtedly the number of votes polled by Mr. Bower... we doubt whether any very considerable number of Mr. Bowers' supporters were Conservatives. They included temperance advocates and very advanced Radicals who believed in the forward policy of Mr. Bower... it seems to us that the existence of so large a body of voters in a Liberal Ward... is a fact that deserves earnest attention." 13

If the Liberals were concerned at this result, the early I.L.P. members were elated. They celebrated in December at a grand smoking concert in the Mechanics' Hall. The chair on this occasion was taken by Keir Hardie and he was supported by Bruce Glasier. A week later the West Nottingham membership heard Glasier speak on the necessity of the I.L.P. before rounding off the year with a grand tea, with songs and recitations.

The votes won by Bower seem to have stimulated a good deal of further activity and by early 1894 the I.L.P. had built a formidable political machine. This was well demonstrated at the first Labour Day celebrated in Nottingham on May 7th 1894. According to the Nottingham Express some thousands marched in procession to the Forest where three platforms had been erected. Bowers took his place on platform 1 where amongst the surging crowd and brass bands the banner of the Tailors' Society "tattered, yet gaily bedizened, was in evidence and was cheered." Bower soon got into his stride, working himself up to a climax in which he told the crowd that "their object was to protest against the action of an irresponsible body of nincompoops like the House of Lords in mutilating the Employers' Liability Bill, before going on to claim that "the terror of the workers today was the unemployed army. It was an injustice to allow one man to monopolize 8 or 10 hours whilst others worked 3, 2 or 1 and none... employment of children was one of the biggest curses of the day. The taking

of children into factories at such early ages was a crime. The whole matter would end in socialism and the sooner the better." Platform No.2 was surrounded by the miners who were headed by the Wollaton Colliery Brass Band and the Bulwell Ebenezer Brass Band. The platform was occupied by Bailey, the N.M.A. agent, Jepson, secretary of the Trades Council and interestingly, four women speakers from either the lace or the hosiery workers. Platform No.3 attracted many railway workers since, as well as Christie of the I.L.P., it featured Hartford, the General Secretary of the Railway Servants' Union. ¹⁴

This first May Day was a huge success; 50,000 were said to have been present. The I.L.P. had already been busy in the outlying districts. In February, Keir Hardie had made a stirring speech at Beeston and this alone had resulted in 30 recruits joining the new branch. This group of new members would have thoroughly enjoyed their first May Day which closed with a big I.L.P. social and dance, advertised during the procession by the Typographical Society, who had mounted on a drag a Cropper printing machine which printed en route a flaring announcement. ¹⁵

Once the social and entertainment had closed the branch quickly went onto the offensive. The Town Council was, of course, the main target and the Liberals on it attracted most of the fire. In May, for instance, Sir John Turney moved the Council to an expenditure of £16,000 on the purchase of a new rifle range for the Robin Hood Volunteers. This infuriated the I.L.P. who promptly attacked "our jingo Liberal Fire-eaters, who spread themselves on the dignity of the town and all the other balderdash usual on such occasions." ¹⁶ The Liberal members of the Nottingham Board of Guardians also earned the scorn of the I.L.P. The town's Labour Leader correspondent lost no time in pointing out that the same group of Councillors who had voted £16,000 for a new rifle range were also responsible for resisting the demands of the inmates of the workhouse, who wanted a little extra tea for the Aged. These same Guardians were also accused, by the I.L.P., of "white slavery." It

seems that during the previous five years they had been responsible for apprenticing 1,915 boys to the fishing smack owners of Grimsby. Of these the I.L.P. claimed that 628 had deserted and 118 had died. ¹⁷ Not given to pulling their punches the members of the I.L.P. rounded off this early attack with a straightforward implication that the Guardians were corrupt. The Board of Guardians, they claimed "think more of the salaries of their officers than the comfort of the inmates of the 'house'. Of late, they have been very liberal to their higher officials."¹⁸

Responding to this kind of pressure it is not surprising to find the I.L.P. claiming, in April 1894, that the Liberals in the Southern Division wanted the I.L.P. to support a Lib-Lab. candidate. Equally not surprising was the I.L.P.'s claim that "it wasn't having any." Indeed, by the end of April the Labour Leader was listing Cunningham Graham as the official I.L.P. candidate for West Nottingham. Despite this development it seems that some discussion between the Liberal Party and the I.L.P. in the town must have taken place because the I.L.P. Journal reported that "some of the Liberal leaders in Nottingham had promised to support the I.L.P. for the Southern Division." This offer must have gone sour, however, since the I.L.P. maintained that the Liberals had "fulfilled their promise by putting forward a Liberal money bag."¹⁹

At this stage in its development the I.L.P.'s prime need was to distance itself from the Liberal establishment. This necessity must have made the job of weaning wavering Lib-Lab. elements across to the new Party extremely difficult. In Nottingham, however, the early I.L.P. militants seem to have been prepared to speak their mind without worrying about the consequences. Late in April 1894, for example, Hardstaffe, who was now the secretary of the Trades Council, drew the following sarcastic comment :

"Mr. W.L. Hardstaffe J.P. must be a genius. He condemns in the strongest terms the action taken by the ILP because it would delay payment of members and the second ballot, and yet he supports a Government which, having the power to grant these reforms, persistently refuses them. Your Liberal-Labour man is fearfully and wonderfully made." 20

The struggle with the Lib-Lab. elements in the town was of major importance at this stage. Since there were large and articulate groupings of the trade union old guard in a number of the town's major industries it was essential that the I.L.P. should seize every propaganda opportunity. Against this background Tom Mann arrived in the town in May 1894. Mann was able to start a branch at nearby Stapleford, where he was joined by two brakeloads of I.L.P. members who had driven over from Nottingham. Whilst making this journey they had "made the welkins ring with labour songs." ²¹ Later, Tom Mann spoke to meetings of railwaymen at Hucknall and Netherfield and also helped to start a Nottingham Ladies I.L.P. branch "which promises to outshine the men's organisation." Harry Quelch of the S.D.F. was also in the town for a couple of Sunday propaganda meetings. These, however, were only moderately successful, being "consistently interfered with" by the presence of the yellow van of the Land Nationalisation League which was conducting a vigorous campaign of its own. ²²

All this activity seems to have generated not only enthusiasm but more important - new members. In February, for instance, at the second I.L.P. conference Nottingham was represented by six delegates who were there on behalf of branches in West, East, Central and Manvers Wards. At the end of May the growth of the Nottingham I.L.P. was recognised when the quarterly meeting of the Administrative Council of the I.L.P. met at the Trent Ward club which was run by the Nottingham membership. Keir Hardie was in the chair at this meeting which lasted for seven hours. Christie, the Nottingham stalwart who was a member of the N.A.C., reported on the arrangements which were being made to get together a General Election fund, but during the course of discussion it be-

came clear that the town's own chances of contesting the next election was receding. From the chair, Hardie advised that special attention should be given to running an I.L.P. candidate for Nottingham South, since the "erratic behaviour" of Cunningham Graham had now lost the I.L.P. the opportunity of running a candidate in West Nottingham. ²³

Despite this depressing news the Nottingham branch of the party staged a splendid evening social and dance after the formal business. The Hall was filled with about 1,000 people, many of whom, it seems, were prominent Liberals. The I.L.P. members, together with their wives and sweethearts were, however, there to enjoy the company of Hardie, Tom Mann, Leonard Hall, Pete Curran and Brocklehurst. Some amongst these broached the possibility of a Liberal alliance with Hardie. Putting a fresh light to his pipe, Hardie "smiled in his own quiet way and put an end to questions, before leading off in the first polka, much to the amazement of his friends who had not dreamt that tripping the light fantastic was in his line." ²⁴ The movement in Nottingham during this period was certainly vigorous and healthy. Robert Meats, a foundation member of the I.L.P., vividly remembers one of the I.L.P.'s early propaganda meetings. Writing about a meeting held by Enid Stacy he recalled :

"She had a great crowd of listeners and an elderly gentleman, an evangelist well known as Jimmy Dupe, who always, when fine, held a Sunday morning service in the Market Place. He sometimes had on his platform a reformed gentleman named William Thompkin, but much better known as Bendigo, the prize fighter. Dupe must have got a bit perturbed at seeing so many people at our meeting for he closed his meeting down, came round to ours and shouted as loud as he could: 'All you're fast going to the devil!' " ²⁵

Certainly, as Meats concluded, Dupe was sincere enough in his methods and beliefs "but he cannot have given much thought to the 'Brotherhood of Man' question."

In the months which followed the I.L.P. organised a cyclist lecturing campaign to capture the adjoining villages and after Tom Mann

had held rousing meetings, branches were formed at Arnold, Hucknall, Netherfield, Beeston and Carlton. Later, Pete Curran came to Nottingham for a week of meetings and in August a big crowd in the Market Place amongst which "silk hats and other badges of respectability were much in evidence" heard Keir Hardie speak for the I.L.P.²⁶ A day or two before this meeting Edward Aveling had "electrified the audience" whilst giving "two of the most powerful and thrilling speeches ever heard in the Market Place." Writing in 1934 Robert Meats, who acted as Aveling's chairman, remembered :

"He was little in stature and elderly, but his power, his voice, his fluency and the richness of his addresses generally so impressed me that I must place him bang in the front rank of Socialist propagandists. At one of his meetings, when there must have been 2,000 or more people present, I know that the collection ~~was a record for outdoor meetings ...~~

Dr. Aveling's evening subject was entitled : 'Masters and Men' and I do not exaggerate when I say one could fancy seeing the forces of capitalism and labour marching in opposition to one another, in the vivid exposition of society's rottenness, as given by the Doctor."²⁷

The vividness with which the meetings are remembered forty years later is one indication of the strength and vitality of the early I.L.P. The comradeship and good fellowship of these early meetings were often cemented by indoor and outdoor social occasions. In July 1894, for instance, the newly formed Nottingham branch of the I.L.P. travelled to the village of Costock for a splendid picnic which involved hay-making, skittles and other rural pastimes before the pork pies and ginger ale of the al fresco tea.²⁸

Although there is plenty of evidence that the I.L.P.'s propaganda meetings were attracting plenty of new members it also seems that some amongst the early socialists were depressed and pessimistic at their failure to make more rapid progress.²⁹ In July 1894 the Labour Leader reported that the Nottingham Trades Council did not "pursue a very vigorous policy with respect to the I.L.P.'s principles. So far as

we are able to judge it is dominated by a majority of members who still believe in the Liberal Party. Our members should see that they send the most advanced men to represent them and then by steady and persistent work, get the Council to join hands with the I.L.P." The problem with this approach, of course, lay in the fact that the socialism of the I.L.P. had not been born into a static world. The I.L.P. could not isolate itself from other political activity; it did not breath and grow in a sterile cultural vacuum. This fact of life was soon to be born in on the I.L.P. activists who reported in July that the Liberal member for the Southern Division was making a fair bid for the Labour vote. Judging from his speeches it was claimed he was prepared to promise anything. The tactics of the "advanced Liberal candidates (we have two here) is strengthening the impression that these gentlemen have received the tip from H.Q. to go upon the sort of Harcourtinian lines of being all socialists now." 30

Later, commenting on the recently announced programme for the N.M.A. demonstration, the Nottingham I.L.P. expressed its concern at what it saw as "an attempt on the part of the wire-pullers to work the organisation on Liberal lines." On this occasion the I.L.P. was upset because the announced speakers for the demonstration were Ellis, a local coalowner and Liberal M.P. for Rushcliffe and Yoxall, the Liberal candidate for the Western Division. To add insult to injury, Yoxall was introduced to the audience of coalminers as "the Liberal and Labour candidate for West Nottingham unmindful of the fact that the I.L.P. have adopted Councillor Beever of Halifax to do battle for Labour." Outraged by these developments the I.L.P. activists optimistically comforted themselves with the hope that since "a good number of the Notts miners are members of the I.L.P., when our candidate comes forward for the Western Division, they will plainly show their disapproval of this caucus work." 31

By this time, only about eighteen months after its formation, the I.L.P. in Nottingham had 700 members, two club rooms and an "eminent

band of women workers whose energy and enthusiasm carry everything before it." ³² Some idea of the strength of the I.L.P. in the town can be gauged by the fact that it spent £3 on penny copies of Blatchford's Merrie England. By October 1894 the group felt strong enough to run its own candidates for the Town Council and fielded five candidates in the local elections. Commenting on the Nottingham campaign the Labour Leader reported "good attendances, good collections, increased membership and great uneasiness in the old parties." Concurrent with the municipal elections the General Election campaign was beginning and in October Councillor Beever of Halifax opened the Nottingham I.L.P. Parliamentary fight at an evening meeting whose audience of over 1,000 was brought to its feet with ringing cheers by Tom Mann, who was in fine form. In the local elections all five I.L.P. candidates were well-known trade union members and in addition two other Trades Council members stood as non-political Trade Union candidates. The actual contest, however, seems to have been most closely fought between the socialists and the Lib-Lab elements. True, the Town Council was attacked for voting ratepayers' money to buy presents for the Royal Family, but most of the political in-fighting seems to have centred on Bailey, the Miners' Agent. According to the Nottingham correspondent of the Labour Leader, the local I.L.P. "besides the usual class opposition, have an active enemy in Mr. Bailey, the Miners' Agent. Looking at some of his amazing talk, I should say that nothing could ultimately do the Notts I.L.P. more good than his opposition." ³³

Although none of the I.L.P. candidates were successful on this occasion the group did win 24 per cent of the votes polled in the three-cornered fight and this contrasted quite well with the 15 per cent poll for socialists in Liverpool, but it was nowhere near as good as the 40 per cent in Keighley, or the 37 per cent in nearby Leicester. ³⁴

Reporting the Nottingham result, the Clarion made the point that Bowers might well have won Wollaton Ward, but for the "foolish and unfair

attack on the I.L.P. by miners' agent Bailey", whilst the Labour Leader unleashed its full scorn reporting that the I.L.P.'s strongest opponents were :

"those furious demons of political partisanship the amphibious Lib-Lab. town councillors ... the most determined and unscrupulous of these, Councillor Bailey, in addressing the miners of Wollaton Ward, made a frenzied attack on the I.L.P. ... no weapon was too base or too mean for the pseudo trade unionist to use ... his cunning verged on Jesuitry ... his babbling tongue was allowed to run riot." 35

Despite their defeat in the municipal elections the I.L.P. only a month later nominated a total of seventeen candidates for the December Board of Guardian election. The S.D.F. were also in the field with a single candidate, but when the results were announced not one of the eighteen socialists had been successful. The Clarion's Nottingham correspondent, probably with some justification, put this particular debacle down to an excess of enthusiasm :

"We do enthuse in Laceopolis and as a striking example of misdirected energy the I.L.P. campaign for the Guardians is a corker. Instead of running, say, half a dozen in safe districts, where with a little hard work their return would be practically assured ... no less than 17 misguided but well-meaning candidates ensured that the seats captured were represented by a big round O." 36

Although this series of defeats must have been disappointing, I.L.P. candidates were elected to the parish councils of nearby Colwick and Gunthorpe so that, at a huge smoker concert held in the Mechanics' Institute at which the year was seen out with boisterous cheers for Hardie and Nunquam as well as the singing of "England Arise", the I.L.P. could clearly congratulate itself on a year in which significant progress had been made.

The main political event of 1895 was the General Election. Events in other parts of the country as well as Nottingham had done much to convince the I.L.P. that local Liberal Party Associations were definitely prejudiced against Labour and that there was little point in

trying to co-operate with them. This, of course, was the first General Election since the I.L.P. had been formed and the party must have looked forward to it with relish. At the beginning of the year the Nottingham group seems to have been in good heart. The January Divisional Conference was held in the town and after the business meeting the delegates adjourned to the West Nottingham Labour Club and the splendid tea provided generated the following rather patronising but nevertheless revealing comment from the Labour Leader :

"A word of praise is due to the women's branch which was in evidence during tea, rendering the assistance which only women can do on such occasions. Branches of the I.L.P. would do well to copy Nottingham and inaugurate women's branches - there is nothing like it." 37

In the same period the local branch of the I.L.P. was well into its winter programme of lecture meetings, smoker concerts and dances. Late in February Comrade Winterton was speaking to the Trent Ward I.L.P. on "Why I am a Socialist." 38 A week later the Western Division I.L.P. held a dance at the Albert Academy.

At the I.L.P.'s Annual Conference in Newcastle, George Christie was re-elected to the N.A.C. of the Party and at the same time he was selected to contest the Hyde Division of Cheshire in the forthcoming General Election. The election campaign was occupying most of the time and energy of the local I.L.P. but at about this time, for reasons which are obscure, Councillor Beever of Halifax withdrew as the I.L.P.'s candidate for West Nottingham. This development must have created something of a crisis amongst the local activists but it did not prevent the group from maintaining its attacks on the Lib-Lab. element. Whilst addressing the Labour Electoral Association in May, Bailey made an appeal to the I.L.P. to consider "whether they could not get what they wanted through constitutional methods." 39 Since the I.L.P. was busy contesting elections in a perfectly straightforward and constitutional way, it is not really surprising that the local militants replied with a certain amount of sarcasm :

"Of course, we are all hairy chested, red-shirted monsters with bloodshot eyes who go about demanding eight-hour Bills and pensions for aged workers as well as retired speakers and who are even in favour of giving the poor, dirty miner the full value of his labour ... revolutionary destructive proposals all of them! For, says Mr. Bailey, to try to run the country without landlords and mineowners would be 'Socialism run wild.' " 40

In this period the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. seem to have been working well together. The S.D.F. had a club room in Swan Yard and during the winter months a series of meetings on "Political Economy" had been held. The 1895 May Day celebrations were arranged by a joint committee and the socialist open-air propaganda campaign during the summer months seems to have involved both groups. Around the middle of May this campaign organised a meeting at Bulwell which was largely attended by miners. During the course of this meeting the I.L.P. speakers attacked Bailey for his recent speeches against the I.L.P. and socialists and, according to the Labour Leader this criticism "was highly appreciated."⁴¹

This campaign continued throughout the summer and in late June the Labour Electoral Association conference in the town gave them plenty of opportunity to renew the attack. Every effort was made to "boom" the meeting but the efforts to persuade the Nottingham union branches to send delegates do not appear to have been very successful. Obviously pleased at this sign of waning Lib-Lab. influence, the local activists reported that only about three union branches had sent delegates :

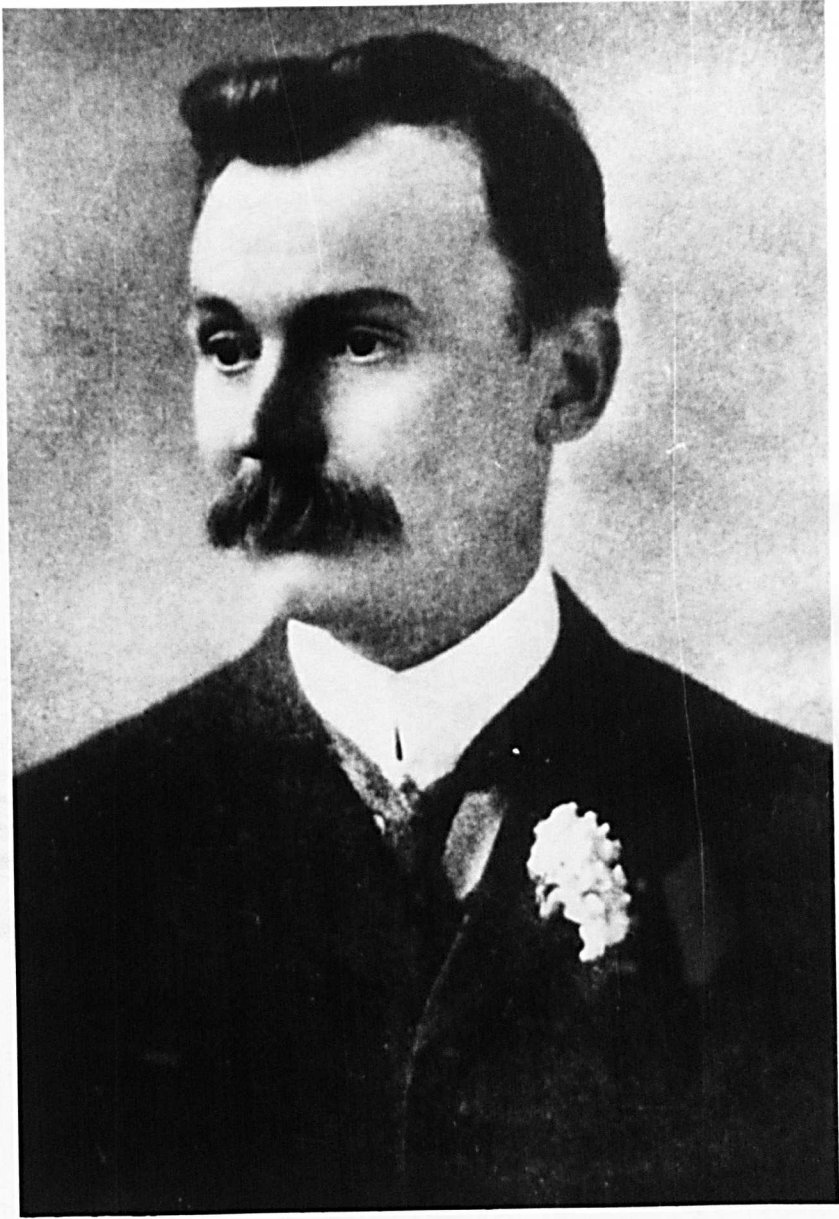
"Of 89 delegates 25 to 30 were local Liberals of the deepest dye ... the meeting was nothing more or less than an integral part of the machinery of the Liberal caucus ... the conference was visited by the Nottingham Mayor ... and the chosen spokesmen of the delegates endeavoured to out rival each other by impressing upon His Worship the fact that they were not destructionists, they were not utopians but believed in working on constitutional lines and much more drivel of a like order." 42

A month later the Labour Leader reported that the Liberal-Labour stalwarts in Nottingham were beginning to develop symptoms of "electioneering hydrophobia." The unease which the established political parties were now developing was a factor not only of the I.L.P. attacks on the Lib-Lab. element but also of the successful propaganda campaign being mounted by the Nottingham socialists. During the course of June Ben Riley of the Land Restoration League spoke at Market Place and street corner meetings on "The History of English Poverty" and "Landlordism" and late in the month Bruce Glasier arrived in the district.

Glasier, of course, was a leading propagandist of the I.L.P. and his diary gives a vivid impression of an I.L.P. meeting in nearby Hucknall :

"I had an exceedingly encouraging meeting in the Market Place, some 500 people, mostly miners, being present. In the course of my address I strongly commented on the attitude of Bailey and the local miners' leaders in associating themselves with the Liberal Party and attacking the I.L.P. A somewhat kindly and earnest old man who announced himself as the secretary of the local Labour Electoral Association (the only bona fide branch of this body I have come across in the country) took exception to my attack on the Liberals. I answered him effectively I think ... certainly with the hearty approval of the greater portion of the meeting." 43

Later Glasier got a local miner to take him to Hucknall Church, where he stood over Byron's tomb and at the request of the sexton, Glasier signed the visitors book. It seems that the sexton must have had socialist sympathies since he remarked that it was "appropriate that as one of the leaders of the great democratic movement" Glasier should have his name inscribed in the visitors book of the church which held Byron's tomb. A day or so later, Glasier spoke at "immense meetings" in Nottingham on "Elements of Socialism in existing society" and "The Reward of Genius". Writing about this visit to Nottingham Glasier was mildly critical of the local branch of the I.L.P., recording that "it was keeping fairly well together but without any great enterprise or push."



Henry Staton was born at Shepshed in Leicestershire in 1864. He came to Nottingham in 1883 and immediately joined the Tailors' Union. Staton was an earnest socialist and represented Nottingham at the first conference of the I.L.P. in Bradford. Staton was the president of the Nottingham Labour Representation Committee and was three times an I.L.P. candidate in the local elections although always unsuccessfully.

Part of the explanation for this state of affairs may lay in personality problems of one kind or another. Certainly Glasier hints at this when writing about Christie, the N.A.C. member and perhaps the leading I.L.P. member in the town:

"As I expected, however, he is not popular amongst the Nottinghamshire members. They say he is overbearing or rather was, for now he seldom comes near them. They accuse him of having led the branch into an expenditure of £20 to advertise the Labour Leader in the district." 44

Despite these problems, however, Glasier reported that everywhere in the mining communities in and around Nottingham he found the people eager to imbibe the teaching of the I.L.P. Conditions amongst them, according to Glasier's diary, were appalling. "In Hucknall, Bulwell and Sandiacre we found that the miners were, and had been for months, receiving no more than 2½ to 3 days' work a week."

Building on conditions like this the pace of the socialist propaganda meetings seems to have quickened. As one local Liberal paper put it, "the mad whirl of socialistic voices" was heard at the usual meeting places. Eleanor Marx-Aveling visited the town in July and in September Mrs. Bruce Glasier addressed meetings on "The Cry of the Children." Harry Quelch, the editor of Justice and a leading S.D.F. member, also spoke in the town during the summer campaign which included an S.D.F. tea and social as well as an I.L.P. picnic at Hoveringham. The N.M.A. Annual Demonstration came towards the end of the summer. In these years, most of the miners were, of course, still supporters of the Liberals. The novelist Alan Sillitoe remembers that his grandfather, who was employed as a blacksmith at Wollaton colliery, supported Yoxall, the successful Liberal candidate for West Nottingham, throughout the 1890's. ⁴⁵ At the 1895 Miners' Demonstration Yoxall's programme of House of Lords reform, rural education and industrial insurance went down well. Marxian, the Labour Leader columnist, claimed that Yoxall regularly read the I.L.P. paper and advised his readers :

"don't be surprised if he turns revolutionist." ⁴⁶ On this occasion it seems that Yoxall might have stolen the thunder of John Burns since the Socialists in the audience later expressed themselves as being exasperated with Burns' speech which they described as being "as mild as separated milk" ⁴⁷ and they can have taken little comfort from the resolution which was subsequently passed since it merely regretted the result of the General Election "owing to the divisions amongst those who claim to speak in the name of labour." ⁴⁸

The Lib-Lab. elements in the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association were not alone in their determination to crush the socialist groups. In September 1895 the Labour Leader reported that the Liberal trade unionists in the town were "in high glee at having brought about another coup d'etat. This time it is the Liberal-Labour leaders and their fellow members of the Rotary Framework Knitters' Society whose prejudices against everybody and everything that savours of I.L.P.ism has led them to essay the hopeless task of blotting out socialism." ⁴⁹ Unfortunately for the I.L.P., however, the anti-socialist element were able to bring enough pressure to bear on Bowers, the secretary of the Rotary Power Society, to ensure his withdrawal as the I.L.P. candidate for Wollaton Ward in the forthcoming local elections. This set back, together with the temporary collapse of the S.D.F., must have created a crisis amongst the socialists and against this background the municipal campaign must have been very difficult.

Compared with the 1894 campaign the 1895 local election passed off very tamely. Bower had been replaced as the I.L.P. candidate for Wollaton by Harry Staton of the Tailors' Union but he was only able to poll 386 votes as against the 996 gained by Bower the year before. To some extent the collapse of I.L.P. support can perhaps be explained by the more forward-looking policies being advocated by some Liberals. In Bridge Ward, for instance, William Hamilton, the Liberal

and Radical Association candidate, described himself in his election address as a "progressive" and called for the municipalisation of the tramways as well as the building by the Corporation of workmen's houses. It was significant also that just before the election J.E. Ellis, M.P., a local coalowner, having voted for the Eight Hour Bill in the House of Commons, introduced the eight hour day into his collieries without loss of pay. Happily for the morale of the I.L.P. however, only a week or two after the local election defeat, Tom Moore, their candidate for the School Board, was able to win a seat, registering 19,458 votes despite a complete press boycott. This consolation prize was welcomed by the Clarion as the long-awaited "thin end of the wedge". Pavement chalking had been a big feature of the I.L.P. campaign and on the day of the poll "scarcely a street was left without its exhortation to 'PLUMP FOR MOORE.'" 50

In many ways 1896 ought to have witnessed major progress in the history of the Nottingham I.L.P. The Party was now three years old; it had recruited about a thousand members, many of whom were active in the town's trade unions and at the end of 1895 it had won its first electoral victory. Everything should have been set fair for continued growth and influence. In fact, the I.L.P. lost ground. An early sign of trouble on the horizon occurred at the 1896 Annual Conference of the Party which was held in Nottingham. At one level the conference helped to boost the confidence of the Nottingham activists. Keir Hardie, Tom Mann, Enid Stacy and Fred Brocklehurst all spoke at a mass meeting which filled the Albert Hall. Tom Mann later chaired a Grand Smoking Concert in the Mechanics' Institute and propaganda meetings were held all over the city. Behind all the drum-banging, however, there were ominous signs that all was not well. One recent writer has suggested that a shift in the perspective of British socialism occurred about this time. Prior to 1895 it is argued that the movement was charged with almost millennial fervour. Midway through the 1890's, however, there are signs that a more fragmented socialist movement adopted pol-

icies which were more attentive to short term pragmatic considerations, which concentrated on consolidating the I.L.P. by means of electoral agreements with the Liberals and patient courtship of the unions. ⁵¹ In Nottingham, however, this analysis is not really true. The town's socialists still retained plenty of evangelical fervour, the Labour Church was at the height of its popularity and the I.L.P. seemed determined to make electoral progress without Liberal assistance. None of this is to suggest that Nottingham was without its own troubles, which came to the surface at the opening of the National Conference when the credentials of G.S. Christie, a member of the N.A.C. and the leading I.L.P. member in the town were declared irregular. Christie appears to have attended the Conference with the credentials of the Stapleford and Sandiacre branch. This branch was part of the Rushcliffe Division and under the rules of the I.L.P. only the Division had the power to appoint delegates. Since the Rushcliffe Division had delegated Comrade Pegg to represent them, it was inevitable that Christie should be found to have no locus standi and ruled ineligible to stand for re-election to the N.A.C. It seems likely that behind all of this lay some kind of deep-seated political or personality problem. Why, for instance, was Christie at the Conference with the credentials of Stapleford and Sandiacre, when at previous Conferences he had represented Nottingham? ⁵²

The possibility of some kind of split seems more likely when viewed alongside other reports from the town. In June the Labour Leader reported that "events so far as the I.L.P. is concerned may be described as very quiet." But only a fortnight later, after remarking that "for listless activity I should say the past three months efforts of the (Nottingham) Executive Committee take the bakery", the Nottingham correspondent wrote to say that the local branch had "become three distinct branches with local autonomy". ⁵³ Occurring as it did only three months before the local elections, it seems probable that this division must have weakened the I.L.P.'s electoral organisation and made the job of

winning a City Council seat that much more difficult. Despite the problems facing them, however, the local I.L.P. retained much of their enthusiasm. At the 1896 Board of Guardians election they were given some encouragement when George Thundercliffe, the secretary of the Bakery Workers and at this stage an I.L.P. supporter, managed to win a seat against Liberal opposition and it was against this background that the I.L.P. nominated Harry Staton for Wollaton Ward in the municipal elections.

The result showed, however, that the I.L.P. had increased its vote by only just over 100. The Labour Leader, in announcing the result, made clear that in its view the Lib-Labs were the major reason for the lack of progress :

The Unholy Alliance candidate	1,427	
Staton (I.L.P.)	497	maj. 997

Although at this time Staton was the vice president of the Trades Council, it seems that like Bowers before him he had run into opposition from Bailey and other leading members of the Trades Council. According to the I.L.P. newspaper, Staton had fought a plucky fight but had been "compelled to succumb to the opposing hosts of Toryism, Liberalism and quasi trade unionism." It seems that the Wollaton branch of the N.M.A. had even appealed to their headquarters to come and assist them in the "questionable work of scotching labour." Hardstaffe, the secretary of the Trades Council, was accused of having done more than "any other Liberal labourer to place the workers in a state of subjugation to the Liberal Party."⁵⁴ Clearly for the I.L.P. activists the Lib-Lab. elements were beneath contempt. Their condemnation of Bailey and Hardstaffe is a little too simplistic, however, in that it refuses to allow that the motives of individuals like these might have been sincere. To underline this point Hardstaffe came under attack after the 1896 elections, not only from the I.L.P. but from Sir John Turney, a leading Liberal Party

member. Hardstaffe's crime in this instance was the withholding of his support from certain Liberal candidates who had "ratted" on the Fair Contracts question. At the Trades Council meeting which followed the elections Hardstaffe made a statement in which he claimed that he had no other course but to oppose the re-election of men who played fast and loose with the principles of trade unionism. If it came to a question of being loyal to a certain political party and throwing his labour principles to the winds "he would not desert trade unionism but leave the Liberal Party tomorrow." ⁵⁵

However, none of this did anything to placate the I.L.P. militants who argued that the "pandering of the Liberals to Trade Union officials in Nottingham has for a long time proved the most successful weapon in their armoury with which to attack the I.L.P." The Lib-Labs, according to the socialists, were entitled to no sympathy. It was an open secret that the official Liberal establishment were opposed to any further trucking with Labour; happily, according to the I.L.P., the "grave of Liberalism and Labour with its place hunting and intrigue is at last opened." ⁵⁶ All of which makes lively reading underlining as it does the strength of feeling of the activists amongst the Nottingham socialists. What it ignores, however, is the very tight psychological grip which established Liberalism had, not just on the minds of leading personalities amongst the trade unions, but more importantly on the huge rank and file of the working class. The loosening of this grip was the major task facing the I.L.P. At the end of 1896 it was still more than a decade away.

The magnitude of the difficulties facing the I.L.P. was well underlined at the beginning of 1897 when, at a specially arranged debate the issues between individualism and socialism were thoroughly examined, not at an I.L.P. propaganda meeting but at a local church meeting. On this occasion the Most Reverend Andrew Ring argued against Mr. A. Morton

that "socialism must be swept from the face of the earth ... competition was the best thing that's ever been in vogue." For this audience at least, the strength of this argument was enough to ensure that the advocates of "grab and scramble" overwhelmed the believers in socialism.⁵⁷ By April, however, some of the splits of the previous year seem to have been on the way to healing. Jordie Christie attended the 5th Annual Conference of the I.L.P. in London and this time there was no argument over his credentials and he moved a resolution congratulating the Greek people on the determined stand they were making in the Turkish-Greek War. By July it was reported that the I.L.P. in the town had recently been reconstructed. The three branches had been merged into one and "new blood introduced into its management."⁵⁸

During the summer months it seemed for a while as though the Trades Council might be beginning to move towards the socialists. In June a resolution was passed which expressed gratification with the action of the Manvers Ward Liberal Association in refusing to accept Councillor G.K. Wells as their candidate for the forthcoming municipal elections. The Trades Council then proceeded to instruct its Executive at once to consider ways of bringing out a suitable direct labour candidate. At a later meeting an attempt to rescind this decision was rejected by 12 votes to 42 and Hardstaffe's name was subsequently sent to the Manvers Ward Liberals as a Lib-Lab. candidate.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, the Socialists in the town were far from happy with this development and they continued their propaganda campaign in favour of a fullblooded socialist candidate.

According to the S.D.F. publication Justice, the I.L.P. in this period was involved in little open-air propaganda and the S.D.F. had the field to themselves. The S.D.F., it will be remembered, had collapsed at the end of 1895. Propaganda meetings, however, continued to be held by the remnants of the group and in September 1897 the political secretary of the S.D.F. was able to report that the branch had been reorganised.

Towards the end of September the S.D.F. held a Sunday evening meeting on "Liberalism, Toryism and Socialism" which lasted until 10 o'clock. According to Justice Nottingham at this time represented "a good field for propaganda with ample opportunities for a good working branch to become strong and powerful." ⁶⁰ Later in September the S.D.F. organised a meeting at Beeston where "nearly the whole of the workers are directly or indirectly affected by labour troubles through a local dispute in the lace trade and the lock out of the engineers at the Humber Cycle Co." ⁶¹

As part of the S.D.F. propaganda work Harry Quelch visited Nottingham early in October. Quelch appears to have had some difficulty persuading some of the town's workers of the arguments in favour of socialism. During one Sneinton Market meeting, for instance, he managed to get involved in a "somewhat lengthy and lively discussion with a working man who objected to keeping the children of the drunken loafer at the bottom, but seemed to have no objection to the drunken and other loafers at the top of the social ladder." By the end of the argument, however, the crowd were so much against the heckler that he was forced to take his leave. ⁶²

Despite the propaganda work of the S.D.F. it was the I.L.P. which in late October felt confident enough to announce that George Patchett, a foreman labourer at the local gasworks, would contest Wollaton Ward on behalf of the socialist cause. The engineers, who were locked out at this time were, of course, fully supported by the I.L.P. The socialists had arranged a number of meetings for members of the A.S.E. and a good deal of money was being passed across to the lock-out fund. With the lock-out as background it is probable that the I.L.P. might have been hopeful of a much better result. It was not to be, however, for when the poll was declared Patchett, the I.L.P. candidate, had done very badly, gaining only 229 votes against the 896 of the successful Liberal. To rub salt into the wound, the Lib-Lab element had been successful in two wards, Skerritt winning in St. Anne's and Hardstaffe winning at

Manvers Ward in the face of opposition from a Conservative and an Independent Liberal. ⁶³ Later, at the Liberal Club, these two members of the Trades Council heard Roberts, the Liberal Councillor who had beaten Patchett, declare that the best Liberal policy was to ignore the I.L.P. and the chairman made Hardstaffe blush by declaring that he was "a thoroughly practical man who, like the other Lib-Lab. members, would work to cement the alliance between Liberalism and Labour." ⁶⁴ The defeat of Patchett was perhaps to be expected since Roberts seems to have been a particularly intelligent Liberal. In June the Trades Council had received a letter from the A.S.E. which commended Roberts for his "fearless and courageous stand amid the running fire of interruptions and jeers, whilst stating the case of the engineers before a hostile Town Council." ⁶⁵

The Lib-Lab. alliance of which Roberts was a part was, however, coming under increasing strain. In January the Labour Leader published details of the politics of the Nottingham employers involved in the lock-out which showed clearly that the majority were supporters of the Liberal Party. The I.L.P. during this period was on the offensive and 'Marxian' of the Labour Leader, gives a vivid impression of the town during the lock-out and some of the Nottingham I.L.P. personalities involved in it :

"As we pass through the hurrying, gaslit streets, I note upon the hoardings the heavy black print of a 'statement by the Federated Employers' ... Keeling, he of the vigorous and virile voice, smiles grimly and Bob Meats whose firey moustache flows all over his face, smiles too ... we were compelled to sample the ginger beer of the Plough ... and we had not been there two minutes before a man carrying a jingling collection box diverts my attention to the wakening demand: 'Subscriptions, gentlemen, for the engineers.' "

Later, Marxian writes of Jordie Christie, the Labour Leader cartoonist. According to this description Christie was "a splendid, whole-hearted pagan personality, a square shouldered savage ... as non moral as Bernard Shaw, as full fledged as Herbert Bland and as obstinate as Keir ...

the ferocity of Jordie's pencil is equalled only by the breadth of his boot soles and the astounding opinion he holds concerning hyenas."⁶⁶ During the lock-out the Trades Council were naturally doing their best to raise money for the engineers and one might have expected this to help in their collective politicisation. Certainly the I.L.P. did its best to ensure that the right political lessons were drawn. The Labour Leader, for instance, when urging the Nottingham I.L.P. to fight the South Nottingham constituency, claimed that Lord Henry Bentinck, the Conservative Member for the constituency, had "nothing to recommend him except his extraordinary resemblance to a young crust once of the Pall Mall Gazette."⁶⁷ Subsequently, the Labour Leader told its readers that "Billson, Walton and Furness and Co. have made the name of Liberalism stink ... the trade union 'leaders' who insist on sneaking up the coat tails of the trio are being measured for their political coffins." However, this comment was far from the truth in any but the long term. In April 1898, for instance, the executive of the N.M.A. balloted on a list of possible speakers for their Annual Demonstration, placing Sir Walter Foster, a Liberal M.P., at the top of the list with 204 votes, whilst Will Thorne, the Gas workers' leader and a member of the S.D.F., was second from bottom with only 14 votes.⁶⁸ In May the N.M.A. underlined its Lib-Lab. sympathies by expressing its deep sympathy with the family of the late Right Hon. W.E. Gladstone in their bereavement and placing on record its high appreciation of the "noble character and distinguished abilities of the deceased statesman." The Trades Council echoed these sentiments, passing a vote of condolence which was adopted in silence, the delegates rising in their seats.⁶⁹

As the time of the local elections drew near the Trades Council sent the name of Appleton, general secretary of the Laceworkers, to the Trent Ward Liberal Association and he was subsequently nominated as the Lib-Lab. candidate. Obviously the intelligent section of the local Liberal establishment was as intent as ever on winning over

the Trade Union leadership and at an election meeting in Trent Ward in October this was made clear when Councillor Radford on the platform with Appleton said that he was glad to "welcome a fair proportion of labour representatives on the Council." ⁷⁰ The argument here, of course, centred on the definition of a "Labour Representative". The I.L.P. in the town were determined that the 'Johnny Facing Both Ways' of the Appleton type must not, in their terms, be allowed to "dupe" the ordinary rank and file. In 1898, however, Appleton, Hardstaffe and Hancock were well in the saddle and the I.L.P.'s chances of unseating them were pretty far from reality.

By the middle of 1898 the Nottingham branch of the I.L.P. seems to have been in the doldrums. In July a ballot was organised on the question of fusing the various branches into one which, it was hoped, would be more vigorous. In the same period strenuous efforts were made to launch a guarantee fund with which to run a School Board candidate. Despite these developments, however, the local membership seems to have remained stagnant. Against this background Tom Smedley, the young editor of the Nottingham Labour Echo, decided to take his own life. Writing about this tragic suicide in the Labour Leader, Keir Hardie recorded :

"It is only a few weeks since I was with Tom Smedley. He was then full of life and energy, his whole life being wrapped up in the movement. The good meetings we had elated him considerably. But good meetings and good results in Nottingham have been the exception for some time past, and not the rule, and so our comrade seems to have lost hope. If Socialism was not going to sweep everything before it, life had nothing to make it attractive. Thus it comes that his body was found in the canal. " 71

The letter which Smedley left was read out at the Inquest. It is a moving document and provides a useful insight into the thinking of many sensitive young converts to the socialist cause :

"I am sick of this world of everlasting misery and monotony, hellish competition, and ceaseless strife ... may the Labour Church flourish and the socialist movement grow that young men may no longer be forced to commit suicide in order to escape from social tyranny. LONG LIVE SOCIALISM. I am loth to leave you. I did so love the cause. From a sacrifice at commercialism's altar - Tom Smedley." 72

The distressing loss of Smedley must have further demoralised the I.L.P. activists and for a little while things seemed to go from bad to worse. In September, for example, it was reported that at I.L.P. meetings in the town the "attendance for some time back has been far from encouraging." All members were asked to "buckle to, in order to put some life back into the branch," ⁷³ but the signs are that as the local elections approached the I.L.P. was in some disarray. This state of affairs seems to have led to a decision not to run an I.L.P. candidate, indeed Patchett, the standard bearer of the previous year, seems to have been reduced to simply working against Appleton. As a result of this, at a Trades Council meeting in November it was alleged that Patchett had opposed Appleton in Trent Ward. Subsequently the Trades Council executive interviewed Patchett, who agreed that he had "made hostile statements against the Trades Council candidate." As a consequence the executive agreed to "name" him at the next full Council meeting, but when this was tried at a meeting in December an amendment moving Next Business was successfully carried. ⁷⁴

The minor victory which the passing of this blocking amendment represented was small consolation, however, for the overall lack of real progress which characterised this period. Even the "election" of Jordie Christie to the School Board in November 1898 was no real victory since he had been given a walk over. The deal which lay behind this development must have taken some negotiating since it gave the Liberals eight seats, the Church five, the Socialists and the Roman Catholics one seat each. Twenty-one candidates were nominated but "after some

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queer work the six outsiders were got to withdraw." ⁷⁵ However, the fact that this deal had been done at all does suggest the first faint signs of a thaw in the grip which the Liberal establishment and its Lib-Lab. collaborators had on the politics of the working class movement. These slight signs of political change are perhaps one indication that the propaganda of the itinerant socialist lecturers was beginning to have some effect. The arguments of the socialists were certainly being put with a good deal of vigour in this period. Writing from Nottingham, for example, Katherine Glasier told her husband Bruce in 1899: "They tell me my lectures went over with real power ... I know I was weary when they were well over." ⁷⁶ Mrs. Glasier in particular was popular in Nottingham for the skill and power with which she stripped the hypocrisy from a society which to a large extent shut out large numbers of ordinary people. In the late 1890's she was at the height of her abilities and it seems likely that, together with other propagandists, she sensed that the rigid class divisions of late Victorian society were in reality built on very shaky foundations which, given enough time and energy, would collapse.

Signs that these foundations were beginning to crumble have to be looked hard for in the Nottingham at the turn of the century. It must be remembered, of course, that this was the period in which the imperialist hysteria which had been whipped up around the issues of the Boer War played its part in strengthening Conservative and anti-political attitudes. Cyril Roberts' autobiography paints a graphic picture of proletarian attitudes. At a concert which he attended in the working class Meadows area :

"the curtain rose revealing a portly woman, dressed as Britannia, with a shield and spear. She was appearing for a war charity fund and sang some verses written by Rudyard Kipling that had taken the country by storm with its jingo tune:

'Cook's son, Duke's son, son of a belted Earl
 Son of a Lambeth publican, it's all the same today.
 Each of 'em doing his country's work
 (And who's to look after the girl?)
 Pass the hat for your county's sake
 And pay, pay, pay!'

At the close she put on a protective gilt mask and covered herself with a shield and as she sang the final 'pay, pay, pay', a rain of coins fell on the stage from all over the house." 77

Despite the attractions of jingoism, however, there is evidence that working class attitudes were not as easily influenced or manipulated by unprincipled demagogues as has been previously thought.⁷⁸ Certainly this seems to have been the case in Nottingham where despite the atmosphere of hysteria whipped up around Boer War issues there are signs of a gradual shift in attitude amongst leading trade unionists. Some of this came to the surface at a Trades Council meeting in January, 1899. On this occasion Ernest Gutteridge, a leading I.L.P. member, was invited to attend and give his views on the subject of Labour Representation. During the course of a lengthy statement Gutteridge made the following points :

1. That the Town Council had adopted a standard rate of wages resolution, but had failed to carry it out.
2. That the City Corporation was increasing in power and numbers as an employer of labour.
3. That the Municipalisation of industry was growing.⁷⁹

All these factors, Gutteridge argued, pointed to the necessity of increasing labour representation. Against all the odds, Gutteridge's exposition seems to have carried the day and the Trades Council agreed to carry out a survey of the trade union branches in order to try to establish rank and file opinion.

In June a further I.L.P. deputation of Christie and Meats asked the Trades Council to join them in a programme of joint action. Despite an

attempt to get this suggestion deferred a sub-committee of five was set up to confer with the I.L.P. A month later it was reported that the sub-committee and the I.L.P. had agreed to recommend that a joint committee be set up to select wards and candidates, as well as to draw up a programme to be submitted to "the various organisations for approval."⁸⁰ The progress which this represented, of course, does not mean that the Lib-Labs and the socialists had suddenly decided to bury the hatchet. In August, for example, Appleton was complaining of the insinuations which were continuously being advanced by a socialist delegate to the Trades Council in regard to the Trent Ward election. The October meeting of the Trades Council agreed to support a Lib-Lab. candidate for Bridge Ward "on purely personal lines" and Robinson, the Trades Council secretary, seems to have had no difficulty in persuading the Council to back him on the Lib-Lab ticket for St. Albans Ward.

The mixed feelings represented by all the argument and tension between the militant socialists and the Lib-Lab. element present a confused picture which is difficult to interpret. The Trades Council 1899 "Labour Representation Fund" which was used to help finance Appleton and other Lib-Lab candidates raised £44. 17. Od. from 38 different trade union branches and this might be taken to support the view that trade union politics were fully committed to Lib-Lab. candidates, with no hope of socialist activists ever winning trade union support. At the end of the year, however, the Trades Council announced the result of its questionnaire on independent labour representation. Nine trade union branches had expressed themselves in favour, four against, with two returning a neutral answer.⁸¹ On the face of it this result was far from encouraging for the I.L.P. To gauge its real significance it has to be compared with the total block on the question of independent labour representation which the Trades Council had maintained for so many years.

To evaluate properly the contribution of the I.L.P. in this its vintage period, it is necessary to ignore its electoral failures. The complications

of the franchise when all is said and done heavily loaded the political dice against the Independent Labour Party. The generous principles of the 1884 Franchise Act for instance were undermined by the failure to overhaul the antiquated registration machinery. The reduction of the working class vote by the registration process, and the inflation of middle and upper class support by plural voting, combined with semi-corrupt practices like "treating" placed major obstacles in the way of left wing political progress.⁸² In these circumstances it is probably fairer to the early socialists to judge their efforts not by their failure to win elections but rather by their rapid growth at grass roots level.

To the established political parties the I.L.P. looked a mere group of eccentrics on the fringe of political life, whilst to some on the left, the I.L.P. members were "whitewashers of the Red Flag".⁸³ In reality, however, the early members of the I.L.P. deserve better than this. They possessed a faith in the rightness and ultimate victory of their cause which acted as a powerful driving force in a period when the S.D.F. was for the most part content to "tell the workers with reiterated emphasis that they had been and were being robbed systematically." before inviting them to "reach a practical decision to wage class war upon the robbers." When the audience failed to reach this conclusion, as T.A. Jackson has pointed out, the S.D.F. members were apt to conclude that the working class "wasn't worth saving."⁸⁴ None of this could be said of the I.L.P. who made up in energy and enthusiasm for their lack of members and doctrinal purity. Robert Blatchford, the founder of the Clarion, supported this contention when he claimed: "The Socialists had one great advantage over the old parties. Their propaganda was continuous. The Tories and Liberals only took their coats off a short time before the election. The Socialists never ceased working."⁸⁵ Percy Redfern, the young Nottingham shop worker, reinforces the view that the I.L.P.'s other major contribution was its evangelical fervour when, telling how, having rejected the "kernal of bitter half-truth" offered by

the narrow and doctrinaire, he and others like him had been touched "by something vaguely, unattainably fine" when they listened to Margaret McMillan, an I.L.P. speaker. She brought to the Market Place a "vision of health, joy and beauty in working lives, to be demanded and created by people themselves."⁸⁶ The young men and women who joined the I.L.P. in these years were in a very real sense a political elite. They rejected the didactic symbolism of the early dogmatists and replaced it with human emotion and personality. Without their commitment and enthusiasm the socialist movement would have remained in the doldrums for very much longer than was the case.

THE LABOUR CHURCH

During the 1890's many of the early Socialists were searching for a meeting place between the religious inheritance which they had absorbed in childhood and the scientific attitudes learned in adolescence from organisations like the S.D.F. and Socialist League. For many in Nottingham this meeting place was provided by the Labour Church which was established in 1895 and which continued to provide a curious amalgam of church, club and socialist university until the First World War. The step from the country to the town, as E.J. Hobsbawn has pointed out, had in general led to a sharp reduction in the influence of traditional religion amongst many workers and against this background it would be difficult to describe the Labour Church as Christian or religious in any except that of its broad ethical appeal.¹ Nevertheless the Church retained sufficient ceremonial form for the nonconformist to feel at home and the fervent worship of the Labour Church congregation had a potent appeal to those working class groups where social disorganisation was most marked. In many ways the real text of the Labour Church was William Morris's "Fellowship is Life" and the central objective of its supporters was to achieve salvation via solidarity and brotherhood.

The roots of the support on which the Church drew were deep in the prevailing nonconformist atmosphere, although many members of the congregation were also drawn to the Labour Church by the authentic moral revolt which was underway in the 1890's. In working class towns like Nottingham, however, the main appeal of Labour Church teaching lay in the fact that it could be easily assimilated by those for whom much early socialist propaganda was too heavy and abstract. For many of the workers in the Northern and Midland towns where the Labour Church was strongest life was "miserable, poor, nasty, brutish, short

and insecure." ² Against the background of such circumstances, socialism in Nottingham was winning for itself a wide popular audience in the coffee houses, radical clubs and open air 'spouting places' where the insistence by the early propagandists on the need for moral regeneration struck an emotional chord on which the Labour Church was able to rely for its sustenance.

The process of spiritual conversion which affected so many young men and women in these years is recalled at a high pitch of emotional intensity by H.H. Snell, a Nottingham member of the S.D.F., who recalled in his autobiography :

"The adhesion to Socialism of Mrs. Besant had helped to sway my mind and in due course I made my confession of faith one Sunday evening from the platform of the S.D.F. at a meeting in the great Market Place ... once the decision had been taken I experienced a sense of relief which has remained constant throughout my life." ³

A Nottingham shopworker, who was also a member of the S.D.F., underlines the intensity of aspiration of this early socialism, remembering the period as:

"Glad, creative days ... even those of us who lived through them did not realize how happy and privileged we were... Arid-minded high-brows thought that it was trivial, the politically orthodox disliked it, Socialist doctrinaires declared that its economic basis was not sound, but the man in the street accepted its teaching to which he gave the intense fervour of a happy convert." ⁴

For young converts like this the Labour Church must indeed have seemed the answer to a prayer, offering as it did an opportunity to be born again into a new life of hope and brotherhood.

By April 1896 a congregation was meeting in the Albert Academy adjacent to the Grand Theatre in Hyson Green. Here the seating accommodation of a large auditorium was often insufficient and several auxiliary rooms provided space for committee meetings and the literature stalls where the pamphlets which meant so much to early British



William Robinson was the President of the Nottingham Labour Church. Later he became secretary of the Cosmopolitan Debating Society. A keen outdoor propagandist and debater, he was also fully involved with the various groups which were set up by supporters of the Clarion newspaper.

socialists were offered for sale. By May 1896 the Labour Church in Nottingham had established their own monthly paper The Labour Echo. In August this paper made its position clear in an article appealing to trade unionists to support Labour candidates. "Socialism" it wrote:

"appeals to the worker logically and as none are so blind as those who will not see, it follows, then, that to support either Liberal or Tory when a Socialist is in the field is to purposely shut one's eyes and remain oblivious to the fact that we are not helping to unforge the fetters by which we are bound..." 5

By December the Nottingham congregation was firmly established. In September Ben Tillett was the visiting speaker and in November at a meeting in the Mechanics' Hall Enid Stacy was the preacher at morning service, the subject of which was "Women in the Industrial World." This meeting was attended by an audience of 400 but the evening service attracted a huge crowd of 1,700 - 1,800 to hear Miss Stacy speak on "Religion and Socialism." 6 Later in the month another woman speaker, Miss Isobel Tiplady of Blackburn, a Clarion vanner attracted a large audience to a morning service in which she took as her subject "Agitation and what is to be done." 7 These meetings and the large audiences which they attracted illustrate that by the middle of the 1890's things were beginning to move in the town.

Many of the Labour Church adherents were active socialists in one or other of the town's socialist organisations. Their work in the electoral campaigns of the time was enthusiastic and there is no doubt that they were a key element among the small group of militants actively fighting for the return of Independent Labour candidates. Initially, at least, the furrow which they had to plough was hard and stony and this was recognised in a realistic paragraph carried by the Labour Echo late in 1896. This comment which used an analogy based on the growth of the oak tree made the point :

"The municipal elections have taken place but the result has proved that Socialism is not brought to the minds of the people in a day; nor is rapid growth so much desired as through permeation though it is to be hoped that our comparison with the oak will be respecting his strength and not in the comparative slowness of growth." 8

"When all is said and done" added the Labour Echo "the Nottingham Corporation is principally a Liberal clique, the gods help the poor aggressive socialist who enters the Nottingham municipal chamber."

During the summer of 1896 a wider hearing for the Labour Church message was found through open air services held on the Forest, a disused race-course belonging to the Corporation. Increased interest and membership was the result and this led to big plans being made for the opening of the autumn indoor programme. Acting on the advice of the well-known Clarion propagandist Carrie Martyn, the congregation renovated and redecorated the large Mechanics Hall, thus providing seating for 2,000 people. Financial considerations seem to have been no object and even the large pipe organ was repaired. The large auditorium, which a few had considered much too ambitious, was often filled to capacity. Even standing room was at a premium for the first anniversary service when Stewart Headlam was the guest speaker. The report of this service which appeared in The Labour Prophet provides an interesting and illuminating glimpse of the views of many church members :

"He told us he was not sure... that our principles were not definite on the point ... whether we worshipped Christ or not. We had to tell him we did not worship Christ, any more than we worshipped Nanquam; that we accepted all good reformers as helpers in the cause of humanity and that we, as an institution, did not interfere with the liberty of the individual so long as such liberty did not interfere with the liberty of others." 9

The winter programme seems to have been very successful and in April 1897 it was rounded off by J.C. Kenworthy, the Pastor of the Brotherhood Church, speaking on "Socialism, Communism and Anarchy." 10

The political work of the Labour Church was given added colour by the joy and zest of many of their meetings. In May 1897, for instance, the Penrhyn Choir gave a performance at an evening service. In June, some of the congregation travelled to Thrumpton, on the banks of the Trent, for a ham and egg picnic. In July that year a brake party of Labour Church members journeyed to the village of Woodborough, to join a Clarion supporters' summer camp and throughout the summer months their outdoor propaganda meetings were lively and spirited. Much of this propaganda work was concerned, of course, with the questions of the day. In August 1897, for instance, James Sexton spoke on the engineers' lock-out and this theme was taken up by Tom Mann and the Reverend Tom Collins at the second anniversary meeting in October. On this occasion the meeting of the Church of England Congress in the town gave the Nottingham Labour Church a wonderful opportunity for advertising itself and its second anniversary took the form of a great demonstration in the Grand Theatre. A special correspondent of the London Daily News reported the afternoon meeting :

"The 'High Priest' Tom Mann was down for the occasion and he is preaching or lecturing tonight on the agitators of the old and new testaments. It was a clergyman of the Church of England, however, who was holding forth when I pressed into the Grand Theatre ... he calls himself the 'Dossers Parson' and his denunciation of the Established Church as the foe of the working man was only equalled by the fervour of his advocacy of the socialism propagated by the I.L.P. ... the meeting concluded with the singing of a Labour hymn and 'The Grace of Our Lord' pronounced by the Rev. Mr. Collins." 11

Later in the month the Labour Church was instrumental in organising a mass meeting on the Forest for the locked-out engineers and this involvement underlines the vital role which the church was beginning to play in providing a forum for trade unionists and socialists during disputes of this kind.

As the winter programme got under way the importance of the Sunday lecture was reasserted. Philip Snowden was the speaker at a December meeting and one is reminded that the early fame of Labour's first Chancellor of the Exchequer rested on the "Come to Jesus" style of his I.L.P. and Labour Church propaganda meetings. In January 1898 the Rev. T. Collins gave the New Year Sunday address on "Religion and Discontent, a Poverty-Stricken Parson's View."¹² A week later G.A.H. Samuel ('Marxian' of the Labour Leader) was the speaker at a splendid evening meeting at the Mechanics Hall and in February Arthur Richardson, who was destined to become the Lib-Lab. M.P. for South Nottingham, spoke to the Labour Church congregation on "The Working Man's attitude to the Churches."¹³ To understand properly the impact of meetings of this kind it is necessary to visualise a winter Sunday evening in the working class district of Hyson Green. Here in the dingy gas-lit streets which surrounded the Albert Academy, headquarters of the Labour Church, was packed the mass of terraced or back to back houses for which Nottingham was notorious. Life for the workers, most of whom in this district were miners, was hard and precarious. Men were often old and bent at fifty. Many babies died in infancy and living conditions were hard and sometimes squalid. In the hall of the Albert Academy an audience of several hundred people, mostly men in stiff Sunday suits, would gather for the public service organised by the Labour Church. After the enthusiastic singing of Labour Church hymns which in Nottingham were accompanied by a volunteer orchestra, a speaker like Snowden or one of the Glasiers would launch into an oration which would sweep the audience into another, wonderful world. Word pictures were created in which the audience were invited to enter a kind of paradise where poverty, hatred, bitterness and strife had all been banished. Meetings such as these united religion and politics to preach a new crusade based on fraternity, equality and liberty which often made lasting converts who "stuck" much better than those made by more sectarian organisations.

Although the Sunday lecture was at the heart of the Labour

Church activity, they were equally important as centres of social activity. G.D.H. Cole has noted the importance of fellowship for those involved in the espousal of new ideas. The leaders of the "new unionism" and the movement for independent political representation were mostly young and did not need to be detached from a Liberalism to which they had never owed allegiance. Many of them were in need of a sense of fellowship, however, and of adventure as they tried to develop a new way of living that was much more than a simple working together for merely economic aims.¹⁴ Not surprisingly, it was to the Labour Church, with its close fellowship devoid of differentiation of clique or doctrine, that many turned for the warmth and comradeship which they craved. In Nottingham the dancing classes at the Albert Academy, advertised by the Labour Church as a means of "keeping young", together with a programme of socials, teas, concerts, all helped to provide an enjoyable way of engaging in common activity or "good wholesome fun." Often these entertainments would involve the whole family, but young men and women in their twenties seem to have dominated in a range of social activity which had the added benefit of helping to underpin the financial position of the Church. During 1897, for instance, the members of the Church co-operated in a "Merrie England Show" which was a success financially as well as socially. A bazaar in the same year raised over £25 whilst teas, sales of work and socials added more to the treasury each month.

William Robinson, the first President of the Nottingham Labour Church, was one of the young men in the thick of all this activity. Summing up the appeal of the Labour Church in 1896 he wrote :

"The beauty of our movement is, we get such different speakers and such a variety of topics, this all tending to educate and refine the hearers. We have plenty of enthusiasm and are in touch and close sympathy with all socialist propaganda throughout the country. Every practical worker in our movement feels imbued with a religious sentiment which strengthens the will and determination in the fight for social emancipation. We realise the beauty

and grandeur of the object we have in view. We possess the transparent honesty of being what we really are, and we take no steps to disguise our principles to the world, for we are unanimously one in our conviction and desire to further those natural and humanitarian principles which, when consummated, make the whole world kin. We feel that our religion must first of all be a social religion; that the true foundation of any abstract creed must necessarily consist in healthy bodies, healthy surroundings, and healthy minds ... " 15

According to Robinson the Nottingham Labour Church was attractive because it did "what no religious movement in the town has ever done;" it allowed criticism and discussion based on the remarks of the 'preacher'. Because of this opportunity to expose mere rhetoric, the lecturers were most appreciated who could "educate and refine their hearers and not simply exhort them."

The events of the 1897-1898 winter season indicated that the youthful enthusiasts over reached themselves. In the large Mechanics Hall many of the curious stopped coming and compared with the previous year, even good attendances seemed small. Then also compared with the size of the Sunday congregation the active nucleus was relatively small. Thus the lease of the large auditorium was given up and the church concentrated on consolidating its Albert Academy undertaking. In February, Roger Buxton spoke on "Is the Liberal Party Played Out?". In March the church supporters combined with the I.L.P. for a meeting at which Keir Hardie was the speaker and in April many joined in a ramble to Trent Lock. After the usual summer meetings on the Forest the Labour Church underlined its integral role in the Labour movement by deliberately organising a meeting in the Market Square in defiance of a police ban. Undoubtedly this ban was an attempt to prevent socialist propaganda but the Labour Church not only defied the proscription but also took a collection on behalf of the South Wales Miners, then on strike. Ernest Gutteridge, a key figure in the development of Socialism in Nottingham, seems to have spoken at the Labour Church for the first time in December

1898 and his appearance at the lectern as a local speaker is, perhaps, an indication of a growing dissatisfaction with itinerant speakers which appears to have begun to develop at about this time.

At the 1899 National Conference of the Labour Church, Gutteridge underlined this dissatisfaction in a speech during which he explained :

At Nottingham they had heard a number of very clever speakers, who gave very excellent addresses on all sorts of subjects. But they never ended their addresses with pointing out to their hearers the nature of the work they had to do, and gave no stirring appeal to the audience to join the Church and help forward its work ... they were a good deal puzzled with the multiplicity of their speakers. On one Sunday they would have an orthodox speaker and perhaps on the next an aggressive Secularist. People went away wondering what the Labour Church stood for." 16

This dissatisfaction seems to have been based on the criticism that the itinerants provided a "bill of fare" more varied than nutritious, with the result that some Socialists were beginning to say that the Labour Church was too orthodoxly Christian, whilst churchmen were beginning to argue that the church showed signs of becoming too materialistic. As if to illustrate this growing ambiguity John Trevor, the founder of the Labour Church movement, when visiting Nottingham in May 1898, delivered two sermons; the first given at the morning service dealt with "The Power of Faith" whilst his evening address centred on "The Power of Labour".¹⁷ Additional to their growing uncertainty in the field of philosophy, the congregation was at about this time finding it increasingly difficult to maintain merely a "concern for the welfare of humanity" as the basis for their existence, with the consequence that they were forced more and more to rely on their organisations and activities for a *raison d'être*.

Among the organisations which did much to hold the congregation together was the choir which, by the end of the 1890's, was a self-supporting group providing excellent music for the weekly services

and for occasional concerts and entertainments. The Sunday afternoon tea and the monthly socials were two other projects, which, together with the summer outings and children's parties, helped to provide the fellowship and financial support which held the congregation together. At the end of 1899 the work of the church was progressing well although thrift and careful spending were still necessary to maintain the church finances in a healthy state. Discussing the financing of visiting speakers, for instance, Ernest Gutteridge made the point that when inviting Enid Stacy they had her "for a Sunday and also booked her for five succeeding evenings in the neighbourhood. The result was that her visit had cost them only nine shillings instead of £2." ¹⁸ Further funds were raised in December 1899 at a special concert at which an "enchanted assortment of glees, part songs and solos was heard." At this stage in its history the Labour Church in Nottingham had plenty to celebrate since the closing of the Guarantee Fund indicated that the congregation's debt had been eliminated. At about this time the church began to show an increasing interest in the work of the ethical societies and there seems to have been some discussion as to whether the Labour Church should belong. All the signs are that the Nottingham congregation was in a healthy state and as the century turned they were busy setting up a new fund with which to underwrite the hiring of a better hall.

Within a few weeks the congregation was meeting in the Mechanics' Lecture Hall in the centre of the city and this continued to be their home for a number of years. The new century opened somewhat esoterically with Mrs. Despard taking two services at which she spoke on "The New Order in the Light of the Mystics Creed" and "The Mystery of Pain in Relation to the Higher Life." A month later the church took steps to open a Sunday School for children and by June they were back in the thick of the propaganda battle, organising jointly with the I.L.P. a series of outdoor meetings. With the turn of the century the church began to place increasing emphasis on practical matters, setting up

special study groups and committees to examine such matters as Municipal Housing, Temperance Reform and the like. The finances of the church in this period seem to have been sound and a whole variety of activity is reported in the columns of both The Labour Leader and The Clarion. The church services were now being attended by an average of 250 and the summer propaganda work must have done much to liven up the popular Sunday evening meetings in the Market Square. In August 1901, for instance, the Labour Leader reported laconically "The Labour Church members have spent a few Sundays with the Jingoos and the discussions have created some interest." 19

In this period the Labour Church national press listed Briggs, Mitchell, Pierce, Thornton and the Lib-Lab. Arthur Richardson as being members of the Nottingham congregation willing to act as visiting lecturers and it seems likely that the movement in Nottingham was in a healthy state. During the course of 1902 the programme of indoor meetings and outdoor propaganda seems to have continued unabated but at the end of the year a warning note was sounded by Councillor Robert Morley of Halifax, who spoke at one of the December meetings. Morley reported "a tremendous wave of apathy and indifference on the part of the Socialist fellowship" before going on to argue that "unless some strenuous united effort was made to consolidate the sections, curtail expense and revive interest in the propaganda work, the movement in Nottingham will degenerate into a luxurious lounge for well-disposed theorists." 20 How true this was as a criticism of the Labour Church it is difficult to say. Certainly the series of meetings during 1903 seems to have been well attended and it was reported that the remaining debt was now almost wiped out.

As the year turned it was reported that the Labour Church had arranged a number of soirees to keep the members together. The second of these, held in February 1904, was attended by over 100 people. By this time the Ethical Sunday School had been taken under the auspices of the Labour Church where, it was reported, "good, if not ambitious

work among the children" was being done.²¹ Reporting on the winter programme of 1903-1904 the Clarion told its readers that two meetings had stood out. "In October, John Robinson (London) lectured to a good audience on "Chamberlain's concept of Empire" whilst in November the "visit of Hyndman was made the occasion for a big socialist demonstration."²² During this period T.A. Pierce, one of the stalwarts of the Nottingham Labour Church, was playing an important role in the church's national organisation, serving either as treasurer or national president and there is little doubt that he, together with one or two other enthusiasts, was the prime mover in setting up the study group which, during the course of January and February 1904, met regularly to study Robert Blatchford's book Britain for the British'.

During the course of 1904 the Labour Church seems to have staged something of a revival. This followed a three-month open air campaign in which the Labour Church, joined by the I.L.P., achieved very successful results "both in audiences and educative work." According to the correspondent of the Clarion "the last four months have been full of work. The audiences have kept up and many members have joined."²³ In the summer of 1905 it was reported that the work of the Labour Church was going "steadily, if slowly on" with audiences keeping up and new members still being enrolled. The Socialist Sunday School also seems to have been doing well and the Clarion's Nottingham correspondent told "Those who believe that the hope of our salvation rests in the children" that membership had "practically doubled in membership and attendance this year."²⁴ Much of the credit for these advances must go to the home grown propagandists. During 1905 it was reported that there had been few "speakers from a distance" and the church placed on record its indebtedness to its local friends "those lesser lights who, because they are 'merely local' do not shine with such brilliance, but whose services are invaluable."²⁵ During the course of 1905 the Labour Church's vigour was also demonstrated by its involvement in a bitter and sustained

protest at the misuse of money collected in the town for the use of school children. This cash had been allocated for use in providing a cricket field for the local High School but the Labour Church and I.L.P. argued successfully that it should be used for more essential services.

Throughout 1906 the Labour Church in Nottingham seems to have continued to make progress. In April the topic of "Women's Rights" created a good deal of lively discussion and there was a good audience for the visit of Charles Bradlaugh's daughter who, in the tradition of her father, spoke on "Morality without Religion." The meeting taken by Mr. G.F. Berry on "Socialism and Education" was specially advertised as being open to all, "I.L.P.ers, S.D.F.ers and other respectable persons". Berry, who seems to have become active at about this time, was to become an important figure on the Nottingham Left in the years to come and it seems that he began to serve his political apprenticeship in the period around the 1906 General Election. Certainly Berry was active in the Labour Church and I.L.P. summer campaign of that year. During June this campaign seems to have been at its peak, with Berry speaking at a meeting on the Forest on "The Housing of the People" at the same time that Pierce, the chairman of the I.L.P. in Nottingham and the national president of the Labour Church was speaking at Vernon Park on "The Nation Under Socialism."

The 1906 summer campaign underlined the degree of co-operation which had now been developed between the Labour Church and the I.L.P. In June a series of splendid meetings was held in the Market Place. These included "Socialism and the Worker" and Alderman George Banton from Leicester on "The Ideals of Socialism." ²⁶ These meetings sold out of the Labour Leader and large amounts of socialist literature was disposed of and several new recruits enrolled. In July the Labour Church and I.L.P. held two very successful meetings on the Forest. Large audiences heard Mr. Roberts M.P. speak on "Labour's Aims and Ideals" before enthusiastically adopting a resolution which expressed the view

that "The hopes of the workers will be best achieved by independent action."²⁷ Late in July the Labour Church and the I.L.P. were busy organising four separate propaganda meetings in different parts of the city every Sunday and as a result of this activity "new members were joining up and literature sales increasing."²⁸ During September at a special reception in the Central Hall, Shakespeare Street, Bruce Glasier was present at a packed meeting at which he presented Labour Church supporters Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kennedy with a purse of gold prior to their departure for New Zealand. According to Glasier, Kennedy was "one of the hard workers of the movement who always stuck to his guns." Later, Glasier spoke on "Socialism and the faith of our Fathers" at a Labour Church service at which "new members, collections, sales of literature surpassed our most sanguine expectations."²⁹ A month later Harry Snell who had been active in the Nottingham S.D.F. returned to the town to speak at a Labour Church meeting on the Ethical Movement. This service took place in the King's Theatre which held 2,000 and was so successful that it was agreed to make an effort to hold all future evening meetings at this venue. Another indication of growing confidence is the sudden appearance in the Labour movement press of advertisements for meetings organised by the Bulwell Labour Church and it seems likely that the main Nottingham congregation had successfully set up a new group.³⁰ This development, together with the packed audience which heard Rosetti, a Russian emigre, speak on "The Struggle for Freedom in Russia" at the December meeting indicate that support for the Labour Church was expanding.

All of this activity was undoubtedly beginning to have some effect and the Clarion and Labour Leader reports of Labour Church meetings in 1907 contained a noticeable air of optimism. In February, for instance, the I.L.P. and Labour Church combined forces to put on a musical evening given by the Sunday School children, the choir and the orchestra which was distinguished by "good singing, good music, a

crowded audience and a record collection." 31 In April the church, together with the I.L.P. and the National Shop Assistants' Union, organised a demonstration aimed at condemning the living-in system. In May the congregation repeated its now annual co-operation with the I.L.P.'s summer propaganda campaign and this was inaugurated with a series of five meetings at Bulwell, Vernon Park and the Forest. Once again new members, literature sales and good collections seem to have been the order of the day. Labour Church and I.L.P. co-operation appears to have been at its peak during 1907 when the two organisations jointly applied for the use of school rooms in the town. In the event this application was rejected by the Education Committee by 18 votes to 2 because of the hymns which would be sung.

Despite this setback the Nottingham Labour movement entered 1908 on the crest of a wave. There was in the air something of the atmosphere of a religious revival. The Labour Church, the I.L.P. Clarion supporters, all seem to have united with the remaining members of the S.D.F. to mount a tremendous campaign which finally resulted in the election of Ernest Gutteridge as the first I.L.P. Councillor in the town. Although richly deserved, this victory seems to have puzzled the Labour Leader. Throughout the rest of the country the I.L.P. had suffered something of a setback. The question posed was: why could Nottingham succeed when other towns were slipping back? The answers, when they finally came from the Labour Leader readership, suggested that the key to the conundrum lay in the lack of unity now evident in other parts of the country. In Nottingham, it was argued, a high degree of co-operation and unity had been the major feature of the election campaign.

In helping to create this unity the Labour Church played a crucial role. The Nottingham congregation represented a vital part of the cultural development of an electorate sadly starved of such opportunities. It offered a home to those who were "homeless" because

of their beliefs. It welcomed both puritan and libertarian and in its early days, did much to blur and make indistinguishable the differences between them. It offered a common ground on which all of those who distrusted Victorian respectability could stand. The converts who joined its congregation had all made the break with Victorian mores, with the consequence that many amongst them were looked upon as "unrespectable." The Labour Church also did a great deal to draw women into the Labour movement. Enid Stacy and Katherine Glasier were amongst its most popular speakers and although many women were drawn inside by the dancing and dramatic clubs, the choirs and social activity, they stayed to play a full part in the political activity.

As many writers have pointed out, the movement for political self-expression which was a feature of the 1890's and early 1900's was to some extent partly a religious phenomenon. This is one of the main reasons for its immense irrational enthusiasm and an important explanation for its social origins. Many of those who became Socialists in this period experienced some kind of conversion and it is significant that a popular Labour Church topic was "How I became a Socialist."

Another writer had described the Labour Church as "a short-lived protest against the link which nonconformity had established with the middle class and in particular, against the alliance with the Liberals."³² This was certainly true but in Nottingham the Church enjoyed a vibrant life of its own for much longer than many other towns and this suggests that there was something more to it. Certainly, many of the Nottingham congregation had broken away from nonconformity and their attempt to adapt and utilize the customs of the 'parent' church makes it clear where the roots of the Labour Church lay. As the socialist creed gained ground, however, the alliance between the church and the I.L.P. makes it clear that the secular religion of socialism had now become more important. As the church began to teach ethics in an

alternative context to that of Christian revelation its place in the socialist movement became clear. In Nottingham it came to occupy a central place in the socialist firmament in the early years of the Twentieth Century. Its congregation provided most of the town's activists and there is little doubt that Eric Hobsbawn's claim that the chief function of the church was "to lubricate the passage of Northern workers from Liberal Radicalism to an Independent Labour Party" holds good for Nottingham also. ³³

In the process of the transfer of social energy from religious to political purposes in Nottingham, the Labour Church was an important half-way stage. For all of its life the church grew alongside the town's branch of the I.L.P. and to a large extent, both organisations were supported by the same group of people. For much of the time it was difficult to distinguish between the activities of the Labour Church congregation and the I.L.P. so that the mixture of politics and religion which they generated was almost impossible to disentangle. In the early years of the Labour Church, for instance, the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society which was run as an adjunct of the Labour Church, often prefaced its meetings with a prayer. Invariably the same fervent prayer was used, but on one occasion when Keir Hardie was the speaker, the chairman introduced just one extra word as added emphasis in his appeal, so that it ran:

"O Lord, may the words of the speaker
Sink deep into the hearts of his hearers,
And may they go away from here,
Realizing the truth of his words.
And may they, O Lord, be so impressed
As not to suffer to be further BAMBOOZLED." ³⁴

That Hardie saw no incongruity in addressing a meeting of Socialists which had begun with a prayer, helps to explain the particular nature of the British Labour movement and the place of the Labour Church within it. In the end, however, support for the Labour Church began to decline as other forms of social organisation like the Clarion Cycle

Club became more popular. Nevertheless, the congregation in Nottingham seems to have remained in being after 1910 with about 150 to 200 supporters until, like so many other aspects of pre-war life, it was finally swept away by the tumult and upheaval of the First World War. Its contribution as neutral meeting ground for non-denominational socialists, "their countenances gleaming with good humour above their loose, red ties"³⁵ was vital and its role in the personal development of Ernest Gutteridge, Nottingham's first Socialist Councillor, secured its place in the history of the Nottingham working class.

THE CLARION COMMONWEALTH

Robert Blatchford founded the Clarion newspaper in 1892. One writer has described its appeal as being that of a "genial, pleasantly vague socialism that brought hope and good cheer into dark places." It is difficult to fault this evaluation until it goes on to claim that although the newspaper played a great part in creating the I.L.P. and later the Labour Party, it was "inadequate to sustain it."¹ This claim simply does not stand up to examination. Indeed it could be argued that were it not for the socialists made by the Clarion and the supporting organisations which it established that the labour movement in towns like Nottingham would have been even more sickly and slow growing than was the case.

Certainly the appeal of the Clarion and the group around it was very timely. Professor John Saville has pointed out that during the 1890's the resistance of employers to the trade unions was hardening, and the industrial movement forward beginning to slacken.² Additionally, unemployment in the early 1890's was heavy and signs of revival did not appear until after 1894. Against this background even the old-fashioned labourist leaders of the Nottingham lace workers and miners could no longer oppose the arguments of the younger generation in favour of independent labour organisation with complete conviction. Technical changes in the lace, hosiery, engineering and mining industries all helped to tune the ear of Nottingham workers to the argument of the socialists that mechanisation helped to reduce the skilled to the ranks of the unskilled.

Against this background the central concept of Clarion socialism, that a great co-operative commonwealth would create an ideal society where the community would own, produce and distribute for the good of all was immensely attractive. The idealism which lay behind the philosophy advocated by Blatchford in the Clarion or his books Merrie England or Britain

for the British permeated the socialist movement in the years before the First World War. The boundaries of the concept were, however, hazy and the means of achieving its objective uncertain. Over the years the newspaper expanded into a score of organisations. The Clarion Cyclists, Clarion Glee Clubs, Clarion Cinderella Clubs, Clarion Scouts and the Clarion Fellowship all worked for socialism in their different ways. The supporters of these organisations, the "Clarionettes" were also working for jollity and good cheer. Like Blatchford, they did not hold with the gloom of Sunday Observance and teetotalism. The organisation which they created as Henry Pelling has pointed out, helped to systematize the existing jumble of local labour and socialist organisation and the contribution which they collectively made to the Nottingham labour movement over a twenty-year period was essential to its survival.³

Sometimes during the early years of the Clarion the old rhetoric of Chartism and Owenism appears for fleeting moments, often mixed with more recent socialist language. In May 1892 for instance, one Nottingham reader of the newspaper wrote to suggest that the labour movement should busy itself in the setting up of co-operative workshops :

"It is no use kicking against the capitalist, he is a necessary evil ... if we were in his shoes 99 out of 100 of us would do as he does. What we want is to alter the system ..." 4

Only a week or two before this letter was written a deputation from the local co-operative movement had visited the Trades Council to urge the necessity for closer co-operation between the trade unions and the co-operatives. Later after a lock-out of Nottingham tailors in July 1892 the Trades Council seems to have agreed to help establish a tailors' co-operative in the town, and in February 1893 the Bakers Union established a co-operative bakery.⁵ Four years later, a Nottingham clergyman was busy trying to establish a "Clarion Industrial Scheme"; like other Clarion supporters he assumed that society was evolving toward a higher state and that a new society organised more rationally and humanely would appear in time. With this belief firmly at the centre of their philosophy the Clarion

supporters saw their role as the removal of the barriers in the way.

Towards this end, they believed that the competitive system, ignorance and land monopoly must all be swept aside. How to achieve all of this was, of course, a matter for debate. All supporters of the Clarion would have agreed with Blatchford, however, that the primary object of all of the organisations connected with the newspaper was "to make socialists."⁶ From the outset the paper had been read with enthusiasm in the town. A separate "movement" did not begin to appear, however, until about the middle of the 1890's. During this period its supporters began to organise, (as Judith Fincher has pointed out in an extremely interesting thesis), in response to the increasing fragmentation of new unionism which, up until then, had functioned as a unifying political and moral force.⁷

The first signs of separate Clarion organisation seem to have appeared in Nottingham in April 1895 when growing enthusiasm for the ideas being advocated by the newspaper drew the comment from George Gee, a Nottingham socialist, "Good luck to the Clarion and its Board. I begin to think I only live to read the Clarion."⁸ By early May the Clarion Cycling Club had established a branch in the town and in June the Clarion Vocal Union held its preliminary meeting in the Trent Ward Labour Club. At the end of 1895 the first tea and entertainment organised by the Clarion Cinderella Club for the benefit of slum children took place at the Pump Street Mission Room. On this occasion about 150 children ate a substantial meal before being entertained by a number of artistes who had volunteered their services.⁹ During the course of 1896 these early developments seem to have been consolidated. From about the middle of June until after the August Bank Holiday, for example, the Clarion supporters were in camp at nearby Woodborough. During the course of the camp it was reported that the Cycling Club was now "going on swimmingly. We now have 80 members and muster up very well on Club runs ... we have now started up our camp at Woodborough ... we have got 3 tents and a large army cooking stove, capable of cooking for over 100."¹⁰ During the course of the summer camp the

Nottingham Clarionettes were visited by groups from other East Midland centres and 20 new members were recruited.

By early 1897 consideration was being given to the possibility of a Clarion propaganda van tour of Nottinghamshire. Julia Dawson, a Clarion columnist, wrote that the mining districts of South Yorkshire and Nottingham were "crying aloud for some light to be shed into their darkness."¹¹ Meanwhile, the Clarionettes of the town were doing their best to shed some light into the lives of the slum children of the poorer districts. In February 1897 they reported :

"We have given three Cinderellas this season. The most recent at Carlton Road Board School when about 200 children sat down to a substantial meat tea and were afterwards entertained with a magic lantern ... coming treats include Leen Side School, Bath Street School and Sneinton Board School."¹²

The Cycling Club too was extremely active both in the running of Cinderella treats and in propaganda work for the socialist cause. The Club had started in March 1895 with 16 members, finishing the year with 40. During 1896 this swelled to 80 and the 1897 season commenced with over 100, of whom 8 were women. In March the Club reported that it had done a good deal of propaganda work and meant to do a lot more. The Club had 2 literary secretaries and the profits from its sales went to the Cinderella Fund. During 1896 this fed 1,500 children and in March 1897 it had given "over 1,200 treats and still have not finished."¹³

By the end of 1897, after a summer camp which lasted for 5 weeks, the Clarion Cycling Club was coming together with the members of the I.L.P. and the Labour Church at a meeting in the Quaker Meeting House to discuss together the possibility of appointing a full-time organiser. Unfortunately shortage of funds meant that this project was stillborn.¹⁴ It was, however, agreed that the Clarion propaganda van should visit the area during the summer. The van duly arrived in Hucknall about the middle of July. At its first meeting the chair was taken by Bradley of the Nottingham Clarion Cycling Club. Bacon, one of the itinerant propagandists, then spoke until

the crowd had considerably increased, at which point Belt gave the main address for over $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour "hammering home the truths of socialism with great force."¹⁵ Later, the van moved on to take its stand in Bulwell Market Place where it was greeted with "open-mouthed astonishment" by the Market habitués. At about 7.30 p.m. the speakers "opened fire and for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, kept up a constant fusillade against the well-nigh reason-proof skulls of the Bulwellites. It was tough work, facts and figures alike falling harmless on their brain boxes."¹⁶ Next the van moved to Daybrook where Keeling of the Nottingham Labour Church took the chair. At Basford, much interest was shown by the locals: "some inquired if we were the 'bible men', others wanted to know if it was a show, and when we expatiated on socialism, expressed astonishment."¹⁷

The social and economic conditions which provided the background for this intensive propaganda were, of course, pretty grim. The engineers lock-out and a general fall in demand for lace and hosiery all collaborated to create a great deal of very serious hardship. In January 1898 the Nottingham Express reported that immediate support was wanted to keep honest workmen out of the workhouse. In the previous week, 1,080 utterly destitute men, women and children had been relieved. All of the unemployed were anxious for work but none was to be had. None of the locked-out men was receiving strike pay and over 3 tons of cast-off clothing, boots and shoes, blankets and bed clothing had already been distributed.¹⁸ These were the conditions in the town when the Clarion van finally rolled into the Nottingham Market Place.

The meeting which followed attracted a crowd of upwards of 1,500. Keeling of the Labour Church was in the chair and the first speech came from Ernest Gutteridge, a leading member of the Nottingham I.L.P. Gutteridge was followed by Bacon who kept the ball rolling for a time, before Comrade Belt of Hull put in the "rousements" in his usual vigorous style. Just after the meeting had commenced its effect was greatly heightened by the arrival in the Square of a large contingent of Clarion cyclists. In

the afternoon another meeting was held on the Forest Fields before the thirsty propagandists adjourned to the premises of the Labour Church for tea where "the light-hearted conversation and merry jests proved that socialists are not the perishing pezzers but people who enjoy life as well as most folk."¹⁹ The evening meeting attracted a huge crowd. The Watch Committee had refused the Clarion van permission to stand, so the Clarionettes were forced to try to hold a meeting from 2 drays which they had hired as a platform. During the meeting a police inspector demanded the removal of the drays. Asked for his authority, he maintained that he had instructions from the Watch Committee. Nevertheless, the meeting continued "in spite of the Watch Committee and their factotums." Later a resolution condemning the police action was carried unanimously, the hands of about 3,000 people going up in favour.

The socialism of the itinerant propagandists involved in this meeting was utterly direct, unambiguous and comprehensive in the way in which it stripped the hypocrisy from a society wherein both secular class divisions and the pious religiousity of much established religion excluded human brotherliness. The electrifying language of the vanners, the "rousments" of men like Gutteridge and Christie, helped to stimulate a radical spirit which refused to be comprehended within the orthodoxies of the established political parties. The socialism which they propagated was a joyful and creative libertarian philosophy expressed in willing service to mankind. This desire to serve was, perhaps, best seen in the work of the Cinderella treats. The Clarionettes who, winter after winter, raised the funds with which to feed slum children, were in many ways, the salt of the early labour movement. During 1899 they once again fed over 1,500 children, before entertaining them with magic lantern shows. At a treat in January 1899, 250 children were also given oranges, sent "by two kindly friends" and at the end of the season the Cinderella supporters decided to use the £10 in hand, together with other funds raised for the purpose, to take some children to the seaside.

The craving for fun and civilised pleasures which was such a feature of Clarion socialism, was also interlaced with constant reflections upon morality. This duality was well illustrated in the programme which they were sustaining at the end of the 1890's. In March 1899, for instance, the Cycling Club numbered 160 and many of these could be found every weekend throughout the spring and summer on organised trips into the countryside around the town. The same men and women, however, were also involved in running the Cinderella treats or attending lectures by Philip Snowden on "Is Socialism Practicable?", or the Reverend Charles Wilkins's special presentation of 120 lantern slides illustrating "Slums and Sunshine",²⁰ as well as distributing the huge pamphlet literature of the period with its glorification of brotherly love.

The enthusiasm and corporate spirit of the early Clarionettes owed much to the fact that they were consciously reacting against Mrs. Grundy and other aspects of a suffocating Victorian morality. Their rebellion against this aspect of the world in which they lived is seen best in the convivial atmosphere of the Clarion Fellowship. In Nottingham, the Fellowship was founded at a meeting in November 1900. The I.L.P. and other socialist groups came together with the object of organising a Fellowship dinner, and this seems to have become an annual event. Many of the young men prominent in founding the Fellowship and other Clarion organisations seem to have been young clerks. The emergence of clerical workers as a distinctive social group was very much a phenomenon of the years around 1900 and many of them seem to have been active in the Nottingham socialist movement of this time. The Clarion Cycling Club, for instance, seems to have had as its secretary more than one black-coated "cuff and collar boy" from West Bridgford or other similar "better class" parts of the town.

A study of the Nottingham Directories in an attempt to identify the background of Clarionettes whose names and addresses appeared in the columns of the Clarion was particularly disappointing, since in the majority of cases the individual was not listed. This suggests that many of the

most active Clarion supporters were young single men living away from home as lodgers. It also seems likely that many amongst them were highly mobile and the insecurity which this suggests might well have been a crucial factor in helping to shape their political philosophy. This group were at the centre of a good deal of socialist activity in the town, and this is perhaps a reflection of the leisure time and additional income which their 'white collar' status allowed. Additionally, an ingrained respect for self-education and "improvement" would seem to have acted as spurs to their attempts to make their way in the world, as indeed it did for the leaders of the trade unions and co-operatives.

The spontaneous zest for living of the Clarionettes breaks through many reports of their activity in the town. In December 1900 the Clarion Fellowship Dinner provides a good example. According to the Clarion it was an "unqualified, decided, emphatic and unique success ... glee by the silver-throated Clarion Choir, songs too, and recitations. The function brought together in the Fellowship many who until this memorable evening were wide as the poles asunder."²¹ Earlier in the year a Grand Smoker was held at the Peacock Hotel which was joined by members of the Potteries Clarion Cycling Club and in April 1900 so many had attended the Nottingham Cyclists Annual Dinner that an overflow had to be arranged when Geordie Christie of the I.L.P. presented the retiring secretary with a silver tea service. Christie was also involved in lending a part of his property at Gedling for the Club's Annual Summer Camp and he also seems to have been a key individual in the success of the Cinderella treats. These treats continued to represent a major part of the practical work undertaken by the Clarionettes. In October 1900, at the start of the winter season, the Nottingham group reported :

"Our Cinderella is a big girl now ... 5 years old in fact, with a healthy appetite ... we have been blessed with business minded, energetic officials and a ladies committee which does everything before it is wanted and talks afterwards. We also have a socialist member of the School Board (Christie) who secured for us the privilege of obtaining Board Schools free for our children's treats ... and every year we mind us of a silent member of our club ... and we 'looks towards him' and he 'likewise smiles' and a crisp banknote finds itself nestling in the treasurer's bag, and we 'buck up' once more for another turn to, and Cinderella smiles triumphant. Then we issue to our members collecting cards marked in 60 little squares, with which they solicit a penny from their friends and the cards come back with from one to five shillings and off we go again." ²²

A month later, Gutteridge, a leading Clarion supporter, was writing of a treat organised in the Narrow Marsh area :

"about the most unsavoury locality Nottingham can boast, and we have some 'high ones' ... tea consisted of potted meat sandwiches, bread and butter, raspberry jam and buns and a good brew of tea ... I would not have believed that the waifs to whom I had given tickets could have been so responsive to the little light and joy to which they were brought into contact." ²³

During the course of 1901 the whole range of Clarion activity continued to expand. During February 3 Cinderella treats were organised for 900 children and later in the same month a soiree and dance attended by over 100 members of the Clarion Cycling Club was a big success. In April the Cinderella season's work was brought to a conclusion with a treat for Sneinton children, the funds for which were "provided by a local comrade, Mr. Jackson, who supplied the whole of the provisions and sent in addition a quantity of clothing for distribution." ²⁴ This successful winter's work had fed over 1,800 Nottingham children and made them happy for at least one evening.

The mention of Comrade Jackson in the report of the 1901 Cinderella programme is a useful indication of the participation of some middle-class elements in the Clarion organisations. Men like Jackson did, indeed, play a role in helping to finance the newspaper and the clubs associated with it. The middle class did not, however, set the tone of the movement

or control it. The Clarionettes were in the main working class, and the strength of their movement was in the industrial towns of the North and Midlands. Here, the isolation of many urban workers and their families, with few outlets for social activity apart from the church, provided a base on which to build. In Nottingham the increasing insecurity of workers in industries like lace or hosiery, both of which were undergoing decline or structural change, provided many ready converts. George and Harry Wheatcroft, father and son, provide a useful Nottingham example of this process. George Wheatcroft had left school at 14 but his high intelligence ensured that he became a prolific reader, and Harry, his son, remembered his father devouring Ingersoll, the American free thinker, Ruskin, Bradlaugh, Darwin and Huxley. When Harry was born in 1898 the family was living in Sneinton Bottoms with "no indoor sanitation or bathroom. Rows of back-to-back houses, many of which were in a very poor state of repair being bug infested, it was a very, very poor area."²⁵ Wheatcroft senior in this period was a jobbing builder, and Harry, his son, remembers that because of his membership of the I.L.P. and general outspokenness, he lost the custom of many property owners. Despite these pressures, however, Harry remembers selling the Clarion and the Labour Leader and in 1908 the entire family took part in the campaign which returned Ernest Gutteridge as the first Nottingham I.L.P. Councillor.

During these early years the Wheatcroft home in Handel Street acted as a pied à terre for many of the pioneers who were such favourites of the I.L.P. and Clarion supporters: Macdonald, Bonfield, the Glasiers, Snowden, Mary MacArthur, Fred Jowett and Keir Hardie - all were entertained by the family in a period when the life and vitality of the Nottingham movement seemed to offer real hope for the co-operative commonwealth in which those around the Clarion so fervently believed. On May 1st 1902 the realisation of the hopes and dreams of the Clarionettes must have seemed nearer for "Nanquam" (Robert Blatchford) was in the town to officially open the Nottingham Fellowship Club. This Club offered music,

refreshments, billiards, and the use of a library for a quarterly subscription of 1s 6d. The club was opened every night of the week, and throughout the weekend and its establishment marked a tremendous increase in enthusiasm and optimism.²⁶

Throughout 1902 this optimism seems to have been maintained. In July the Clarionettes held a smoker, in order to raise funds for a special Cinderella summer outing for slum children. The Cycling Club, too, were busy raising funds towards this aim by organising games and sports at their Annual Summer Camp which this year lasted from the 24th June until August Bank Holiday at Mapperley, just outside the town. During these years the Cycling Club seems to have operated very effectively as a quasi-socialist educational group. The pages of the newspaper are filled with advertisements for bicycles costing about £10 and these were used every weekend to take the Clarionettes out into the country where they distributed the newspaper and Clarion pamphlets, as well as holding propaganda meetings. Over a twenty-year period the Clarion carried advertisements for the Nottingham Cycling Club's weekend runs, and there is little doubt that the men and women who took part in them were often at the centre of the educational and electoral work which the town's socialists were involved in.

During the course of 1903, despite continuing electoral disappointments in the municipal elections, the Clarionettes seem to have continued gaining strength. In April the Cycling Club raised £10 towards "the little sickly ones' summer holiday scheme" and in May, 70 sat down at a special dinner to celebrate the first anniversary of the Fellowship Club. Later, an extra 100 turned up for the concert and dance which followed. Arthur Richardson, the Lib-Lab. grocer, was in the chair on this occasion when Ernest Gutteridge proposed the toast "The Cause of Socialism".²⁷ By November 1903 the Clarion supporters were confident and optimistic enough to open the Clarion Club on a daily basis for luncheons and teas, and this indicates that the resources of the Clarionettes must have been growing in both human and financial terms.

Against this background of growing strength and success, for reasons which are not entirely clear, it seems that by early 1904 the Clarion Fellowship in other parts of the county was either dying or merging with other local socialist societies. Leonard Hill, a leading Clarion supporter, used the columns of the newspaper to plead for the retention of the Fellowship in order to help combat the sectarianism prevalent in the contemporary labour movement.²⁸ These pleas went unheeded, with the consequence that the Nottingham Fellowship felt confused and isolated. The frustration of the Clarionettes at these developments is easy to sympathise with. In January 1903 they had joined the I.L.P., S.D.F. and Labour Church to organise a very successful propaganda meeting which attracted an audience of 2,000 to hear Hyndman. In March, at its Annual General Meeting, the Cycling Club had reported a membership of 140, and later in the same month a ladies' sewing circle had been established to help raise funds for the Cinderella treats. On May 1st the Fellowship had once again co-operated with the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. to organise a united demonstration, and on May 13th the Fellowship held an Anniversary Social Gathering which was generally admitted by all to have been a great success.

With this record of increasing co-operation with other socialist groups, as well as growing support for the Fellowship and other Clarion organisations, it is hardly surprising that one of the Nottingham Fellowship activists felt moved to write to tell the readers of the Clarion:

"I only wish some of the funeral dirge singers about the passing of the Fellowship would give us a look up ... it didn't look much like our movement here in Nottingham is "snuffing" out to see nearly 200 Fellowship-ers doing the 'light fantastic toe' 'till nearly 2 in the morning." 29

Beneath the surface, however, there were signs of internal disagreement which had within them the potential to disrupt and destroy much of the good work which was being done. In May 1904, for instance, an argument developed between "Flying Scotsman", who wrote the Clarion's 'Cyclorama'

column and Charlie Skelton, the secretary of the Nottingham Clarion Cycling Club. "Flying Scotsman" started the ball rolling by accusing the Nottingham group of ignoring the national organisation and wondering if they were not too "aughty". Skelton, replied denying the charge and claiming that national meets were too far from Nottingham. Later "Flying Scotsman" returned to the fray suggesting that the club had become "too respectable, and has been localised by the admission of many persons who are not Clarionettes or socialists and who never read the Clarion and consequently are not interested to any extent." The attack was softened somewhat by the assurance that Charlie Skelton was a man "of sterling integrity, and fearless candour and a good Clarionette to boot" before going on to argue that all concerned would benefit from the airing of these disagreements.³⁰

The problem being discussed here was a product of the opening of the Cycling Club to non-socialists. This came about because the supporters of the Clarion were concerned to encompass as many people as possible within the socialist movement, whilst alienating as few potential people as possible. Although this policy made sense it carried the risk that in time elements hostile to the basic objectives of the organisation might succeed in taking it over.

Skelton and other leading Clarion supporters in Nottingham were probably well aware of this risk, and in July, after a large group had ridden from Nottingham to join the Leicester Clarionettes at Long Clawson they wrote to tell the Clarion, "quite 40 put in an appearance, who said Notts were sleeping?"³¹ A fortnight later they were reporting the start of their annual camp at Plumtree and making a point of asking the "Flying Scotsman" to join them. This camp lasted for over 3 weeks and during the Bank Holiday was joined by Clarionettes from Leicester and Coventry, as well as groups from other East Midland Centres who joined the camp for the Saturday night concerts. The fun and joy of the annual camp was, however, taking place against the background of rising unemployment and distress, and it was undoubtedly this rather than the sport or entertainment

provided by the Clarion Clubs which motivated most Clarionettes.

In July 1905 this was well demonstrated in Clarionette support for a demonstration of the Nottingham unemployed organised by the Labour Church. The meeting held in the Market Place was attended by a large crowd and the leading members of the I.L.P. and the Clarion Fellowship had co-operated to help make the meeting a success. T.A. Pierce, of the I.L.P., presided and Arthur Richardson, the Lib-Lab. Parliamentary candidate, moved the resolution. Ernest Gutteridge spoke in support, and strangely, so did Councillor Houston, a Conservative member of the City Council. Concern for the unemployed in these years was mounting and the members of all the town's socialist organisations were very active on the question. At the same time, however, many Clarion supporters were intent on trying to improve the quality of life wherever the opportunity offered.

On occasion, this search for a better life led the libertarian elements amongst the socialist pioneers into some strange eccentricities. Vegetarianism, for instance, attracted many of them, as did spiritualism. The 1905 Labour Church programme advertised George Allan of Gloucester-"the leading long distance walker of the world", speaking on "Food for Health or How to be Strong"³² and on other occasions speakers dealt with "The Mystery of Pain" and "The Mystics Creed". More normally, however, the Clarionettes search for self fulfilment led them into the countryside of the East Midlands. At Easter 1905, many of the Nottingham group were at Worksop in the North of Nottinghamshire for the Annual National Meet of the Clarion Cyclists, where the Nottingham members were responsible for the billeting and registration of Clarion supporters from all over the country. During June the Clarion Fellowship arranged an outing and summer party at Woodhouse Eaves in Leicestershire and in July and August the Clarion cyclists were once again in camp. The 1905 Annual Camp seems to have been particularly successful and it was decided to extend it until August 3rd when it ended with a concert given "by the lute quartet who

gave us a few selected glees in splendid style."³³

The concern to make socialists continued to be the main preoccupation of the Clarion supporters. In February 1906 the Clarion Cyclists in Nottingham decided at their Annual General Meeting "to lay themselves out for propaganda work on a larger scale than formerly." The Club had £25. 9. 8d. in hand and the membership of 150 decided to spend much of this on propaganda material. The period from 1906 to 1909 were the years of greatest Clarion propaganda activity since the middle 1890's. Six propaganda Clarion vans were on the road during this period, reinforcing the political work being done by the local groups. The effort and enthusiasm which went into this activity in Nottingham in the years between the 1906 and 1910 General Elections surpassed anything which had gone before. "We are continually making new members, and the attendances are better than ever", reported the Clarion of the Nottingham group in May 1906.³⁴ The Annual Fellowship Dinner was attended by nearly 100 and 100 more joined the Social and Dance which followed. Early in the season 52 members of the Cycling Club rode to Matlock, where they met groups from Derby and Sheffield. Later, the Clarionettes joined the I.L.P. and Labour Church in the May Day celebrations and in July and August the group was once more involved in its Annual Camp.

The 1906 Camp was held at Gedling, and a good description of it remains in the report of the Clarion's cycling correspondent, James Paton:

"The camp was stowed away in a garden at Gedling ... in a suburb and yet as isolated as though we were 50 miles from any town, the marquee and bell tents of the Nottingham Clarion Cycling Club stand inviting all and sundry to come and live the simple life ... the land the camp is on belongs to a bloated old socialist/capitalist called Christie ..."³⁵

The camp was a huge success and by the end of July was in full swing, being visited by Clarionettes from long distances. Later in the year, the Clarionettes were busy organising a winter series of indoor propaganda and educational meetings and this continued into 1907 when in February, Fred

Bramley, a popular Clarion vanner, spent a week in the town speaking seven times at different Nottingham venues. This programme opened with a meeting in the King's Theatre on the "Religion of Socialism". The meeting began with a selection from the Clarion orchestra and after the audience had been warmed up by local speakers Bramley succeeded in "rousing the audience to a pitch of enthusiasm."³⁶ In November, after the usual crowded summer of activity, the Clarionettes invited Charles Drysdale, another popular Clarion itinerant propagandist, to speak at a meeting arranged jointly with the I.L.P. and Labour Church. This single meeting was responsible for recruiting 14 new members into the I.L.P.

The increasing tempo of Clarionette political activity in these years was, perhaps, in response to the intuitive feeling that after years of electoral defeat the socialist cause in Nottingham was at last beginning to get somewhere. The return of Richardson, who had many Clarion and I.L.P. connections in the town, at the 1906 General Election, must have given the activists some heart. Certainly the increasing membership of the socialist organisations, coupled with signs of political change amongst key groups of workers like the lace workers and coal miners, provided evidence that things were on the move. These signs of change are best seen in the appointment of a full time I.L.P. organiser in March 1908, but long before he took up his appointment there was evidence that the pace was beginning to quicken. For the moment, however, the Clarionettes were fully occupied with their normal programme of activity. On Boxing Day, 1908, for instance, it was reported that :

"The Clarion Club will be turned inside out by Father Christmas. A real old fashioned Christmas tea will be provided for 70 needy little guests. After tea there will be a magic lantern, all sorts of games and romps and a great big Christmas tree crammed full of dolls, toys and things and in addition, each child will receive an article of clothing."³⁷

Three weeks later, George Lansbury was in Nottingham to speak to the Clarion supporters and the Labour Church on "Christianity and Socialism", and shortly afterwards all the town's socialist groups came together for a

Grand Musical Evening by the Socialist Sunday School. The Cycling Club's programme of weekend runs began about Easter, and early in May they were involved in a propaganda run to nearby Gotham. By the middle of July the Club was once again in camp at Bradmore and the 1908 Camp seems to have been a huge success. So many attended on one Sunday that the Clarion correspondent reported :

"So many here last Sunday that the Committee are thinking of getting a board with 'Standing Room Only' for next Sunday." ³⁸

A fortnight later the Clarionettes made themselves very popular in the village by organising a tea and sports :

"On Saturday we had all the children in the village for tea and sports; packed them all in with a prize each. On Thursday we entertained all the householders to tea, and one old man said, 'I've lived in Bradmore for 50 years and there never was anything like this; these socialists do know how to do it.'" ³⁹

The Camp closed after the August Bank Holiday and the fun and games of the Annual Camp gave way to more serious propaganda work as the November municipal elections drew near.

During the third week in August the Clarion propaganda van was once again in the area. Three large audiences heard the speeches at Bulwell and at Beeston the meetings were well attended. All concerned agreed that the van's visit had done a "large amount of good."⁴⁰ A fortnight later the T.U.C. Congress was meeting in Nottingham, and the Clarion Cycling Club cancelled its normal run in order that the Clarionettes could take part in a great socialist demonstration organised by the S.D.F. Later the Clarionettes joined 2,000 trade unionists and a number of the leading T.U.C. delegates in a march with flags and banners to a special service at St. Mary's, before joining a special celebration at the I.L.P.'s new rooms. A month later with the local election campaign in full swing, the Clarion supporters were fully involved in propaganda work and canvassing for the I.L.P. candidate, although as might be expected their winter programme of social activity was also getting under way. In October, for

instance, it was reported that the Clarion Social Club was getting nearly 100 at each of its fortnightly whist drives. Also in October, the Clarion Club was visited by the Sheffield I.L.P. Male Voice Choir and in November, after the I.L.P.'s victory in the municipal elections, a Celebration Dance was a huge success, "everybody crying out for more."⁴¹

Mrs. Bruce Glasier was a tremendous favourite of the Clarion supporters in the town, and she was the guest of the Nottingham Group at the 1909 New Year's Eve whist drive and dance as well as being the speaker at the Fellowship Club, where "capital debates were taking place every Tuesday."⁴² Later in January 1909, the Nottingham Clarion Club established a "Starving Children's Committee." Commencing with the distribution of 200 loaves at the Club to those needing bread, the Committee subsequently began systematically visiting the homes of the distressed :

"Tickets are left, enabling the holders to obtain the face value in food from a provision store. Something like 400 cases have been dealt with in this way."⁴³

Work for the Starving Children Fund continued into 1910 and after a fund-raising function which attracted 240 to the Arboretum Rooms in March, the Clarion supporters issued an appeal to "come in and join us and help our Starving Children Fund. Do something ! Do not stop outside and criticise."⁴⁴ This appeal underlines yet again the way in which Clarion supporters saw their movement as the nucleus of the universal brotherhood, their religion was humanity. Parliamentary representation for the Clarionettes was not the object but rather the full emancipation of humanity and establishment of human justice, human fellowship and human love on earth.

In April 1910 Alfred Wilkinson of Beeston wrote to the Clarion to say that the local supporters had :

"been able, by means of local subscriptions and special efforts in the way of New Year collections, concerts etc., to keep the Bread Fund going through the winter but our funds are now practically exhausted and unfortunately there are still cases of distress arising not only from unemployment but from illness."⁴⁵

Problems of this kind put a great deal of stress on the supporters of the Clarion Movement but, despite these strains the Clarionettes held a fund-raising social in favour of the Clarion van, and in July the van arrived in Hucknall where four large and keenly interested crowds participated in a propaganda meeting, although the collections were smaller than might have been expected because of a local strike and short time working. Three excellent meetings at Bulwell followed where large crowds heard Arthur Hayday of the S.D.P. Later in the year the Clarion newspaper seems to have been in financial trouble, and this stimulated one Nottingham reader to write to the newspaper to say that he had:

"bought the sole right to a board in front of a newsagents shop for 5s. a year which I intend using to advertise the Clarion ... if we see to it that the public are made aware of the value of the Clarion as they are of Beecham's Pills, if these are worth a guinea a box, what is the Clarion worth to the people of this country." ⁴⁶

Clearly the Clarionettes were determined to retain and wherever possible, widen the appeal of their newspaper, although disagreements within the wider political movement seem to have been threatening its survival. During 1911, however, the Clarion Fellowship continued its propaganda and social work. In March a whist drive and dance was a tremendous success, and plans were made for a concert to help the bread fund. This eventually took place in May and was described as a "glorious success". At the time the bread fund had spent £23. 19s. on food leaving a balance of only £2. 12s., leading the treasurer to comment that "if the work is to be carried on next year, Clarionettes must make a more generous response."⁴⁷

In September 1910 many of the political tensions which had been beneath the surface finally came to a head, and elements of the Clarion's support came together with the S.D.F. and Victor Grayson, to try to form a new political party. In Nottingham, however, there does not seem to have been an immediate rush to join the new grouping. Although the Nottingham branch of the S.D.F. quickly changed its name to become the Nottingham section of the British Socialist Party, it was not until Jan-



George Thundercliffe was born at Hull but came to Nottingham at the age of five. Thundercliffe was secretary of the Operative Bakers and Confectioners, as well as one of the founders of the Nottingham Trades Council. In the 1890's Thundercliffe seems to have had I.L.P. sympathies, but after the turn of the century he became a stalwart of the Labour Party right-wing.

uary 1911 that what was described as "both sections" of the B.S.P. came together to form one branch. The second of the sections was obviously a breakaway group of Clarion and I.L.P. supporters. This development led during February 1912 to a reported decline in the membership of the Clarion Fellowship, and subsequently, the remaining Clarionettes announced that an attempt to make the Clarion Club more interesting socially and politically would be made. This decision led to the introduction of a series of political lectures at the Club. In April it was announced that the newly constituted B.S.P. was "looking forward to better propaganda work this summer!" Something of a Clarion revival seems to have followed and the Cycling Club was able to announce that it had recruited 7 new members during April and a further 11 at the May Day demonstration. In any event, June found the Cycling Club at their Annual Camp at Bradmore, and late in July the group was supporting the work of a Clarion motor van which was in Nottingham for a series of four meetings. ⁴⁸

During the course of 1913 fund-raising activity was organised in aid of the motor van fund, and the Annual Camp at Bradmore was repeated. Tom Groom, a Clarion columnist, visited the Camp during July and wrote a description for the newspaper which captures something of the essence of what the Clarion commonwealth was all about :

"Three bell tents and a marquee set in a small field constitute the Camp. It is a pleasant pitch, with a good view of the wide-spreading countryside around. A land of laziness where you lie on your back in the sun and listen to the song of the lark ... and sweet sounds of eggs and bacon sizzling in the pan ... and, look you in the matter of company, one might travel a mile or two without finding a bonnier lot of lasses than our girls at the Nottingham Camp or a more cheerful crowd of Clarionettes... in Nottingham the younger generation are taking things in their own hands, and we of the old gang may play skittles and cook ham and eggs. The young 'uns have come along with new enthusiasm to carry on and better the work of the past." ⁴⁹

The arcadia which Groom was here describing was, of course, already doomed. The Bradmore Camp with the benefit of hindsight was a poignant epitaph for

a part of the socialist movement which was to die in the vortex of death, blood, mud, stench and pain which the First World War brought with it. J.J.Mallon, looking back on the movement many years later, made the point that "it was a joyus moment. When it passed the Labour Movement seemed glum."⁵⁰ Certainly, its contribution to the development of a significant working class movement in Nottingham was extremely important.

LABOUR POLITICS 1900 - 1908

Henry Pelling and Frank Bealey have pointed out that there were few people in 1900 who might have supposed that the year would witness any sharp break with the politics of the past, or a sudden reorientation on the "labour question".¹ Certainly this was the case in Nottingham where in February the T.U.C. circular convening a National Conference to consider the question of "Labour Representation" was received with little enthusiasm. This Conference, which opened on Shrove Tuesday, 27th February 1900, established the Labour Representation Committee. It attracted 129 delegates but in Nottingham, despite the setting up in 1899 of a Trades Council - I.L.P. Committee to plan joint political action, the invitation to attend could only win a pious resolution from Trades Council delegates :

"that we express our fullest sympathy with the movement but cannot see our way clear to being represented." ²

Nevertheless, despite their disappointment with this form of words, the Socialists amongst the delegates managed to win a decision that the Trades Council should organise a special meeting to "obtain the views of the rank and file."

This meeting took place in April with the unbending Lib-Lab. miners leader J. G. Hancock in the chair and "sympathetic" liberal councillors in attendance. Hancock, like many other miners of his local origin and religious affiliation, was a member of the Liberal Party and not surprisingly, he and the group around him had little real enthusiasm for the resolutions passed at the meeting, which affirmed the advisability of securing direct representation of the working class upon various local administrative councils, forming a Workers Electoral Federation, and instructing the Executive of the Trades Council to take immediate steps

to place such a Federation on a proper working basis.

The Socialists behind these resolutions seem to have been led by Christie and Gutteridge, both employed in the lace trade and members of the I.L.P. Their victory over Lib-Lab. stalwarts like Skerritt and Hancock was, however, only temporary. The seeds of political tension had been sown long before, but the resolutions passed at the rank and file meeting, cannot have helped to improve the situation since they called for the setting up of Labour Representation Committee which should include in its membership "all persons having the true interests of labour at heart, whatever their political creed may be."³

Initially, however, the Nottingham Workers Electoral Federation seems to have got off to a fine start. Its constitution and prospectus refer to a meeting in September 1900 when over 300 representatives from the Trades Council, Trade Union branches, Co-operative Societies and independent labour organisations met to formulate a constitution. G.S.Christie and J.A. Murray, both of whom were active in the I.L.P., were elected President and Secretary respectively, although political balance was maintained when the meeting went on to nominate George Robinson, the Lib-Lab. Secretary of the Trades Council, for the November elections.

In his capacity as Secretary of the Trades Council, Robinson must have been instrumental in a series of Trades Council decisions connected with the 1900 General Election, which notwithstanding the establishment of the W.E.F., indicate the strength and influence of the Lib-Lab. grip on the local movement. Just before the election the Trades Council and the N.M.A., both under the influence of Hancock, the miners agent, produced a list of candidates most favourable to the labour cause. In all, 3 Nottingham Divisions' trade unionists were asked to vote for Liberal candidates. Assistance was subsequently given to Yoxall in the Western Division, Fraser in the East and Sanger in the South. Sanger in particular, seems to have made a bid for the support of trade unionists addressing a meeting of railwaymen on "Workmen's Compensation" and winning the support of the Shop



J. E. Pendleton was born in Nottingham in 1870. He began work in the hosiery industry and became the President of the Hosiery Finishers' Society. Later, Pendleton became a commercial traveller although he retained his connection with the labour movement. In 1900 he became a member of the City Council with Liberal support. In 1904 he became full time secretary of the Tramway Workers' Union.

Assistants as well as the Miners.⁴

The Trades Council General Election Manifesto included a series of questions to all candidates which neatly summarise the main preoccupations of the town's trade unionists :

1. Are you prepared to support any measure which seeks to provide from the Exchequer pensions for the aged poor ?
2. Are you prepared to support the amendment of the Workman's Compensation Act so as to make it apply to all accidents ?
3. Are you prepared to support the taxation of ground values ?
4. Are you prepared to support a measure to give Municipalities greater facilities to provide workmen's dwellings ?
5. Are you prepared to support Minicipal control of lighting, water, sanitation, roads, etc. ?
6. Are you prepared to support giving Municipal contracts only to firms paying standard trade₅ union rates ?

These questions had been drawn up by Appleton, the General Secretary of the Lace Makers. In July he had beaten Hancock by 36 votes to 31 for the Presidency of the Trades Council. Since, however, both candidates were long established Lib-Lab. supporters, the contest between them was personal rather than political.

The small minority of Socialists who were delegates to the Trades Council quickly found themselves up against tough opposition. Gutteridge had managed to win election to the five-man Executive of the Trades Council at the 1900 Annual General Meeting but in October Christie, whilst trying to speak in a debate on the National Housing Council at a Trades Council meeting, was stopped by a resolution "that we have no politics in the Council."⁶ The Lib-Lab. elements who used the "no politics" argument, did so, of course, simply as a blocking tactic. Men like Appleton, or Hancock and Stewart of the Miners, were all deeply political animals. Together with Robinson, the Trades Council Secretary, this group of men were determined to manoeuvre the Socialists into a cul-de-sac and this, notwithstand-

ing the fact that all four attended the Paris Peace Conference in October 1900 when they participated in the singing of the International. None of them had any sympathy for the Socialist cause and all were fully capable of taking any "political" initiative to halt the progress of the Socialist supporters. This group of "non political" trade unionists during the summer of 1900 appointed Thundercliffe of the Bakers to represent the Trades Council on an Old Age Pension Committee set up by Lib-Lab. trade unionists. Thundercliffe seems to have flirted with the I.L.P. during the 1890's but by now he was fully committed to the establishment and considered quite "safe". The same group of Lib-Lab. supporters were also active on the "educational question" and during 1900 they invited the Headmaster of the High Pavement Higher Grade School to address the Trades Council on this topic. All of this, coupled with what we know of the personal relationship of these men with the employers and the Liberal establishment, makes it clear that the supposed abhorrence of "politics" claimed by this group of influential trade unionists was nothing but a smoke-screen.⁷

The period around the turn of the century has been described as one of "unparalleled industrial peace"⁸ but as always with judgements of this kind, qualification is necessary. In Nottingham, 1900 witnessed a number of disputes. In January a deputation from the Auxiliary Male Lace Workers reported that its membership was decreasing as a consequence of pressure from the employers and asked the Trades Council for organisational help. At the same meeting a deputation from the A.S.E. reported that Manlove and Elliott were refusing to employ trade union members. The Nottingham Handloom Weavers were on strike during August and in October the carriage straightening shop of Jardines was blacked by the Trades Council, who later, at the request of Will Thorne, the Gas workers' leader, involved themselves in a dispute at the Cinderhill brickyard.⁹

This series of disputes preceded by only a few months the Taff Vale decision. This judgement was naturally welcomed by the employers,

Workers' Electoral Federation
(Broxtowe Ward Branch).

A MEETING

Of Delegates and Members, to which the Public are Heartily
Invited, will be held in the

Large Room of the Bowling Green,
CHURCH STREET, OLD BASFORD,

On TUESDAY, June 3rd,

At 7-30 p.m., when

Councillor Pendleton,

Councillor Hooton,

& Mr. Will Garniss

Will give ADDRESSES upon the

**"Better Housing
OF THE
Working Classes."**

It is very important that the Working Classes
should understand this Question, so that an
Intelligent Public Opinion may be formed—
BASED UPON ACTUAL FACTS.

DR. * CALLANDER *

(Vice-President of the Workers' Electoral Federation) will preside.

ALL WORKERS are Heartily Invited.

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The Workers' Electoral Federation was the creation of the I.L.P. and socialist elements on the Nottingham Trades Council. The Lib-Lab group on the Trades Council led by Appleton of the Lace Makers worked hard against the W.E.F. and it seems to have collapsed in the early 1900's. At this meeting the appearance of Pendleton on the platform is significant since he had been elected with Liberal Party backing.

although it met with indignation and dismay from the Trade Unions. Certainly this was the case in Nottingham where the Lib-Labs and Socialists both understood the decision as a deliberate use of the legal machine to ruin the unions. Many saw Taff Vale as further proof that whilst the employing class claimed to believe in "playing the game" it would, when pushed, change the rules in its own favour. As the full import of what had happened began to dawn on the labour movement, activists of all kinds started to work for political change.

Initially, Taff Vale had the effect of paralysing many amongst the most active trade unionists. In Nottingham there seems to have been a good deal of confusion and muddle during 1901. In March, for instance, the Nottingham and District Building Trades Council wrote to Ramsay MacDonald, the secretary of the L.R.C., in terms which demonstrate the degree of confused thinking which existed in the minds of some of the leadership and important elements amongst the rank and file :

"Some weeks ago there was held in this city a meeting to advocate the Sunday closing of public houses. Posters announcing the same had in large type the name of your treasurer (Mr. R. Bell M.P.) Working men in Nottingham viewed with anything but satisfaction the action of a Labour M.P. using his name to influence and support a direct encroachment upon the liberty of the working man. Sunday closing aims directly at the toiler, whilst allowing the rich man the free and full use of his wine cellar." 10

The antagonism which the Lib-Lab. Bell had generated was demonstrated again only a month later when the Nottingham building workers again wrote to MacDonald to report that it had been unanimously decided that correspondence from the L.R.C. should be allowed to lay on the table:

"The opinion was freely expressed that already there are too many Federations, organisations etc., etc., in which the names of certain men appear again and again. We are of the opinion that to consolidate and cement our forces in one body would be far more useful and weighty. Again it would be impossible for us to pledge our support until a hard and fast line is laid down prohibiting its members when elected to Parliament from rushing onto political platforms containing men who have no sympathy or a good word for trade unionism." 11

The suspicion being demonstrated here was very widespread. At Beeston, a part of Greater Nottingham, the Trades Council in 1901 insisted that its candidates in School Board and Urban District elections should, if successful, be required to write out and sign their own resignation to that body, such resignation to be placed in the hands of the Secretary of the Trades Council "to be used if the Trades Council deems necessary."¹²

In Nottingham itself the 1901 Trades Council elections produced a leadership firmly in the grip of Lib-Lab. ideology. Appleton was President and the Executive included Hancock and other well known Liberal sympathisers. Gutteridge stands out as the only real Socialist, although Lane of the Gas workers seems to have been moving leftwards. In July, this Executive demonstrated how easy it still was for ruling class ideology to override the divisive force of class antagonism. The Trades Council had been drawn into discussion of a memorial to Queen Victoria. To the disgust of the Socialists the Executive underlined how easily appeals to the unifying force of the monarchy or religion could still blind the working class to the real nature of the world in which they lived, by meekly allowing the demands for a practical scheme to be overridden by those in favour of yet another statue.

Later in the year the Trades Council emphasised yet again how strong was the grip of Lib-Lab. elements. In October the local Liberals put an offer to the Trades Council which suggested a degree of electoral co-operation. In accepting this offer the Trades Council executive nominated Appleton as their candidate for a School Board seat. Only a month later, following the death of Councillor Robinson, the Lib-Lab. secretary of the Trades Council, it was resolved to claim his St. Albans Ward seat for a Trades Council nominee and to write to the Liberal Party with this information in order to prevent "friction." Co-operation between the Liberals and the Trades Council would also seem to have been a feature of the November municipal elections when James Scott, a member of the Railway Servants, fought Bridge Ward with Liberal support. Scott expressed himself an "Advanced Liberal, almost a Socialist and strongly in favour of muni-

cipalisation and nationalisation", he listed amongst his supporters all the members of the Labour Church choir but he failed to beat his Conservative opponent :

Dr. Hunt (Conservative)	896	
J. Scott (Labour)	757	maj. 139

Many of the votes won by Scott were the consequence of Liberal support. Where this did not exist as, for instance, in the three-cornered contest in St. Alban's Ward, the socialists did not do well. Described by a local newspaper as "a so called labour candidate," Lane, who was fighting a vacancy in the ward in which the Trades Council had "claimed" the seat previously held by Robinson, the Liberal candidate, described himself as a "progressive and a trade unionist". But without Trades Council support Lane was able to poll only 127 votes. ¹³

During the course of Lane's campaign it became obvious that the Liberal candidate had the support of a number of Trades Council members. This group must have been influential only a day or two later in pushing the nomination of Pendleton, a Lib-Lab. hosiery worker, for the bye-election occasioned by the death of Robinson. At the December meeting of the Trades Council the pending St. Alban's bye-election was discussed at some length. Christie and Hazledine of the Workers' Electoral Association attended as a deputation. These two dedicated socialists during the course of a lengthy and conciliatory address remarked that the organisation which they represented had been called into being by the Trades Council; all they desired, they claimed, was "to work in harmony." ¹⁴ Later, however, they made it clear that the W.E.F. required any labour candidate to sign an undated resignation form and deposit it with their association. This statement was received with loud applause and Pendleton agreed to accept the constitution of the Federation. Despite this acceptance, however, only a fortnight later Pendleton reported to the Trades Council that the Liberals were prepared to pay half of his election expenses. ¹⁵

Beneath the surface, however, working class resentment at the employers' attempt to undermine the Labour movement by the use of legal restrictions was beginning to undermine the Lib-Lab. position. As belief in the neutrality of the legal system and Parliament evaporated the attitude of many trade unionists to the employer began to harden, and this meant that the working class was gradually becoming more susceptible to the direct and indirect suggestions of the socialists. After a meeting at the end of 1900, attended by Glasier, MacDonald and Burgess, all members of the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P., the local branch of the party seems to have begun a new lease of life and the outdoor propaganda meetings seem to have been revived. In April Christie was re-elected to the Board of Guardians. His record of work included the abolition of the pauper card system and a long fight against denominationalism in connection with the chaplaincy of the workhouse. In September the I.L.P. joined with the Labour Church and the Clarion Cycling Club in organising a social in aid of the I.L.P. Parliamentary Fund. This renaissance bit by bit seems to have had an effect on the business of the Trades Council, and late in September 1901 it combined with resentment at the Taff Vale judgement to motivate a resolution protesting at the appointment of Jardine, an important local employer, to the City Bench of Magistrates. According to the Trades Council it would be impossible for "the workers to have confidence in the just administration of justice should a matter affecting trade unionists come before a court in which he is sitting."¹⁶

In August 1901 MacDonald had sent a circular to the trade unions in which he maintained that: "The recent decision of the House of Lords ... should convince the unions that a Labour Party in Parliament is an immediate necessity."¹⁷ During the first 6 months of 1902 the affiliated membership of the L.R.C. rose by 238,000 to over 700,000. In Nottingham, however, timid and reactionary elements seem to have successfully blocked the affiliation of the Nottingham Workers Electoral Federation. The strength of feeling now developing amongst the most advanced workers was



W.A. Appleton was born in Nottingham in 1859. At the age of ten he was taken into a jeweller's employment, but two years later he went to work in a lace factory. Later he won election to the Executive of the Lace Makers Society, and subsequently became its president. In 1896 he became the General Secretary and held this position until made General Secretary of the General Federation of Trades Unions in 1906. As a Liberal he was elected to the Nottingham School Board, and for one year represented Trent Ward on the City Council.

however, vividly displayed in a letter which their secretary wrote to MacDonald :

"We are thriving fairly well. The old shibboleths, Tory and Liberal, are receiving their death sentence in this city ... let us hope that the day is dawning when with respect to imperial policies, they will also be doomed, and labour assert its rightful place in the government of our country. It is worth striving for as it is evident that the capitalists are on the march to trample the workers in the dust ... the capitalist today I need scarcely remind you is a most dangerous monster ... we blindly and unwillingly enthrone him in such an autocratic position that we reduce ourselves to an absolute state of servility... it is not enough that we should bear our heads and beg to be allowed to earn our daily bread, but we must exalt them and make them our legislators, administrators, magistrates, in fact we are so insane that we blot out as it were our manhood and allow them to usurp everything that our Creator sent to meet the wants and requirements of the whole human family. It is truly time the workers made a move, that they buckle on their armour and hurl back this deadly foe which seeks to humble, degrade and enslave the sons of toil." 18

Much of this would have been anathema for Appleton, the Lace Makers Leader, who now occupied a comfortable place in the esteem of the local Liberal establishment. In February 1902 the Trades Council had decided to affiliate itself to the W.E.F. but Appleton, the President, was already scheming to ditch the left-wing federation and if all else failed, to cast in his lot with MacDonald and the L.R.C. Probably at Appleton's suggestion the L.R.C. returned the affiliation fee of the W.E.F., claiming that only trade unions and trades councils could affiliate. Not surprisingly, this rebuff amazed the W.E.F. whose secretary angrily scrawled across his returned receipt, "Please read this to your dull committee," before going on, "It is no use hair splitting when such important work is to be done, nor bantering over trifles when the enemy is thundering at the gate. Organise, mobilise, affiliate, federate, aim straight, then victory is assured." 19

Appleton, who, by now, was the dominant personality on the labour right, was undoubtedly the main agent working for the isolation of the militants. In early December 1902 he wrote to MacDonald :

"Your description of Labour politics in Nottingham as 'muddled' is distinctly apposite. At one time (the vote) was engineered in the interests of the Liberal Party, and some of the labour leaders waxed fat. In later days, however, the Liberal pastures have not afforded such excellent grazing, and the so called leaders of democracy have turned their eyes in other directions. We are in a muddle, and the muddle is largely due to the 'interests' of the men who have managed to obtain the control of the local political wires. the I.L.P. had a chance a few years ago, but its narrowness of view and crudeness of method and its inability to avoid the personal in all its dealings ruined its chances."

Appleton then went on to advocate a Labour Party :

"broad enough to embrace all who put Labour interests in the forefront of the programme... what I feel ought to be done is this. First, the Trades Council should take up its cross, formally withdraw its delegates from the W.E.F. affiliate with the L.R.C. and adopt a rational policy." 20

In a letter written only a week or two later, Appleton, who in the meantime had made arrangements to meet MacDonald, makes his views on the W.E.F. even clearer :

"The first of these difficulties is termed the W.E.F. Unfortunately the Trades Council sanctioned the formation of this body, never dreaming at the time that it would be bossed by people who were outside the Trade Union movement ... unfortunately the Trades Council has undercurrents and the desirable will not be accomplished without a very severe struggle, during which it would be unwise for the W.E.F. to become affiliated with the L.R.C. If this organisation with its outside control became the recognised political factor it would not become the dominant one for the miners and lace makers who form the back bone of the Trades Council will never permit domination of men outside the trade union movement." 21

Clearly, Appleton in this period was involved in a great deal of backstairs dealings. Whilst trying to decide on the direction of his political future he was obviously in close contact with the local Liberal establishment, although his correspondence with MacDonald makes it clear that he was holding his cards very close to his chest. Early in December 1902 he had told MacDonald that the Liberals had offered to stand down in South Nottingham but that he wasn't prepared to touch this suggestion with "a ten foot pole."

Later in December MacDonald wrote to offer advice on how the W.E.F. might be ditched, before going on :

"I am not in the least surprised that the Liberals are prepared to stand aside in South Nottingham. That is just the sort of trick they are playing on us in other places. In East Nottingham the Conservative majority is 779, in South Nottingham 1,384 and West Nottingham is a Liberal seat. If the Liberals get a labour man cajoled to fight South Nottingham they will make a lot of party capital out of it, and will also get the labour electors of East Nottingham cajoled to vote for the Liberal candidate. The result will be that they will probably win East Nottingham and keep West by doing a labour man the honour of allowing him to be defeated in the South." 22

As things worked out MacDonald's warning proved unnecessary since at its December meeting the Trades Council had decided to turn down the Liberal offer, saying that they had no money to spend on "forlorn hopes".²³ At an earlier meeting in September the Trades Council judged it wise to run no candidates in the November municipal elections "first on grounds of finance, second defective organisation." Despite this decision the Trades Council did endorse the I.L.P.'s nomination of Gutteridge in Sherwood Ward, although it seems that of Scott who once more fought Bridge Ward as a labour candidate was not endorsed.

The results when announced were not particularly encouraging. Scott, in a three-cornered fight, won 438 votes, and Gutteridge in a stright fight with the Liberals, polled 688. The relatively poor results registered in 1902 were probably a factor not only of the "muddle" about which Appleton had been writing to Ramsay MacDonald, but perhaps equally importantly, of the continuing psychological grip on the minds of working class voters which the established political parties were able to maintain. Against this background the Nottingham Independent Labour Party seems to have experienced something of a set back. George Christie was on the stump in the North of England, using illustrated limelight views which had been specially designed to show those working men who shouted for Empire "how little of the Empire belonged to their class."²⁴ But back in Nottingham a visit from Enid Stacy to talk about the "Housing Problem" was the first

advertised I.L.P. meeting for some months. The impression left after a reading of the Labour press for this period is one in which it seems that many former activists were depressed and despondent at their failure to make more significant progress.

Some of the most downhearted and frustrated amongst the activists simply left the country. In December 1901, for instance, the Nottingham I.L.P. recorded that they had "suffered a serious loss by the removal of Harry Smith and family to New Zealand."²⁵ In June 1902 the first prize in the I.L.P.'s National Prize Draw was a passage to New Zealand, whilst the second prize was a one-way passage to South Africa. Amongst Nottingham militants a number of names of Clarion and I.L.P. supporters simply disappear from sight in this period and one is left wondering how many of them (like Smith) had simply decided to cut their losses and leave the country.²⁶ The overall political atmosphere of the early 1900's certainly seems to have favoured the Lib-Lab. and anti-socialist elements. In July 1902 they were able to demonstrate their grip on the Trades Council by easily getting it to pass a resolution which :

"begged to offer its respectful sympathy to his most Gracious Majesty the King and expresses the hope that he may be permitted to recover from his dangerous illness and be long spared to render useful service to his people."²⁷

Later in the year the Trades Council underlined yet again how far they were from genuine independence by inviting amongst other local worthies, the Mayor, Sherriff, Town Clerk, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board of Guardians and the Vice Chairman of the School Board as guests of honour at the annual Trades Council social and dance.

In industrial terms, 1902 seems to have been relatively quiet. During the summer months the Trades Council busied itself by organising a series of meetings aimed at trying to help the Tramway Workers to negotiate with the employers. These efforts do not seem to have been particularly successful, and they indicate that the trade union movement generally was

going through a difficult period. In May the Certificated Teachers had affiliated to the Trades Council, but in general terms, trade union membership was growing very slowly. The pervading air of uncertainty which afflicted the labour movement in these years did nothing to hasten the protracted break from Liberalism which the Nottingham socialists were finding so difficult to hurry along.

Meanwhile, however, political intrigue continued. In February 1903 the Southern Division of the Nottingham Liberal Party wrote directly to MacDonald to say that they favoured "if possible that the candidate for the next Parliamentary election be a direct labour representative."²⁸ Despite his previous rejection of this offer it seems that Appleton was now up to his neck in the Liberal plot for in early May he was writing to MacDonald to say that "my loyalty to the spirit of Labour representation had landed me in hot water." This letter included local press cuttings which gave details of a plan discussed at a Trades Council meeting to run Arthur Richardson, a local wholesale grocer and tea dealer, as a "labour" candidate with Liberal money. Although Appleton had previously written to tell MacDonald that he would not touch this plan with a "ten foot pole" he now wrote to ask for MacDonald's support for the suggestion, following this up a day or so later with a reprimand for the L.R.C. secretary who had "failed to give a lead."²⁹

At this stage these developments do not seem to have had the support of many Trades Council delegates. At the April meeting, for instance, after a letter from the President of the Clifton miners which suggested the name of Richardson as a "labour" candidate for the Southern Division, next business was carried by 37 votes to 8. Later at the same meeting, however, the Lib-Lab. Pendleton managed to get the delegates to unanimously pass a resolution which called on the Trades Council to "take in hand the question of Labour Representation on municipal bodies."³⁰ At their meeting a month later the Trades Council Executive agreed to recommend to the full Council that the Trades Council should fight Sherwood, St. Alban's and Broxtowe Wards at the November local elections. Since, however, the Trades Council,

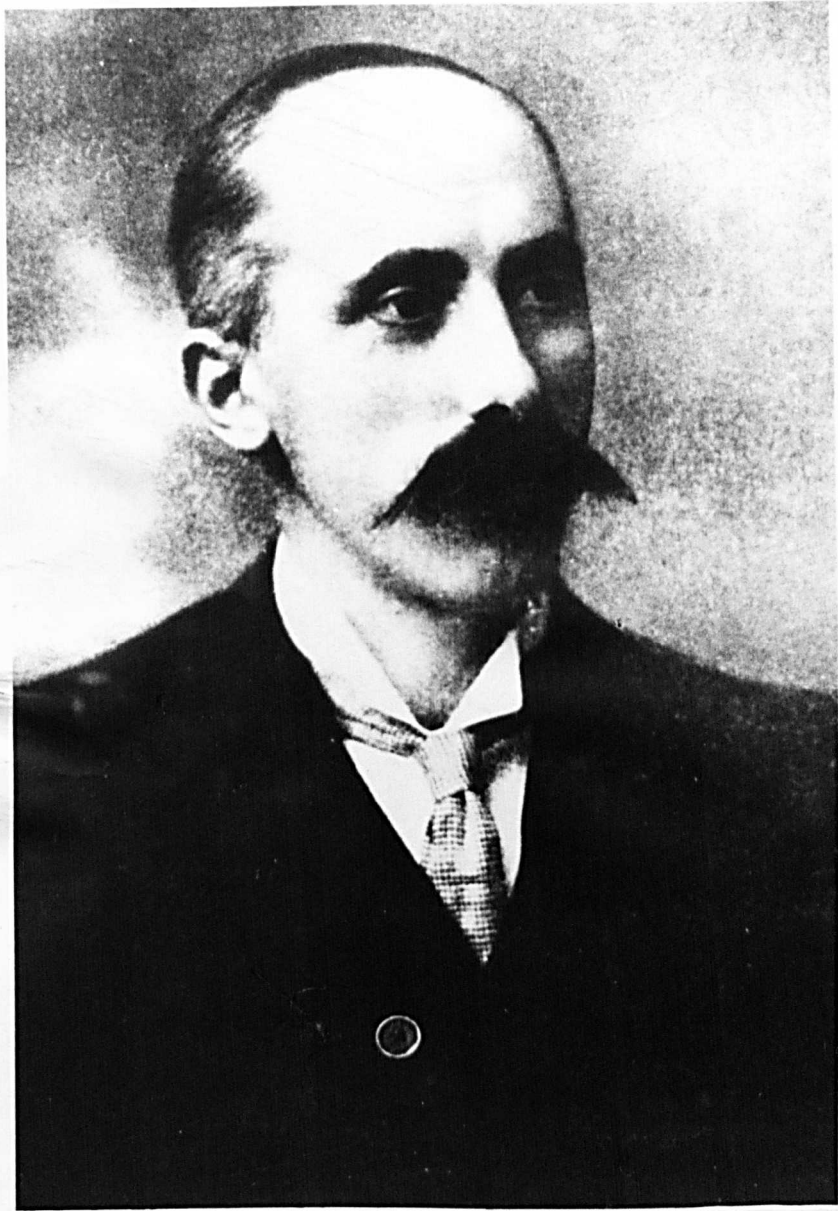
having taken this decision then proceeded to write to the local Liberal Associations to ask for financial support, it is plain that although they were prepared to flirt with the idea of independent labour representation, they were still unable to break away from old Liberal ties.

The Clifton miners' resolution must have had the support of the N.M.A. for at the May Trades Council meeting Aaron Stewart moved the suspension of standing orders before putting a resolution :

"that this Council learns with pleasure of the proposal to adopt a labour candidate for the Southern Division of Nottingham in the person of Mr. Arthur Richardson, and in the event of his adoption we agree to render all possible help in order to secure his triumphant return to Parliament." 31

In discussion the resolution was supported by the Railway Servants and the Certificated Teachers. Garness of the No.4 A.S.E., however, said that his branch had decided not to support any candidate who was the nominee of any political party. Scott of the Railway Servants asked who would propose Richardson and who was expected to finance him. In answer Stewart replied the Liberal Party and the Labour Party would nominate him, the Liberals had pledged a handsome sum and the trade unions would be asked to subscribe. This provoked Scott to say that although he could see his way clear to support Richardson morally, the Trades Council should not support him financially.

This last point brought forth a statement from Butler of the Certificated Teachers, who had clear Liberal connections, that he could state "with authority that no money was required from the Council."³² Nevertheless, Lee of the Ironfounders said that his Society supported the L.R.C. and he did not think it fair to call on his Society for further contributions. Meats, an I.L.P. member and the delegate of the A.S.E. No.5 branch, rounded off the discussion by suggesting that the Trades Council ought to hear Richardson before making any decision. Subsequently, the delegates voted by 44 votes to 22 to hold a special meeting in 6 weeks' time. Before this meeting could take place, however, the Lib-Lab. supporters tried to



George Sadler was born in London but came to Nottingham at an early age. Five times president of the local branch of the Typographical Association he was a keen member of the Trades Council. A keen supporter of the Cooperative Productive Movement he was on the managing committee of Nottingham Printers; a labour cooperative at which he was employed.

short-cut further discussion by writing to MacDonald on their own initiative to ask that the Trades Council "decision" to support Richardson be endorsed by the L.R.C. Mr. Richardson, they wrote, "though not a Labour man is prepared to accept the Labour ticket."³³

This development was probably influenced by a series of meetings between Trades Council members and Liberal Party functionaries. On May 13th 1903, for instance, the Eastern Division Liberal Association wrote to the Trades Council to ask if Sir Henry Cotton could attend a Council meeting to place his views on labour subjects before them. This request was agreed to and later, on May 31st, a deputation of 7 members of the Sherwood Ward Liberal Association attended a Trades Council Executive meeting in order to thoroughly discuss the question of a suitable candidate. Although this meeting was adjourned to give the I.L.P. an opportunity to participate, a special meeting of the Trades Council seems to have gone ahead at the instigation of the Lib-Lab. elements.

During the course of this meeting Appleton left the chair to move a resolution that:

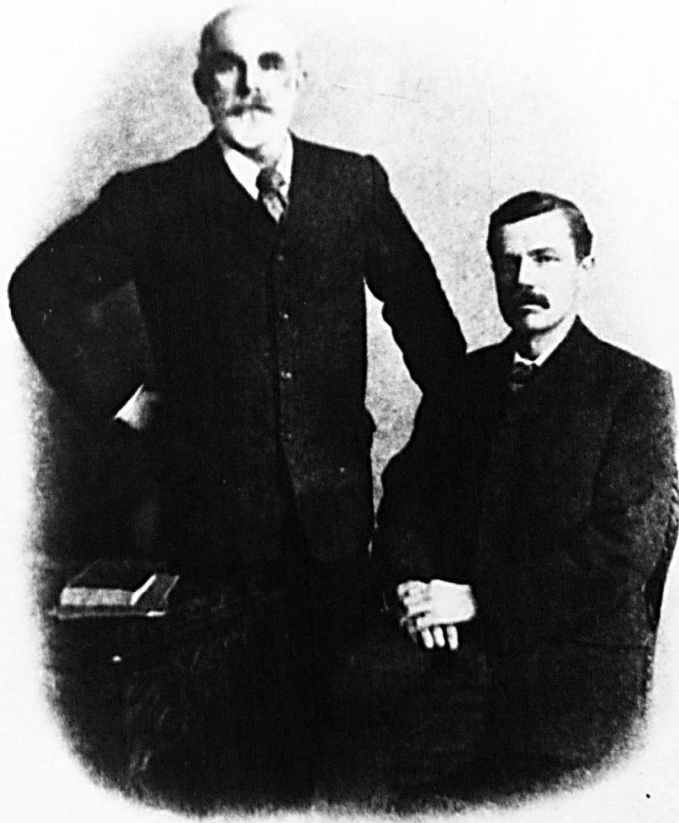
"this meeting of the Nottingham and District Trades Council believes Arthur Richardson to be a fit and proper person to represent in Parliament the labour interests of this locality and all pledge themselves to assist in securing his return for the Southern Division at the next General Election; and further, that the Executive of the Trades Council be instructed to decide upon the extent the financial liabilities the Trades Council assume and arrange for a mass meeting of trade unionists to (a) hear Mr. Richardson (b) to endorse his candidature, and (c) to decide on the best means of canvassing his candidature." ³⁴

So much for Appleton's claim that he would not touch South Nottingham with a "ten foot pole." In the debate which followed, Murray, A.S.R.S., and Garness, A.S.E., argued "we could all agree the name, but they personally disapproved of the Trades Council pledging financial assistance." This view was supported by Sadler of the letterpress printers, who said that his Society could not see their way clear to rendering financial assistance. Against this opposition Simpson, Hancock and Stewart, Pendleton, Hopkinson

and Gutteridge all supported Appleton's resolution before Rollitt closed the debate by regretting that the Trades Council was not affiliated to the L.R.C. so that they could have had a choice of names and the financial and moral support of that body. At the end of all the argument the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority.

Interestingly, these developments were taking place concurrent with the negotiations which were concluded in September with the MacDonald and Herbert Gladstone "entente" which allowed the L.R.C. a free run in a number of constituencies. In Nottingham, however, the links forged with the local Liberals came under early strain when Trades Council delegates together with representatives of the I.L.P. met the spokesmen of the Sherwood Ward Liberal Association in July. At this meeting the I.L.P. delegates insisted that they were not prepared to support any candidate other than Gutteridge in the November local elections. Despite Liberal protests the meeting was adjourned and at the Trades Council Executive meeting in July Gutteridge was endorsed with 2 votes against and 5 abstentions. At the full Council meeting a fortnight later, Stewart of the N.M.A. opposed Gutteridge's nomination and after a long discussion, Gutteridge finally said that since the Trades Council was not unanimous they had better forget Sherwood Ward. Disappointingly for the left, this suggestion was adopted by 44 votes to 10. Subsequently, however, Gutteridge fought the ward as an I.L.P. candidate, winning 433 votes and effectively allowing the Conservative nominee to win the seat.³⁵

Only a few weeks later, the Lib-Lab. element was once more fully in control. In September 1903 they called a special conference of the Free Church Council, Temperance Organisations, Trade Unions, Liberal Associations, the Co-operative Societies and the I.L.P., to set up a committee to manage Richardson's election campaign.³⁶ It seems that at a meeting between the Liberals, Richardson and Trades Council representatives, W.R. Hamilton, the Liberal agent, suggested that the Trades Council should find two thirds of the estimated £600 which it would cost to run Richardson.



*Vote for Arthur Richardson
 He will justify your trust
 Yours truly
 John Burns*

A 1906 election endorsement which illustrates the Lib-Lab. connections of Arthur Richardson. Richardson was born in 1860, son of the village carrier of East Bridgford, a village near Nottingham. Apprenticed a grocer in 1877 he subsequently took over a Nottingham business. Richardson became Lib-Lab M.P. for South Nottingham between 1906-1910.

Not surprisingly, the sum of money involved seems to have frightened the Trades Council since they quickly pointed out that they had understood that financial was of secondary importance to moral support, before hurrying to adjourn the meeting. Subsequently, however, a committee was set up to manage Richardson's campaign which included 6 members of the Temperance Federation, 7 representatives of the Free Church Council and the whole of the Trades Council Executive.³⁷

(2)

During this period the lace makers were still the dominant force on the Trades Council. Appleton, their General Secretary, was President of the Trades Council, 1901-2, 1902-3, 1906 and 1907. Although in many ways an archetypal Lib-Lab. organisation, the lace makers were in these years undergoing political and industrial pressures which slowly helped the socialists to gain ground. Appleton, for instance, wrote in the Annual Report of the Association at the end of 1902 :

"To talk about labour representation at a lace makers' meeting in the 'nineties' would have been to invite trouble, for not 10% of the members were in favour of it. Today the position is changed and there are not 10% who dare speak against it. The Taff Vale and other decisions have taught the trade unionist bitter lessons, and if he does not adopt the only obvious method of self defence, he desires to be kicked, and kicked hard ... the seriousness of the position and the need for action become more apparent every day, for following upon the Taff Vale comes the Denaby Main decision, which actually prohibits the Yorkshire Miners Association from paying strike pay." 38

All of this makes it plain that although Henry Pelling has rightly pointed out that the L.R.C. "had no policy which was in advance of Liberalism, and indeed tended to follow the Liberal lead rather than force the pace in all matters except those directly affecting the trade unions"³⁹ long established Lib-Labs. of Appleton's type were nevertheless beginning to draw the political lessons which were to ensure that the Liberals and their Trades Council supporters became increasingly uneasy bedfellows.

The day-to-day political interests of Appleton and others tended in this period to centre not only on the question of labour representation, but on housing and education reform as well. In August 1903 the Trades Council set up a programme of Sunday discussions which included education, co-operation, socialism, gambling, compulsory arbitration and alien immigration. Perhaps as a consequence of this discussion group the Trades Council began to vigorously press the Town Council to deal with the evils of bad housing, overcrowding, high rents and to accelerate slum clearance, urging at the same time that all new building should be on garden city lines. Appleton's position on the education committee of the T.U.C. must have helped to ensure that the Trades Council pressed for efficiency and equality of opportunity, especially in the provision of secondary and further education for working class children, and in the field of teacher training.

Although political agreement within the Trades Council was relatively easy to achieve on these topics, on the question of labour representation there continued to be a good deal of tension, often centred on personalities. In November 1903, for instance, after Gutteridge had failed once again to win a seat in the local elections, 2 branches of the A.S.E. condemned the Trades Council for opposing Gutteridge's candidature. This protest was initially ruled out of order, but at the December meeting of the Trades Council, Allcroft the treasurer was allowed to make a personal statement. In this he claimed that, following the previous meeting, he had been grossly insulted by a member of the Trades Council. Subsequently, this matter was dropped; that it was raised at all, however, indicates that beneath the surface political differences continued to threaten the unity of the Trades Council and specific unions.

By 1904, however, sheer common sense was beginning to swing important groups behind the L.R.C. banner. In March, for instance, the secretary of the Bakers and Confectioners wrote to MacDonald to say, "I shall do my best to persuade my union to join the L.R.C."⁴⁰ In June the

Farriers wrote to say that they had decided to give Richardson a grant, and in August the Carpenters and Joiners asked MacDonald for advice because some of their members would like to endorse Richardson but one of their branches was objecting that he was a Liberal. This brought a reply from MacDonald that "Mr. Richardson is not a L.R.C. candidate; this committee has never had an application to endorse his candidature."⁴¹ According to a later account, however, the L.R.C. had been written to officially by the Trades Council but had replied "after considering the question for three months, that they were not prepared to nominate a man."⁴² In all the circumstances then, despite MacDonald's warning of a Liberal plot, Richardson was lucky to have the enthusiastic support of the Lib-Lab. element, as well as the not so enthusiastic support of the socialists who were in no shape to field a candidate of their own.

Beneath the surface of all the manoeuvring around the question of the Richardson nomination, long lasting and fundamental political changes were at work. In March 1904, for instance, Appleton had spoken to the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society on "The Egotism of Socialists". By October, however, he was writing to tell MacDonald, after a ballot of the lace workers, that a decision to affiliate to the L.R.C. had been taken by 1,029 votes to 106. A fortnight later he wrote again, to add that he had now "resigned all connection with the Liberal Party in order that I may bring myself into line and have a free hand."⁴³ Other important trade union leaders were beginning to change sides in the same period and it is possible to sense a new atmosphere developing in which an increasing number of important activists were prepared to drop the "no politics" pretence.

In January 1904 the Trades Council had run 6 candidates for the Board of Guardians at a cost of £67. 1. 7d.⁴⁴ and in May delegates had heartily cheered Mr. E. Knight, the delegate of the Colwick branch of the Railway Servants, on his election to the chair of his local Urban District Council. In October the Trades Council had decided that it could not afford to run any direct candidates in the local elections, but only a

month later it agreed to sponsor Hancock of the N.M.A. for a vacancy in Broxtowe Ward. The November local elections were, however, contested by the I.L.P. in Sherwood Ward where in the absence of a Conservative candidate Gutteridge successfully pushed his vote up by over 200 to come within striking distance of the Liberals :

Wright	(Liberal)	844	
Gutteridge	(I.L.P.)	640	maj. 204

This improvement in the I.L.P. vote was long overdue, and it seems likely that it was achieved in the face of Lib-Lab. opposition since at the December meeting of the Trades Council several letters were read which condemned the part played by Allcroft, the well known Lib-Lab., in the Sherwood Ward election. Despite Lib-Lab. hostility, however, the I.L.P. decided to contest the seat again when a bye election became necessary a month or two later.

Added encouragement was given to the I.L.P. when at an appropriate meeting on May 1st 1905 the Trades Council decided to support Gutteridge. Gutteridge was asked if he was prepared to be under Trades Council "instructions on all labour matters" and after he had replied in the affirmative the secretary was instructed to write to the Conservative and Liberal Associations informing them of the Trades Council decision.⁴⁵ A week later, the Sherwood Ward Liberals wrote asking the Trades Council to withdraw, but after a long discussion a resolution was passed which made it clear that the Trades Council was not prepared to give "any pledges." Some idea of the strength of Gutteridge's support can be gauged by the fact that 63 Trades Council delegates handed in their names as being willing to help him.

Unfortunately, Gutteridge did not win the bye election, and it seems likely that there might have been some residual Lib-Lab. hostility to his nomination. Councillor Hancock at the Trades Council meeting which followed the campaign was asked why he had failed to support Gutteridge, and his reply that his "absence from the election was due entirely to the business of his society" seems a little weak, since at the same meeting he

opposed a resolution moved by Appleton that the time had now come for the Trades Council to affiliate to the L.R.C. Significantly, Hancock could only get the support of 14 other delegates, and the Trades Council which had just paid out £44. 5. 6d. to finance Gutteridge's campaign, agreed to affiliate to the L.R.C. at a cost of £40 per annum.⁴⁶

Later in 1905 the Trades Council supported the candidature of Appleton in Trent Ward, and his subsequent victory was hailed by the Labour Leader as a victory for the I.L.P. :

Appleton (L.R.C.)	1,009
Swain (Con.)	924

In reality, of course, the Labour Leader was over-enthusiastic. Appleton was far from being a socialist and the absence of a Liberal candidate in the Trent ward contest suggests that some kind of deal might have been struck. A later account of these years suggests that once the Trades Council had joined the L.R.C. it had thought "that having purged itself of politics by handing over that part of the business to the new organisation it would be able to devote itself to purely trade union matters."⁴⁷ If this was the case it ignored the fact that, despite the changes which were taking place, the physical and ideological dominance of the existing social order remained more or less intact, making it inevitable that the Trades Council would have no alternative but to become more and more involved in political activity.

(3)

The 1906 General Election involved the Trades Council in a great deal of political work. Naturally enough, most interest centred on the South Nottingham Division where Richardson was the Lib-Lab. candidate. Whilst building up a sound wholesale grocery business Richardson, "forthright, rugged,



In 1908 George Bell was described as "one of the younger and more ardent spirits of the independent labour movement in Nottingham." Bell began life in a grocery and provision stores in Nottingham but subsequently obtained work in an iron foundry. After joining the Ironfounders Society in 1896 he later became the assistant secretary of the Nottingham branch. In 1904 he was elected to the Trades Council Executive and in 1905 he unsuccessfully contested St. Ann's Ward in the municipal elections.

strong in character, a doughty politician"⁴⁸ had gone out of his way to befriend the leading personalities of the local trade unions. For many years he had been an honoury member of the Nottinghamshire Miners Association and he was also well known as a Labour Church "preacher". Throughout his campaign Richardson was intelligent enough to make his mission to the trade unions and the working class and he attracted large and enthusiastic audiences to meetings in chapels, schools and workshops. At one meeting John Burns spoke in his support and it was reported that six thousand were unable to gain admittance into one prodigious meeting at the Victoria Hall. Alarmed by these signs of purposeful activity, Lord Henry Bentinck the Conservative candidate was alleged to have invited 1,500 of the 13,000 constituency electorate to join him for a sit down meal.⁴⁹ Significantly, Richardson had part of his campaign expenses paid by Jesse Boot, the famous Nottingham chemist, who like many other intelligent capitalists in this period was busy advocating harmony between capital and labour. Like the local labour movement, Boot was elated when Richardson confounded MacDonald's 1903 prophesy that the seat would be won by the Conservatives.

A. Richardson	(Lib-Lab.)	6,314	
Cavendish-Bentinck	(Con.)	5,514	Maj. 800

Once the election was over the Trades Council began to make active preparations for the running of candidates at the November municipal elections. In truth, however, the Trades Council was still perplexed as to where its allegiance lay, and whilst it paid fees to the L.R.C. it was not wholly converted to the growing movement of independence. In March 1906 the Nottingham Rotary Power Workers affiliated to the L.R.C. but within this organisation and many others the Lib-Lab. tradition continued to assert itself. During the November local elections, however, over-reaction by Appleton and his friends caused a partial rupture.

At about this time the L.R.C. was in the process of becoming the Labour Party and this development seems to have generated some tension in the Trades Council. In July an attempt to move a resolution endorsing

the change was postponed. A month later, during a long argument about the creation of a Labour Party, one delegate accused the president of "sitting on him and telling an untruth." Subsequently, a resolution calling for affiliation to the Labour Party was lost by 44 votes to 27. This defeat led one delegate sarcastically to suggest that the Trades Council should get in touch with the local Conservative Association in order to arrange for the running of joint candidates.⁵⁰ Later the Trades Council resolved to fight the November elections and to contest the three seats already held by Lib-Labs. Against this background it seems that a good deal of Lib-Lab. manoeuvring was going on with Appleton at the centre.

In September 1906 the Nottingham Star drew attention to some of the double dealing then going on :

"We remember the frantic efforts Mr. Arthur Richardson has always made to disclaim any connection with the Liberal Party, especially during the municipal election contests, and how on the close of the poll he was always to be found in the Liberal Club along with the remainder of his colleagues." 51

This damaging accusation went on to suggest that both Richardson and Appleton could best be described as tightrope walkers, before saying of the lace makers secretary :

"Our good friend Mr. Appleton is evidently going to attempt the difficult task of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. He has contested Trent Ward as a Lib-Lab. candidate on two occasions and last November was elected with a majority of 84. When the question of affiliation with the L.R.C. came before the Trades Council a short time ago he resisted the proposal along with Messrs. Hancock, Pendleton and others. The contention was that it was impractical under the present circumstances, in as much as the three of them held their seats on suffrage, and a dissolution of their alliance with the Liberal Party would forfeit those seats, and be a cutting off the nose to spite the face. Since then the lace makers secretary has become the prospective labour candidate for the Ilkeston Division, against Sr. Walter Foster ... will the Nottingham Liberals (and the Trent Ward ones especially) overlook this treason, and continue to cherish the traitor... we have great admiration for Mr. Appleton's talents, and should not be surprised to find that he succeeded in

wearing the different coats to the satisfaction of both the factions concerned."

In fact, Appleton's victory was the result of a deal with the Liberals which had allowed him to be elected for one year in a bye election, whilst a straightforward Liberal was elected to fill a normal seat in the same ward for three years. The disagreements surrounding these events were directly responsible for the reconstitution of the L.R.C. to run independent labour candidates.

The controversies surrounding the 1906 local elections were sharpened by yet another defeat for the faithful Gutteridge. On this occasion his vote although smaller than previously had the effect of keeping the Liberal out :

A. Baker	(Conservative)	963	
J. Perry	(Liberal)	962	
E. Gutteridge	(I.L.P.)	361	maj. 1

His campaign as always had been honest and straightforward and it led the Nottingham Star to comment :

"One almost loses count of the number of times Mr. Gutteridge has contested this ward. He has certainly stood as a single candidate against a Liberal and a Conservative, and against the two combined, with varying support but never with success ... his attitude is consistent and places him and his party in a different category to those labour candidates who make all their attempts on Conservative seats and leave religiously alone those occupied by Liberals." 52

Only six weeks after this defeat for Gutteridge, the socialists in the town, after a special meeting at the Clarion Club, decided to unite their forces, formally abandon the Lib-Lab. element and set up a Labour Party. Mr. G. O. Richards was the first secretary of the new organisation and in December 1906 he wrote to tell MacDonald :

"A local Labour Party having been formed here ... wants to affiliate to the National Labour Party. For information I might state that a local L.R.C. existed before but through the action of the Trades Council in not agreeing to an independent

labour policy it was dissolved. But the Nottingham and District Building Trades Federation along with other branches of the Trades Unions decided to start an organisation on the lines of the national party and up to now the scheme has progressed as well as can be expected in a place where the leaders of the societies connected with the staple industries are simply hangers-on to the Liberal Party." 53

As one might expect, the I.L.P. seems to have played a crucial role in this significant development. During the course of 1906 the local branch enjoyed a new lease of life, and its outdoor propaganda work was attracting huge audiences. During the first week of May, for instance, Pete Curran was the speaker at a number of meetings which were attended by crowds of about two thousand. Treble the usual number of Labour Leader copies were disposed of, and large meetings throughout June gave the local group every encouragement.⁵⁴ During July, Councillor Arthur Hayday of West Ham spoke at I.L.P. meetings in the town, and this seems to have been his first contact with the Nottingham movement which he was to represent as a Labour M.P. from 1918.

Throughout July the Nottingham I.L.P. was registering increasing success. The sale of the Labour Leader was going up all the time, and new members were joining. In August Gutteridge organised a meeting on "Labour Representation" at nearby Hucknall with the result that an I.L.P. branch was quickly formed in the town. In September another I.L.P. branch was opened at Bulwell, and at huge meetings in Nottingham addressed by Fred Richards M.P. "monster crowds and collections broke the record."⁵⁵ Clearly, a new mood was abroad and it is not surprising to find the Labour Leader reporting that the workers of Nottingham were "jubilant at the prospect of the coming fight."

To some extent, of course, this jubilation was premature. The socialists were again defeated in the 1906 local elections, and the 1906 ballot on Labour Party affiliation which was conducted by the N.M.A. must have deeply disappointed the local militants. Of the miners balloted, 11,292 voted against affiliation, whilst only 1,806 registered votes in

favour. Since the membership of the N.M.A. in 1906 was 23,774, many of the men would seem to have been too apathetic to participate.⁵⁶ The I.L.P. was keen, of course, to win the miners over and in July Pierce, the secretary of the Nottingham I.L.P., wrote to MacDonald :

"The miners are about to ballot on joining the Labour Party ...the officials seem to be against affiliation with the Labour Party but on the other hand there is a very strong movement amongst the rank and file in favour of independent action through the Labour Party." ⁵⁷

Subsequently, Pierce asked MacDonald to help provide a speaker for the miners annual demonstration but disappointingly, MacDonald replied :

"My E.C. is taking no part in working up opinion regarding these ballots; if it did it would be open to unpleasant attack." ⁵⁸

Despite this refusal, however, the Nottingham I.L.P. joined with the Mansfield Federation of the party at what was a most successful demonstration. Mrs. Bruce Glasier was in the town at the time and she was responsible for three excellent meetings on the Forest at which she "ridiculed the popular notion of today that those who worked the hardest received the most." As a result of these meetings, 11 new members joined the women's section of the I.L.P., whilst 12 men also gave in their names to join the party.⁵⁹

(4)

In February 1907 Arthur Richardson gave the first of a series of Parliamentary reports to the Trades Council. His victory undoubtedly helped to build enthusiasm within the local labour movement and the 1907 summer campaign of the socialists showed plenty of evidence of a renewed determination to carry the fight to the political opposition. The main feature of the summer campaign was a great August demonstration, when :

"The Labour Party in Nottingham had a regular field day, on Sunday, with banners and headed by a band they paraded the principal streets in the morning as a preliminary to a meeting in the Market Place with Mr. J. Parker M.P. and H. Pickard, organiser of the gas workers..."⁶⁰

Gutteridge moved the resolution in favour of labour representation with the result that it was decided that George Bell of the Ironfounders and Welsh of the Bricklayers would fight St. Anne's and Byron Wards respectively at the November municipal elections.

Shortly before the election took place a Nottingham Conservative Councillor John Hooton came before the Trades Council to ask for their endorsement. Hooton told the Trades Council that, after sitting on the Council for nine years he had recently cut himself adrift from the Conservative Party and would like to represent labour alone. Hooton's request was endorsed, and he retained his seat but both Bell and Welsh found themselves at the bottom of the poll.

Later, Richardson came before the Trades Council again. This time he told the delegates that "it was with considerable pleasure that he stood before them the only body of men to whom he was responsible, to give an account of his stewardship ... he acknowledged no other authority than the trade union organisation as represented by the Nottingham Trades Council."⁶¹ Despite these assurances, however, Richardson's position was becoming increasingly vulnerable as the socialists in the labour movement began to assert themselves. Many members of the I.L.P. saw themselves as the conscience and spearhead of the labour movement, and in 1907 this group led a national revolt against the Liberal alliance. In April, 11 branches came together to form a Nottingham and District Federation and later, those who saw the alliance in the terms of a straight-jacket were able to tighten the rules governing the selection of candidates at the I.L.P. 1907 annual conference, and in the same year the victory of Victor Grayson in the Colne Valley bye election on an out and out socialist ticket encouraged all those who saw working class interests being stifled by irrelevant parliamentary conventions.

These developments were mirrored in Nottingham at a meeting in the Albert Hall addressed by Ramsey MacDonald, then the Chairman of the I.L.P. According to a letter written to the Labour Leader it seems that on this

occasion, after the chairman had closed the meeting and whilst the aisles were still thronged with people :

"a man arose and in strident tones read out a resolution setting forth the claims of the class war as a solvent of all problems ... this spread confusion in the public mind, and what is even more important, did no good to the 'cult' ... it was nothing more than a childish tilt at the chairman of the I.L.P. This done, they made for the door, wildly gesticulating, and shouting 'It is carried'. Doubtless the 'class' journals of the world will by now have been appraised of the great victory." 62

On the face of it, this was an attack on S.D.F. supporters, but there is no doubt that many amongst the I.L.P.'s membership were also supporters of the "class war" approach. As the year turned the I.L.P. in Nottingham seemed to be on the crest of a wave. At the end of January 1908 the Labour Leader reported that the I.L.P. had so "~~grown-in-numbers-and-the~~ cause of socialism is spreading so rapidly in the town that the secretary cannot give the attention he would desire to the affairs of the branch." 63 Because of these problems the branch decided to appoint a paid organiser, and in March a most successful social was held, to welcome Sam Higginbottom of Blackburn, the newly appointed full time secretary.

Higginbottom quickly picked up the reins and on the Sunday after his appointment he addressed a large audience on "The Work Before Us", with such effect that 12 new members were enrolled at the end of the meeting. In March the branch literature secretary reported that the members were "elated by the way our I.L.P. literature sells" and when the summer propaganda got under way, members began to flood to the local branch. At the end of June things were going so well that the Clarion reported :

"The Nottingham I.L.P. is making history in the City. Six successful socialist meetings were held last weekend, large central premises have been taken as an H.Q., a municipal candidate has already been selected and systematic distribution of literature started in the ward to be contested." 64

Three weeks later the I.L.P. staged an impressive demonstration at the N.M.A. annual demonstration at Eastwood. In contrast with earlier demonstrations

the platform this time was occupied not by Liberal coalowners but by Robert Smillie and Katharine Glasier as well as Bunfield, the Nottinghamshire Miners president. The job of weaning the miners away from the Liberal Party was, however, still an uphill task and in the 1908 ballot on the question of Labour Party affiliation the N.M.A. still voted heavily against the suggestion.⁶⁵

The Labour Leader, however, was far from downhearted and it reported that, despite the large majority against affiliation, "so great was the impression made by the speakers...that many were converted to the policy of political action."⁶⁶ Many of these converts must have been at the I.L.P. demonstration and procession which followed the miners gala; this featured Charles Duncan M.P., Alderman Banton of Leicester, and Councillor Arthur Hayday, all wearing large red rosettes. Like all the other I.L.P. meetings during the summer of 1908, this meeting attracted "record crowds, record literature sales, record collections."⁶⁷ The excitement and enthusiasm which the I.L.P. was building up reached its first peak in September when the TUC visited Nottingham for its Annual Congress.

Under the headline, "ILP REVIVAL IN NOTTINGHAM", the Labour Leader early in September reported the opening of the party's new rooms in Freechurch Street.

"In no industrial centre is the growth of the I.L.P. and the spread of socialist ideas being made more manifest than in Nottingham ...having taken the plunge and engaged an organiser the branch hoped he would consolidate the I.L.P. energies, rally the scattered forces and make the party a power in the town. The results have justified all expectations. New recruits are steadily pouring in, discouraged members have renewed their faith, old fighters have picked up their weapons, this time for a fight to the finish. Six months time has witnessed the doubling of the I.L.P. ... Nottingham I.L.P. now possesses a little 'Labour Journal' of its own which though small, has caused a commotion in the political dovecotes."⁶⁸

The rooms were opened by Katharine Bruce Glasier, her arms filled with roses, the gift of the women and children of the branch. A great day

followed. Three big outdoor meetings were held in the morning, and a fine gasworkers' demonstration with Robert Blatchford in the chair occupied the afternoon. Later the S.D.F. held a large meeting in the Victoria Hall with Thorne, Hyndman and Tillet amongst the speakers, calling on the local authority to organise work for the unemployed.⁶⁹

The climax came, however, at the Sunday evening monster I.L.P. rally in the Empire Theatre :

"At 5.30 p.m. the select citizens of Nottingham thought surely the revolution had come. Thousands of well-dressed men and women were standing in line, waiting patiently till the doors of the Empire opened to admit them to a socialist meeting. Three thousand people waited expectantly while the orchestra played and the choir sang ... outside men besieged the doors clamouring for admittance. Little wonder that old veterans of the branch were astounded, and pinched themselves to feel if they were awake ... later the vast audience sang the opening labour hymn in mighty unison and then settled down to enjoy the sturdy eloquence of Curran and Clynes."

Katharine Glasier was the star of this meeting, and when she rose to speak the scene was electrifying as with burning words she described the cruelly needless waste and moral hideousness of the present system. Indeed, concluded the Labour Leader, this great meeting was "the sensation of Nottingham, the Nottingham I.L.P. has at last come into its own."⁷⁰

These huge meetings and the enthusiasm which surrounded them were, of course, partly generated by the fact that the T.U.C. Congress was in Nottingham. The Congress was held in the Mechanics Hall and there were aspects of it which, in their way, were as significant for the future of the local labour movement as the huge socialist meetings. Writing in the Labour Leader, for instance Bruce Glasier drew attention to the almost complete lack of "distinguished strangers." For the first time for many years, not a single titled personage ornamented the platform, nor was there to be seen "the usual galaxy of intellectuals, the Sydney Webbs, Sir John Gorsts and the professors."⁷¹ Equally significant were the comments of the chairman of the Nottingham Trades Council, Thundercliffe, described by

Glazier as "a very stout man, with a very thin voice who declared that in Nottingham labour had hitherto failed to conquer the City Council, because it was divided against itself." Despite Glazier's perceptive comment that Thundercliffe's remarks "were a cryptic utterance seeing that Mr. Thundercliffe had been an opponent of labour representation", the shift in Thundercliffe's position was symptomatic of the change of philosophy being undergone even by an "old obstructionist" like Thorneloe, the Trades Council secretary.

Later the three Nottingham M.P.'s addressed the Congress. Predictably, Sir Henry Cotton delivered a homily on the desirability of peace between employers and workmen. James Yoxall "urged that education was a greater force than Parliament or the trade unions", without bothering to make it clear what kind of education he referred to. Finally, Richardson who was introduced by the Congress chairman, Shackleton "with doubtful felicity as a 'labour member' was called to the rostrum." His opening allusion to the labour movement as the 'children of Israel in the wilderness' was not very propitious. He went on, however, to attack Blatchford's militarist utterances before making a stirring and even passionate appeal against the misery of the unemployed. During the course of the civic welcome there had been much solemn speech "and nearly all waxed eloquent over the beauties and glories and superlative excellence of Nottingham." Now, however, Richardson pictured the "two thousand unemployed who now tramp aimlessly through Nottingham's streets" before pointing out that as the delegates had passed in procession on their way to the official congress church service "through Leen side and Hockley, we saw not dozens or scores but hundreds of little children without boots or stockings, with scarcely any clothing." Glazier commented, "Somehow, Mr. Richardson seemed to have a good side to us all - I.L.P'ers, Clarionettes, and Liberals."⁷²

The growth of unemployment which Richardson was here drawing attention to had been a worrying factor throughout 1908. In June the

Trades Council had been asked to send delegates to a meeting of the unemployed committee, and in July Appleton reported that the City Council's unemployed committee had registered 1,088 skilled men and about a thousand unskilled out of work, not taking into account casual labour. Later, a deputation of the unemployed met outside the Council Chamber. Initially, the Mayor and the police would not let them in. Ultimately, however, the Mayor saw two men and it was agreed that some men should be given work levelling the Forest. At the same time the Trades Council was told that young men were parading the town with a banner inscribed "Find our children Food".⁷³ Early in August the "Out of Work Committee" approached the Trades Council to ask for funds to help it carry on its work. A week later, during an acrimonious debate at the Trades Council a good deal of disapproval was expressed at the methods adopted by the unemployed. Allcroft, the treasurer, refused money to the unemployed on the grounds that the "Council had enough to do to look after organised labour without paying the bills of those who brought them in nothing ... he did not think the unemployed were helping themselves to find situations by going processioning about the town and paying a bugler a shilling a time." Much of the Trades Council opposition was, however, political. Allcroft objected to "political speakers" and Sadler of the Typographical Association objected that the "dignity of the Council was likely to suffer if the Trades Council remained associated with it." The Right to Work Committee, it was claimed, had been formed by "a small socialistic body, it was not dignified to hold meetings in the streets and make stump speeches."⁷⁴ Despite these objections the resolution to sever contact with the unemployed committee was lost by 34 votes to 30.

In fact, the Right to Work Committee was composed of delegates from the Trades Council, the Building Trades Federation, the S.D.F. and the I.L.P.⁷⁵ The Trades Council Executive maintained its hostility, and after its September meeting once again recommended severance with the Unemployed Committee. Despite this opposition early in October 150 of Nottingham's out of work

left Trinity Square "with a flourish from a bugle and a hearty send off by a large crowd of spectators to march to the Metropolis to claim the 'Right to Work'."⁷⁶ A day later the Trades Council decided to call a special conference to put the matter of unemployment on a proper footing. A long argument ensued as to whether philanthropic societies ought to be involved. The right wing led by Thundercliffe argued that "they had been discontented with the way in which the unemployment movement had been managed or mismanaged", whilst the left wing countered by insisting that "they wanted justice, not charity."⁷⁷ The Nottingham marchers reached London on October 15th, where they were received by John Burns, who was asked to help get government help for Nottingham's four thousand unemployed. That help was urgently needed was in no doubt; in November, for instance, a hundred bricklayers' labourers went as a deputation to the Board of Guardians to appeal for work, lead-
 the Nottingham Express to comment, "Many men are positively starving ... they were not corner boys or loafers."⁷⁸

The economic pressures which led a group of the Nottingham unemployed marching the miles to London were also having their effect on the minds of a much larger group of the population. This group which included representatives of all social classes were, towards the end of 1908, beginning to ask themselves if the factors which led the Mayor to establish a relief fund in November of that year really were beyond human control. If the answer was 'yes' it was reasoned that something needed to be done to change the system in which this could be admitted. Something of the change in the political atmosphere in this period can be sensed from the letter which the Nottingham A.S.E. addressed to Ramsay MacDonald at the end of October. Why, Tom Morley, the branch secretary, wanted to know "didn't the Labour Party press the government to forthwith give precedence over all business until some temporary relief was given to the starving millions, who are out of work through no fault of their own?" Morley went on to ask why it was that the Labour Party had given no support to Victor Grayson in his efforts to champion the cause of the unemployed?⁷⁹ MacDonald sarcastic-

ally replied that Grayson impressed "neither Liberals, Tories, Labourmen, or Irishmen ... I only wish that those who are passing these grandiloquent resolutions could have a quiet talk with members of the House of Commons."⁸⁰

Another indication of the important political changes which were under way came in the municipal election campaign which represented the second major peak in I.L.P. activity during 1908. In the late summer the branch had selected George Watts, a small businessman, to represent them in Manvers Ward. In the event, however, Ernest Gutteridge had to fight the seat because of Watts' withdrawal. The election address issued by Gutteridge explained :

"Finding that our friend Mr. Watts could not be beaten by fair play the foulest tactics have been used to drive him from the field. He is not a wealthy man, and the boycott of his trade has been such a big financial strain that the Labour Party have accepted his withdrawal to save him from financial disaster."

Stepping in at the last moment, Gutteridge concentrated his campaign on the unemployed, arguing that with four thousand unemployed in the city, it was the duty of the City Council to find work for the unemployed. Later, the I.L.P. attacked some of the appalling housing in the city and Gutteridge's election address pointed out that the death rate of children under 12 months old in Manvers Ward was 200 per thousand. To remedy this situation he claimed the Council should build houses with baths and modern conveniences to let at rents within the reach of the workers.⁸¹

Reporting the adoption meeting of Gutteridge the Nottingham Express records him as saying that he believed "in the collective ownership of everything that is essential to humanity." A week later, Victor Grayson, now suspended from the House of Commons, spoke at an election meeting in support of Gutteridge. With Gutteridge in the chair and the leaders of the Nottingham unemployed marchers on the platform, the I.L.P. band played before Grayson spoke for the next one and a half hours. Grayson wasted no time on the social niceties but went straight onto the attack:

"Look at some of the types of humanity you see in the great hotels and restaurants, little, podgy, rounded, palpitating, com-

placent protoplasms I call them. If I had a chance of making everyone of you like that tomorrow I would not. It is not food only we want. It is the vistas of life which exist beyond food ... we are idealists here tonight; we have a vision and a dream and if we sometimes seem rude, it is not that we love etiquette less but that we love humanity more." 82

Predictably, Grayson's climax brought the packed audience to its feet to sing the "Red Flag" and to pledge themselves to ensure Gutteridge's victory. The opposition, of course, described all this as "brag and bluff" but there is no doubt that Dr. Brown Sim, the sitting Liberal Councillor, was worried that his occupation of the seat was at risk.

This anxiety was well placed for when the result was announced the Liberals were bottom of the poll:

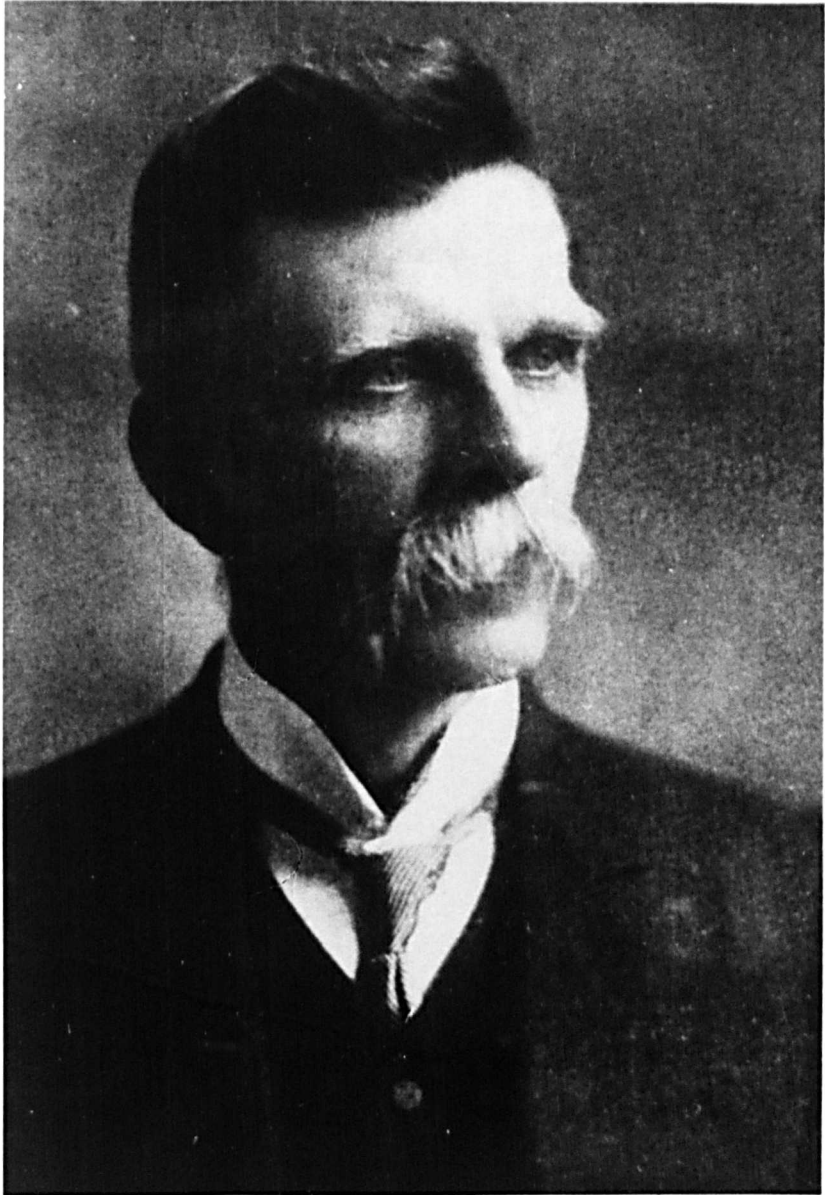
Gutteridge (Labour)	,156	
Armitage (Tory)	,144	
Sim (Liberal)	795	maj. 12

This result must have come as a great shock to the established political parties, for the first time a genuine socialist had been returned for a Nottingham Council seat. Armitage, the Tory candidate, tried to explain what had happened by claiming that "the working man was very much like a child; he was very easily led by figures and statements which he did not understand."⁸³ Not surprisingly, this patronising dismissal of the working class vote infuriated the I.L.P. who replied :

"The workmen of Manvers Ward will make a note of what this rich Tory business man thinks and says about them after the election. While he was seeking their votes they were 'gentlemen', 'free and intelligent electors etc. Now, when Armitage is sacked he loses his temper and speaks what he really thinks. Keep it Stephen, there were 1,156 men in Manvers who had enough sense to vote against you anyhow." 84

Writing to MacDonald with news of the vote, Wainwright, who had acted as agent, explained :

"The Liberal Party held Manvers for years and regarded it as unassailable. It started in earnest last May, when 14 days before the election we had to withdraw our man because of a business boycott, we got Gutteridge in and ... published



John George Hancock was born in 1851 at Pinxton in Derbyshire. On the death of William Bailey, Hancock became the N.M.A. Agent. In 1904 he became a Lib-Lab member of the City Council. In 1906 he became a J.P. and later was Lib-Lab M.P. for a Derbyshire seat. Hancock was a local preacher for the Methodist Free Church.

'A Foul Conspiracy' and a special number of our journal... it is our little man from Blackburn that has started to paint Nottingham red." 85

Higginbottom, the "little man from Blackburn", certainly possessed the kind of organisational ability which may well have been a factor in ensuring the I.L.P. victory. In truth, however, Gutteridge's arrival as Nottingham's first Socialist Councillor was really the culmination of long years of socialist propaganda, coupled with the economic conditions of the town.

Looking at the surviving copy of the Nottingham Labour Journal the activity of the I.L.P. in 1908 was impressive. It included lectures on socialism every Sunday at 6.30 p.m. in the I.L.P. rooms. Outdoor propaganda at 11 a.m. on Sunday mornings on the Forest and Vernon Park. A socialist Sunday School every Sunday at 2.45 p.m. Choir practise on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. Orchestra on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. Members' meeting at 8 p.m. on Thursdays, speakers' class every Friday at 8 p.m. and a social every Saturday night at 7.30 p.m. Against the background of this kind of effort and enthusiasm the Conservative and Liberal establishments were right to be worried. Speaking at the Liberal Club after the poll, Alderman Sir Edward Fraser made the point :

"The advent of this first socialist is a matter of prime importance. I prophesy that the result of his return will be that the contests of the future will be complicated by the appearance of socialist candidates where they hitherto would not have thought of trying conclusions with our party." 86

The Nottingham Express, when reporting the result, spoke of the "growing power of socialism", and there is no doubt that it was this which generated the wild scenes of enthusiasm at the I.L.P. rooms where, after singing the "Red Flag" and "England Arise" the members cheered Gutteridge for ten minutes before allowing him to speak.

Reflecting on Gutteridge's momentous victory, it was, of course, silly for the Liberals and Conservatives to delude themselves into think-

Broxtowe Ward Municipal Election, 1909.

Why all Progressives should
VOTE FOR HANCOCK.

- 1.—BECAUSE **LABOUR** should be fairly represented on the City Council. At present only **Four** out of the 64 members of the Council are Labour Members. The Tories are trying to push one of these out.
- 2.—BECAUSE Broxtowe Ward is essentially a Labour Ward and ought to return a Labour Member.
- 3.—BECAUSE he is striving to secure better pay for the worst-paid employees of the Council. The Tory "business man" blocks the way.
- 4.—BECAUSE his opponent is not recognised by Trades' Unionists as a Fair Employer and does not employ **ONE** *bona fide* Trades' Unionist in his Bakery Business.
- 5.—BECAUSE the **QUALITY** of the work he has done is a better recommendation than any record of attendances can be.
- 6.—BECAUSE he is a **VOTER** in the Ward.
- 7.—BECAUSE the *Nottingham Guardian* says:—"This year the Municipal Elections will have a strong bearing upon the fate of the Budget."

All Progressives therefore are **STRONGLY** urged to
VOTE FOR HANCOCK.

Printed and Published by J. Exton, Black Boy Yard, Long Row, Nottingham.

Hancock was a typical Lib-Lab of the old school. He ran as a "Progressive" in order to avoid any suggestion that he might be a socialist. He was supported by the Liberal Association as well as the president, secretary, and treasurer of the Trades Council.

ing that his victory could be explained simply by reference to the activity of red agitators. Although, of course, the activity of Gutteridge, Higginbottom and the rest was of vital importance, the I.L.P. victory also needs to be explained by the tormenting fears of personal and family misfortunes which haunted so many of the Edwardian working class. The I.L.P.'s own journal summed it all up, when, after lamenting the fact that some foolish men had got too much Tory-Liberal ale and taken to pounding each others bodies near Snienton Market because they could not tell the difference between "Liberal sweater or Tory rackrenter", it went on :

"In spite of influence, in spite of beer and bribery, cajolery and intimidation, the workers of Manvers Ward rallied round their own Labour flag and achieved a magnificent triumph ... the labour movement in Nottingham has too long been hindered and its ranks split by 'labour' men who have traitorously sold their class by accepting pay for political services from Liberal-Tory employers. Verily they shall have their reward. Their day is done. We have no longer any use for paid Liberal-cum-Tory-cum-Labour hacks." 87

It had taken Ernest Gutteridge six electoral fights to win this seat, but in many ways the battle was only just beginning.

ATTEMPTS AT CONSOLIDATION: 1909-1914

In May 1909 the progress which had been made in uniting the different forces of labour was demonstrated by the holding of a joint May Day demonstration in which the Trades Council, the I.L.P. and the Labour Party all took part. The procession of 3,000 included five bands, most of the major unions took part and their gay banners filled the Market Place. The I.L.P. wearing red rosettes turned out in force and a waggonette full of happy youngsters from the I.L.P. Sunday School was a noticeable feature. J. Thorneloe J.P., the secretary of the Trades Council, presided on No.1 platform where Gutteridge moved the resolution, seconded by Sadler of the Typographical Society. The No.2 platform was manned by Ben Hewing, the president of the Labour Party and the resolution was moved by Hayday. At 12.15 p.m. the bugle sounded and a resolution recognising that the "private monopoly of land and capital is the root cause of unemployment and poverty" was moved and carried. ¹

The Nottingham I.L.P. followed Gutteridge's victory in November 1908 with a full programme of winter lectures and socials and at the beginning of January 1909 the branch rallied in large numbers to welcome Katharine Bruce Glasier. Nottingham was proud of its new rooms, and of the way in which new members were flocking to the branch. Nottingham, predicted the Labour Leader, would "make history during 1909." During February the branch sponsored a highly successful series of four Fabian lectures on "Modern Socialism" and later that same month they invited Captain Morrison, the Conservative candidate for East Nottingham, to speak on "The Fallacies of Socialism." ²

By now the I.L.P. in the town had established a group of I.L.P. scouts who, early in May, announced that they were "going strong. We

have an interesting campaign planned for the summer. Netherfield and Beeston are to be the principle points of attack." ³ Their first activity, however, was to be in the electioneering surrounding a bye-election campaign in Meadow Ward which took place towards the end of May. Herbert Bowles, an I.L.P. member, had been nominated as the Labour candidate, and in the absence of a Liberal he was able to capitalise on Gutteridge's earlier victory. When the poll was declared he had narrowly won the seat:

Herbert Bowles	(Labour)	912	
W.E. Walker	(Conservative)	849	maj. 63

A day or two later, at a Trades Council meeting in an interesting sequel, it emerged that Houston, the renegade Tory councillor who only a month or two earlier had declared himself a "labour" councillor, had supported Walker, the Conservative candidate, during the bye election campaign. Subsequently, at the Trades Council meeting in August, Houston was repudiated by 67 votes to 31. ⁴

Bowles's campaign had been a lively one, although shortage of funds meant that his nomination meeting had to be in the open air. The Conservative candidate, Major Walker, was the manager of Clifton pit and this might have helped Bowles win the support of the miners and railwaymen who lived in the ward. Cecil Roberts, writing in his autobiography, The Years of Promise, described the Meadows Ward of this period dismissively as "a world of the cloth cap over the dormant brain." ⁵ This heavy sarcasm, however, was probably motivated by Roberts' own political views. Beneath the surface the workers of the town in increasing numbers were coming to agree with Frank Rose, the Labour Leader columnist, who told an open air meeting in support of Bowles :

"This was a machine age, invention after invention was displacing the skilled craftsman, then the unskilled labourer ... it was a question of getting control of the land and the machinery ... the great struggle for trade unionists, was the fight for the land and the tools. " ⁶

This message with its potent appeal to the unemployed, the skilled and the unskilled, helped to carry Bowles through, and at the Trades Council meeting which followed his victory, delegates agreed that his return had "demonstrated what can be done by united effort."⁷

Throughout the summer the I.L.P. maintained its now traditional outdoor propaganda programme and in August Higginbottam was organising five meetings on each Sunday in different parts of the city. In addition, two meetings a week were being held in the wards which the I.L.P. had decided to contest in the November local elections. In fact, the I.L.P. with the scouts as their spearhead were already laying systematic siege to the wards selected, and as the summer continued the pressure was increased :

"Every week we hold at least two street corner meetings until every street has been visited ...besides this we own a little sheet, The Nottingham Labour Journal, which is systematically distributed each month to every house in the wards to be fought. The same man or woman visits the same houses every month. I.L.P. 'Commonsense' leaflets are also given out at all street corner meetings ...as to our policy we work at elections as part of the Labour Party. There is a full and frank understanding between the I.L.P. and the trade unions. There is no idle chatter about 'capturing'. Most of the leading trade unionists are socialists and members of our I.L.P. branch. In the natural course of events the candidates of the Labour Party are I.L.P. men. The Trades Council also is rapidly changing its complexion. Its old Lib-Labism is dead, having given way to our vigorous policy of complete independence."⁸

By late October the I.L.P. branch was "going very strong, with new members joining every week" but despite an overall sense of optimism amongst the socialists it became obvious as the municipal elections approached that Lib-Labism was far from dead.

The residual strength of Lib-Labism in this period is best demonstrated by the career of J.G. Hancock, the N.M.A. full time agent. In July 1909 Hancock was selected to contest the parliamentary vacancy of Mid Derbyshire with the support of the Derbyshire Miners Association. During the

campaign which followed the socialists in the constituency grew restless as it became clear that Hancock, like so many other Lib-Labs, was trying to face both ways. "Is he a Liberal, is he a Socialist, or is he a mixture of Liberalism and Labour on the pattern of Mr. Harvey, who has done so little since the North East miners sent him to Parliament?" asked the Sheffield Telegraph.⁹ The answer to this question soon became clear. Bruce Glasier wrote in his diary during July that although the Mid Derbyshire election had gone well "doubtless there will be grumbles and allegations of a Liberal deal"¹⁰. In August MacDonald wrote to Hancock enclosing a report from the Nottingham Express of a Liberal victory celebration :

"I need not say that this is making things very awkward. We have to defend the position against a very aggressive attack made by considerable numbers of our own members...it was a Liberal meeting, called to celebrate a Liberal victory, and you attended although you signed our constitution...surely there must be some mistake." 11

During this period Hancock, who had been sent a telegram of support from the Nottingham Trades Council during the Mid Derbyshire election, was also involved in a campaign to retain his Nottingham City Council seat and there is no doubt that his political balancing act was causing a good deal of embarrassment. In September, MacDonald wrote to Hancock again about reports that he had been speaking under the auspices of the Felixtowe and Walton Liberal Club :

"You have done this after my talk with you... we are anxious to give you time to build a bridge from the past into the future but I think you are behaving in a most indiscreet way. " 12

A week later Higginbottom the secretary of the Nottingham I.L.P., wrote to MacDonald to complain bitterly :

"We in this city have striven hard to build up the idea of political independence for Labour and we are just beginning to reap good results. It will hamper and destroy our work if Mr. Hancock is allowed to pursue his way unchecked." 13

Hancock, it seems, was prepared to throw caution to the winds with the consequence that during the course of his campaign he alienated important groups amongst the town's socialists and trade unionists. In September MacDonald wrote to Hancock yet again to say that "things seem to be getting worse rather than better... resolutions are coming from Nottingham, object-ing..."¹⁴

As the local election campaign continued the Liberal candidate for Wollaton Ward wrote to ask the Trades Council for support. This request intensely annoyed the increasing number of socialists who made the point "He has no right to put Labour on his bills; we cannot recognise his as a Labour candidate in any circumstances."¹⁵ In June the Labour Party had offered the services of Gutteridge and Bowles to the Trades Council and it seems that the socialists were becoming increasingly significant, and this was underlined in September when G.F. Berry, the I.L.P. candidate in Manvers Ward, was allowed to tell the Trades Council that "he would get rid of private capitalists and private interests" after an attempt to stop him speaking had secured only 2 votes.¹⁶

At his final election meeting in Broxtowe Ward, Hancock was supported on the platform by Bunfield of the N.M.A. and Sir Edward Fraser of the Liberal Association. Questioned about his position, Hancock explained that "he was not a socialist in the ordinary, acceptance of the term, and never was; he might be on the way to socialism and there might be a good deal in the socialistic scheme... he, however, was no more or less than a labour candidate."¹⁷ Hancock had also been supported by the President, secretary and treasurer of the Trades Council, as well as old Lib-Lab. supporters like Pendleton and Hardstaffe, significantly, however, none of this was enough to enable him to win the seat :

A.B. Gibson (Con.)	1,358	
J.G. Hancock (Lib.)	1,185	maj. 173

Perhaps predictably, in view of the confusion surrounding the concept of a "Labour" candidate, the other 1909 electoral contests fought by genuine

socialists were also lost. In Manvers Ward G.F. Berry failed to win the seat by 324 votes and in St. Ann's Ward an S.D.F. candidate, after a campaign described by the Nottingham Guardian as a "burlesque", could only get 118 votes.¹⁸

The bitterness generated by these defeats seems to have been particularly corrosive, and only a day after the results had been declared the secretary of the Nottingham Labour Party wrote to MacDonald to complain of Hancock:

"After signing the constitution of the National Labour Party he has contested a seat for the Nottingham City Council as a PROGRESSIVE adopted by the LIBERAL PARTY ... after years of hard work to form a local Labour Representation Committee based on independent lines we have got two representatives on the City Council and the action of Mr. Hancock weakens our position."¹⁹

Despite the 1909 electoral disappointments, however, real progress had been made during the year. In March the Building Trades Council had rejoined the Trades Council, bringing with it a further two thousand affiliated members. The bye election campaign of Bowles, who was a delegate of the Carpenters and Joiners, had helped cement the new alliance, and despite the tactics of Hancock and his Lib-Lab. supporters, the I.L.P. was reporting at the end of the year that "new members are still coming in."²⁰

(2)

The Parliamentary struggles of this period came to a head in the two General Elections of 1910. The arguments which led first to the prorogation of Parliament and later to its dissolution raged from the introduction of the Liberal budget in April 1909 to the House of Lords' refusal to enact it in November 1909. In Nottingham, as elsewhere, the political temperature began to rise some months before the January 1910 General Election, and as might be expected, the local labour movement found itself in the thick of the argument.

The first shots were fired in September 1909 when at a Budget League meeting Sir Henry Cotton, the Liberal M.P. for East Nottingham, asked if the House of Lords would throw out the budget, replied: "I wish to goodness they would ... the wings of the House of Lords would be clipped and their power taken away." Cotton's comment led the Nottingham Express to write that "the Liberals are ready and eager for the fray, and whether the peers pass the budget or throw it out, in the words of Mr. Gladstone, 'we stand to win'." ²¹ Later, Mr. W. Brownrigg of the Budget League, in typical peer baiting language, declared that his wish was to :

"make the basis of taxation as broad as the broad acres of the Duke of Norfolk and as narrow as the slenderest income of the poorest labourer." ²²

After the House of Lords had thrown out the budget on November 30th 1909 the Nottingham Express, beside itself with excitement, opined :

"The die is cast...the fateful decision of the Lords last night brings the peers and the people at last face to face and clears the way for the fiercest struggle witnessed in this country since the turbulent days of the Reform Bill." ²³

In the weeks which were to follow, however, the turbulence referred to here by the town's Liberal newspaper with such delighted anticipation was to swamp the ambitions not only of Nottingham's leading Liberals, but of the town's socialists too.

At the January Trades Council meeting, many of the old internal tensions reasserted themselves against the background of the General Election campaign which was then in full swing. Predictably, a difference of opinion emerged between those who argued against the advisability of supporting any candidate not run under the constitution of the Labour Party, and those who were still in favour of backing Lib-Lab. candidates. In the end it was resolved to send "fraternal greetings" to John George Hancock, whilst hoping that the "workers of Mid Derbyshire will again return him as their representative." Additionally, the Trades Council issued a manifesto on behalf of Richardson, the Lib-Lab. M.P. for South Nottingham, and sent a

letter to the electors of West Ham recommending "our old comrade, Will Thorne."²⁴

The January 1910 election campaign afforded considerable opportunity for platform oratory and this was eagerly seized by Richardson, who, speaking at his adoption meeting in early January, referred to "arrogant peers" and "downtrodden classes".²⁵ The Conservative opposition, too, delighted in the use of hyperbolic language and in Nottingham they made as much capital as possible out of the future of the lace trade. Joseph Chamberlain, writing to the Conservative candidates, claimed :

"Nottingham will understand it is in our interest to move quickly in the direction of Tariff Reform. In fact, without something of the sort I do not believe Nottingham can hold its present position."²⁶

Cecil Roberts was also a supporter of Tariff Reform and during the Election campaign he made his debut as a political speaker :

"I was an ardent Liberal and made my first political speech before the local Cosmopolitan Debating Society. It was a socialist hot-bed with a vigorous following. A near riot was created by my provocative line and a fat red-faced woman sitting in the front row who exclaimed in a loud voice, stirred up by my attack on the socialists, 'Listen to him, the saucy young pup! I wouldn't be 'is mother for anything!' To specially annoy them I carried a monocle on a cord. It was a stage monocle, a piece of plain glass. I wore a black stock like Lord Henry's. My elegance was an affront to proletarian equality."²⁷

The Nottingham Guardian too was strongly in favour of Tariff Reform and it depicted the French, Germans and Americans as demolishing Britain's lace trade whilst John Bull, standing helplessly by, asks "Men of Nottingham, are you going to allow this to go on much longer? You know what will happen in the end. Then do your duty today and plump for Tariff Reform."²⁸

The spate of letters to both the unionist Nottingham Guardian and the Liberal Nottingham Express bears testimony to the degree of local interest aroused.

"Put minor issues to one side in this crisis. There is only one way to help yourselves, and that is to vote solid for Tariff Reform." So wrote one eager partisan to the Nottingham Guardian.²⁹ Richardson, of course,

was a Free Trader and throughout the campaign he delighted in the iniquities of local Tariff Reform manufacturers like Mr. Jardine, or Sir John Turney, but as a consequence he came under heavy attack from those who wanted to convince the lace workers that his policies would lead to the collapse of their industry.

In the Eastern Division of Nottingham, Captain Morrison, the Conservative candidate, tried to generate the same fears in the minds of the town's hosiery workers by arguing that "preference helped the hosiery trade". So thorough were the unionists in their efforts to emphasise the distress which they claimed Free Trade caused that they tended to overkill. One caricature, for instance, depicted 'The Lacemaker, stoney broke in Stoney Street'. This picture was particularly offensive to the lacemakers, one of whom wrote to the Nottingham Express:

"I have been a lace maker for many years, but have yet to meet the weak-kneed, hollow-chested, idiotic-looking horror as depicted by the Tory posters. Lacemakers, if you have not already done so, study this poster, and see what the Tory candidates views of an 'intellectual lace maker' really are." 30

Earlier, the Liberal newspaper claimed that the unionists had more sinister allies than undernourished workmen. "Money is being spent freely" they claimed and "bribes offered by the Tariff Reform manufacturers, who recognise that a defeat this time will spell the doom of their pet policy."³¹ Frank Bowden, the proprietor of the Raleigh Cycle Company, it was claimed had arranged for a notice to be exhibited at the works early in December, announcing an increased wages payment of £200 a week until further notice, his reasons being :

"Firstly, the action of the House of Lords in declining to pass what is believed to be an unpopular and certainly unfair budget until the opinion of the country has been ascertained. Secondly, our belief that at the General Election thus brought about the country will pronounce for Tariff Reform...Tariff Reform will undoubtedly stimulate employment and promote national prosperity." 32

This attempt to influence the votes of his workforce subsequently led to Bowden being "ordered by his Doctor to go at once to a warmer climate for the next five weeks" with the consequence that his hasty departure for the continent left his General Manager to face the wrath of the Liberal press.

Increasingly, it seems that nonconformity was still a potent force in the Eastern Division. At a meeting in support of Sir Henry Cotton the Liberal candidate, the Rev. F.A. Rees, concluded his speech in support of Cotton with a parody on a popular hymn :

"Take my vote, and let it be
 Consecrated Lord, to thee.
 Take my hand, and let it trace
 Crosses in the proper place." 33

In the event, however, it seems that the Almighty declined to intervene on the part of Cotton and he like Richardson in the Southern Division went down to defeat. The influence of wealth and reaction was how the Nottingham Express explained the unionist triumph, whilst its rival the Nottingham Guardian put down the defeat of Lygon in Nottingham West to intimidation from "howling mobs of Radical hooligans."³⁴ At first sight the defeat of Cotton and Richardson after four years of service in the House of Commons, and their replacement by a notoriously equivocal member of the Portland clan and an obscure millionaire seems highly puzzling. That Cotton, the most democratic of Liberals, and Richardson, "the friend of the people" should be ousted in favour of a pair of wealthy "food taxers" horrified and mystified the local Liberal press which spoke bitterly of Nottingham "having proved herself unworthy in this great struggle against the forces of reaction, privilege and protection."³⁵

One writer has suggested that since both seats had previously been held by the Conservatives all that had really happened was that "things had returned to normal after the abnormal election of 1906." This view ignores the impact of the arguments of the protectionists and gives too much weight to the theory that the conversion of Richardson's small majority

of 800 into an even smaller Conservative majority of 384, and the overturning of Cotton's majority of 1906 may "largely be accounted for by the dispensing of loaves and fishes."³⁶ It is, of course, true that the Free Trade total vote for all three Nottingham seats was 20,730 opposed to only 18,963 for Tariff Reform, but it should be borne in mind that the lace makers and hosiery workers to whom protectionism appealed were concentrated in the two constituencies won by the unionists.

In the inquest which followed the election, the Trades Council passed a vote of appreciation for Richardson. Replying, Richardson alleged that intimidation had played a part in his defeat and went on to say "that he had no bitterness towards Lord Henry, they had gone through two severe fights and remained at the end the same steady staunch friends they were at the beginning."³⁷ A month later Councillor Bowles attended a Trades Council meeting to speak in favour of a Labour rather than a Lib-Lab. candidate at the next General Election. At the end of a long argument the Council decided by 55 votes to 15 to call a special conference to consider the question.³⁸ Before the Trades Council could properly make up its mind on this question the necessity of securing electoral sanction for the Parliament Bill so that the Royal Pererogative would be available to the Ministry if the Lords should prove obstinate over the limitation of their veto made a further General Election necessary. On this occasion the Trades Council was prepared to support one Liberal candidate but it refused to support Stewart-Smith, the Liberal who had replaced Cotton because they were not satisfied with his position on the Osbourne judgement case. In fact, there are signs that the Liberal establishment and the leadership of the labour movement were becoming increasingly incompatible. W.E. Smith, an outspoken member of the Trades Council, declared that "they were banded together to protect themselves against the Tories and Liberals alike."³⁹

Smith's view was increasingly being shared by other Nottingham trade unionists, but the December 1910 General Election result changed very little. All three seats remained unchanged but Morrison had increased his

majority from a precarious 152 to a comfortable 1,470.⁴⁰ This result led to widespread insinuation of corrupt practise, and the defeated Liberals filed a petition containing 820 charges involving the corruption of 1,470 voters. In due course these charges were dismissed when it transpired that only a quarter of the persons "treated" were on the electoral roll. The trial at which the charges of corruption against Morrison were heard provides an invaluable object lesson in the inter-relation of social conditions and politics in pre war Nottingham. The arguments rehearsed during the case brought out the appalling conditions under which the poorest classes lived and which Morrison claimed his generosity helped to relieve. When summing up, Morrison's judges spoke of him as a great benefactor and it is important to realise that the Sneinton district in which his agents operated was the citadel of the most impoverished elements in the Nottingham working class. Visiting the area in 1907, D.H. Lawrence was deeply affected :

"I went through the lowest parts of Sneinton ... it had a profound influence on me. 'It cannot be' I said to myself 'that a pitiful omnipotent Christ died nineteen hundred years ago to save these people from this and yet here they are women, with child ... so many are in that condition in the slums, bruised, drunk, with breasts half bare ...'" ⁴¹

In the same period another observer of the same area described Sneinton as "a warren of hovels" before going on :

"I am not a squeamish man and have seen some of the industrial sores in various parts of the world, the brutal exploitation of labour in Chicago, the Hebrew sweat shops in the East End of London. But I do not recall ever having been so sick as when I went round the slums of Nottingham. Nowhere in this world have I seen such vile conditions, such decrepit, foul, insanitary houses as I found in an alley in Nottingham." ⁴²

Certainly, Morrison had a great deal of sympathy amongst the Sneinton workers. Throughout the hearing the "Bottoms", the very poorest area, was lavishly decorated with red, white and blue favours, as well as slogans such as "Morrison Not Guilty" and "Morrison for Ever".

Once it was clear that Morrison had won the case, Sneinton

Bottoms seems to have declared an unofficial gala :

"Gone was its wonted squalor hid by a forest of garlands and bunting... gone too was that sordid atmosphere which is associated with poverty and wretchedness, and instead there passed through its courts and alleys a perfect panorama of life ...an air of triumphant jubilation and merry-making overspreads the whole district...nearly every street is festooned with red, white and blue...lines are run across from window to window, and everything that the humour of the inhabitants can devise is hung on the lines even to rows of certain underclothing cut out in red, white and blue paper. Begging boxes were everywhere. 'Please for the decorations' was heard increasingly as a box was pushed in front of a stranger. Musicians...paraded Cross Street with drums and fifes and tin whistles, playing as much as they knew of various airs and levied an increasing tribute." ⁴³

That all of this was in honour not of one of Labour's favourite sons but rather for a unionist millionaire is perhaps an indication of the important role played by largesse in the British electoral system. Mere coincidence alone will not explain the fact that the Eastern and Southern Divisions of the town were both won by Conservative candidates noted for their generosity as benefactors of the poor. Certainly Morrison was an established humanitarian, and Bentinck was in a position to distribute abundant Portland bounty with a lavish hand. Was it also coincidence that the Western Division was held by the wealthy Liberal Yoxall, who always took pains to stress the need for social reform? Bunfield of the N.M.A., for instance, supported Yoxall because "of what Sir James had done for the children, the aged, and the poor...and what he was prepared to do."⁴⁴ These results, taken together, demonstrate that the working class in these years was in no significant way committed to labour or socialist ideology. Rather, they demonstrate the historically conditioned conservatism of many amongst the "lower orders" and underline how much further the local movement had to go.

Local politics in Nottingham during 1910 continued to provide much excitement. Reporting in February the Labour Leader recorded that

Nottingham was "going great guns" and in April the I.L.P. registered a gain in the Board of Guardian elections when their candidate came second in the poll.⁴⁵ Early in May the I.L.P. formed the largest and most effective unit in the big May Day demonstration. Six bands and forty-nine trade union branches took part in the procession through the main streets to the Market Place where Will Thorne M.P., Councillors Gutteridge and Bowles and Messrs. Berry, Eatough and Hayday addressed the huge crowd.

Hayday was by now established as one of the leading personalities of the Nottingham labour movement and his rumbustious character was already beginning to impose itself on the Trades Council. Two weeks after May Day, however, his personal popularity came under fire from the local press, and more importantly, from fellow members of the Trades Council. The Trades Council Executive had written to Queen Alexandra and King George V, tendering "the condolence of 50,000 affiliated members of the Trades Council in the great loss they and the nation had sustained on the death of King Edward VII." When this was reported to the full Trades Council Hayday was quickly on his feet to comment, "I am pleased that there is one less parasite upon society." Rebuked by the Chairman, Hayday returned to the attack, "there has been too much slobbering and fawning in consequence of the death of this particular individual...I am of the opinion that the church and throne are stumbling blocks in the way of democracy entering into its own." Not surprisingly, both Nottingham newspapers were outraged at Hayday's remarks and both attacked him under banner headlines, "AMAZING DISLOYALTY" and "SCANDALOUS OUTBURST!" More significantly, however, for the purpose of understanding the town's labour movement in this period, Hayday was supported by only four Trades Council delegates.⁴⁶

Hayday's reputation with the local movement does not, however, seem to have suffered a great deal, and he was one of the main speakers in the socialists' summer propaganda campaign. In June the I.L.P. was running a programme of six outdoor meetings every Sunday. In September the I.L.P. branch held its first flower fruit and vegetable show and some

idea of the Party's strength can be gauged by the fact that there were 600 entries, whilst the Sunday evening musical programme which followed succeeded in packing the I.L.P. Rooms. Beneath the surface, however, some tensions amongst the Nottingham socialists are discernable. In June Higginbottam, the I.L.P. secretary, wrote to the Labour Leader to attack Victor Grayson's "Little Game". Grayson was busy trying to form a new socialist party, but his efforts were repudiated by the Nottingham secretary, who asked "Are our I.L.P. secretaries to invite this new apostle to use our painfully built up organisation in order to persuade our branches to follow him into the Colne Valley wilderness?"⁴⁷ It seems that the Clarion newspaper might have been being boycotted by the Nottingham I.L.P. in this period, and there were still signs of disagreement within the Trades Council as to the electoral policy which ought to be followed.

In early October the Trades Council decided to print 25,000 copies of a manifesto advising local trade unionists not to support municipal candidates who refused to support Trades Council demands. In the discussion that followed Hayday took the view that this effort would be largely futile because there was evidence that the Tories and Liberals were combining to give candidates walk-overs, so keeping the socialists out. Once the replies to a Trades Council questionnaire were analysed it became clear that Hayday's suspicions were well founded. Many Liberal candidates declared themselves in favour of the Trades Council manifesto, whilst all the Liberal nominations declared themselves in favour of a six-pence an hour minimum for council employees.⁴⁸ In the confusion generated by these developments the Trades Council tried to issue a recommended list of candidates, but a Nottingham Express report under the heading, 'A DIVIDED CAMP' made it clear that the meeting was a far from unanimous gathering :

"The socialist wing freely criticised the action of the Council in supporting the Liberals at the recent General Election...Mr. G.O. Richards, the secretary of the Labour Party wanted to know how it was that the Trades Council held aloof in Manvers Ward...Cockerill, one of the socialist delegates, accused Thundercliffe, the secretary, of saying that the Liberal candidate was

'absolutely the best'. Mr. Askew, one of the socialist miners delegates, said in Robin Hood Ward they had to fight against 'wealth, organised liars and even the resurrection of the King'. Referring to Dr. Milner's designation of Mr. Hayday as the 'thing' the speaker said that if ever he had to be carried into Nottingham Hospital and attended by Dr. Milner he would 'spit in his eye.' 49

In the end, as so often before, confusion was allowed to reign with the predictable result that as the November elections approached the socialist organisation showed signs of serious strain.

Despite the disagreements amongst the Trades Council the I.L.P., acting on their own initiative, nominated Berry for the Manvers Ward seat. At the adoption meeting the chairman claimed that Berry had the support of the trade unions, before the candidate told the meeting that :

"Talk about setting class against class was mere cant. These men to whom he had referred stood for their class, it was for working men to stand for theirs." 50

Later, Hayday was nominated in something of a hurry for Robin Hood Ward, and at a big meeting with Sadler, the president of the Trades Council, in the chair, Will Thorne told the audience that they were "moral cowards if they refused to vote for a man like Mr. Hayday." 51 Three days before polling Thundercliffe, the Trades Council secretary, confirmed earlier suspicions about his loyalty by publically coming out in favour of the Liberal candidate in Castle Ward. Against this background of muddle and uncoordinated chaos the defeat of both Labour candidates was predictable :

Robin Hood Ward

Clarke	(Conservative)	1,286	
Hayday	(Labour)	591	maj. 695

Manvers Ward

Morris	(Conservative)	1,347	
Berry	(Labour)	1,139	
Wells	(Liberal)	501	maj. 208

Following the success of the two previous years the meeting at the I.L.P. rooms which followed the declaration of the poll "keen disappointment was felt", but the meeting ended as usual with the singing of socialist songs.

Only a few weeks later, however, a municipal bye election in Bridge Ward provided the Nottingham socialists with another chance. George Richards, a carpenter and joiner and secretary of the local Labour Party, was quickly nominated, and the Trades Council agreed to issue a manifesto on his behalf. Supported by a large group of trade unionists, Richards ran as an I.L.P. and L.R.C. candidate against Buckingham, the political agent of Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, the Tory M.P. Richards, according to the Nottingham Express, had the support of the I.L.P., the Trades Council, and some Liberals, including Sir Jesse Boot, who sent a motor car to help with the campaign. Concentrating all of their forces in the ward the socialists worked hard for Richards and he was able to achieve a majority of 224:

G.O. Richards (Labour)	1,209	
V.C. Buckingham (Con.)	985	maj. 224

This victory, coming as it did at the end of the year, allowed the Nottingham socialists to round off the year secure in the knowledge that real progress was at last under way.

In April 1911 the socialists were successful in persuading the Trades Council to pass a resolution calling for a "full measure of electoral reform including adult suffrage for men and women."⁵² At the same meeting one delegate complained bitterly of the unsympathetic attitude of the Corporation towards the trade unions and by implication to the Labour councillors. Sir John McCraith and Sir Edward Fraser it was claimed "sat on anything they brought forward...these two gentlemen put their heads together and opposed anything the trade unions suggested. The Trades Council ought to take steps to deal with this sort of thing and if the present lot of Councillors had got such weak backbones as to follow the lead of these people, they ought to do their best to shift them and show Sir Edward and

Sir John that they were not going to 'boss' the working men of Nottingham.⁵³

In this period the town's I.L.P. branch was continuing to recruit new members. In July 1911 a vigorous summer campaign was being conducted. Five outdoor meetings were being held each Sunday and new districts being opened up. Early in September a highly successful demonstration was held in the Victoria Hall. Councillor Richards presided whilst Councillors Gutteridge and Bowles moved and seconded a resolution expressing "satisfaction at the growth of solidarity amongst the workers as shown by recent strikes." George Lansbury was the main speaker at this rally and after he had been given a rousing reception he went on to hope that "next time there was a great strike he hoped the men would strike for big things, for the nationalisation of the mines and railways."⁵⁴ Following this meeting it was reported that "new members are joining the branch each week" and it seems likely that the branch was confident of further expansion. At the 1912 Annual General Meeting, Higginbottom the secretary, when reviewing the three years since the Party had been reorganised, claimed that they had "held six large demonstrations, 157 indoor meetings, 270 outdoor Sunday meetings, fought five municipal elections, two auditors elections and one Guardians and secured the return of three members to the City Council and one to the Board of Guardians. The branch also ran a monthly Labour Journal of which 12,000 are systematically distributed door to door."⁵⁵ Another indication of increasing confidence came in May when the annual labour demonstration showed that it was still possible to build a united movement. The organising committee was made up of delegates from the Trades Council, the I.L.P., the Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party. The speakers included two South Wales miners as well as J.R. Clynes and the demonstration indicated that the different wings of the movement were perhaps coming together more successfully than for some time past.

Within the political wing of the labour movement of this period there were, of course, plenty of differences in both tactics and philosophy. Writing in April 1909 the Clarion had claimed :

"We have for years been treated as enemies by the official wing of the I.L.P. ... Hyndman, Grayson, Blatchford, the Clarion and the scouts have been looked upon by a section of the Labour Party with more hostility than if they had been Liberals or Tories." 56

The disagreements referred to here eventually led to the formation of the British Socialist Party, a branch of which appeared in Nottingham early in 1911. Slightly earlier, in July 1910 there was other evidence of a degree of political dissatisfaction amongst some activists when The Socialist, the newspaper of the Socialist Labour Party, listed cash collected for the press fund of the party by ten Nottingham contributors. By December a small branch of the S.L.P. had been formed. This development followed a meeting held under the auspices of the Cosmopolitan Debating Society at which Yates of London spoke on "Can the Working Class Achieve their own Emancipation?". Yates wound up with an exposition of the objects of the S.L.P. and the Industrial Workers of the World. This meeting helped to lay the foundation of the town's S.L.P. branch. In November 1911 the party's organiser reported that a series of Nottingham meetings had been highly successful :

"We had good opposition from the anti-socialists at our first few meetings but the desire for socialist scalps decreased because we proved to be the ablest exponent of that gentle art. We would have had more questions from the S.D.P. but they refused to oppose us. Many members of the S.D.P. speak as scathingly of the S.D.P. as any member of the S.L.P. ... the Socialist Party of Great Britain have a branch in Nottingham which challenged the S.L.P. to a debate..." 57

This report makes it clear that the town now had three other socialist groups (S.L.P., S.P.G.B., S.D.P./B.S.P.) as well as the I.L.P. and the Labour Party, and all three groups took part in a debate in the Market Square when Dick Mee of the S.D.P. presided over a large audience whilst

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Anderson of the S.P.G.B. and Paul of the S.L.P. argued about the merits of their respective policies.

All of the groups to the left of the I.L.P. shared a Calvinistic belief that they alone were the party of the elect. In the nature of things, however, their claim that all beyond their ranks were bound for eternal damnation restricted their growth to very narrow limits. Despite these restrictions, however, the Marxist organisations seem to have attracted a clutch of colourful individuals. Tom Mosley, the secretary of the Cosmopolitan Debating Society, remembered three of them :

"a great favourite at the Cosmo was William Paul of Derby. How many times has Billy Paul filled the place...I first heard him at the Cosmo in 1912 and the subject was 'The Materialist Conception of History'... the younger members will remember his splendid lecture on 'Robert Burns, Poet of Freedom'. When the chairman presented him with a book of Burns as recognition for what the Cosmo owed him...the many 'epistles of Paul' have always struck a favourite note with Cosmo-ites." 58

Another firm favourite was George Watts, who kept a china shop on the corner of Heathcoat Street :

"Watts was most versatile, was a Marxian, and a materialist, and was deadly in debate. In political subjects, economics, philosophy, ethics, history, he always seemed in his element ...Watts favourite theme was Banks and the Gold Standard. The latter he used to argue, was a purely fictitious basis for the nation's currency...he was an ardent Secularist and remembered Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, Charles Watts (his namesake) and the free thought leaders of the 1880's."

Dick Mee of the B.S.P. also stands out as a remarkable personality :

"He was a most eloquent orator, was a Marxian ...and his contributions in debate were a real delight. He was a dark, good-looking chap with a Romany appearance. He had read extensively, his rhetoric was remarkable, and he seemed at times to hypnotise his audience. In those old days of the Old Market Place Dick Mee was the most popular orator." 59

Men like this saw the Labour Party with its continued alliance with the Liberals, and long record of temporizing as a blind alley. They believed firmly in a return to socialist teaching, to independent political action based on class-consciousness and the rejection of reformism. Their message, however, went unheard by the vast mass of the Nottingham working class. The Socialist Party of Great Britain was a tiny organisation and the Nottingham branch must have been very small indeed.⁶⁰ The Socialist Labour Party was strongest in Scotland and although Paul of nearby Derby was one of its leading lights it seems that his many visits to Nottingham failed to give the town's branch of the S.L.P. appeal for any more than a small minority of the local activists. Throughout 1912, however, the branch was meeting weekly in the Cobden Hall and in December the secretary, H.F. Smith, reported that "the branch has put in some good work for the cause of the revolution...membership of the branch has now reached 14 with more to follow."⁶¹

(3)

Early in October 1911 the Trades Council issued a manifesto for the November elections which appealed to trade unionists to "use their influence and votes in the direction of inducing their representatives to manage the various municipal undertakings and departments in accord with trade union principles." All candidates were asked to pledge :

1. Only properly qualified workmen be employed by corporation.
2. All corporation employees as a condition of their employment to be members of their respective trade unions.
3. Only trade union firms to be used.

During the course of the debate around these points it was claimed that some corporation workers were earning 6s-8s a week less than the trade union rate. The Tramway Employees, it was said, had recently approached the corporation for better conditions, only to be told that no deputation would be seen as only 7 per cent were members of a trade union. Some weeks

later after a propaganda campaign 96 per cent of the Tramway workers were organised, and after they had threatened a strike, the men were recognised and their demands met only two days before the local elections.⁶²

The recognition of the Tramway Union is evidence that the established parties were becoming susceptible to pressure from the left. The Conservative candidate for Bridge Ward went so far as to claim that "Nottingham is infested with agitators who will not let the men alone."⁶³ Certainly, both the Tories and the Liberals were getting worried, although to emphasise how exaggerated some of their fears were, Sadler, the ex-president of the Trades Council was adopted as the Liberal candidate for Broxtowe Ward early in October. Gutteridge and Bowles were defending their seats and both campaigns were full of incident. Both men were opposed by Conservatives and neither seems to have pulled any punches. Bowles, for instance, accused the Tory regime as allowing men to work for 105 hours a week during the summer months. At another election meeting wild scenes followed an allegation from Gutteridge that the Tories were using beer as a bribe. Both Labour candidates attacked the Corporation's mismanagement of the Council-owned Stoke Farm. Bowles claimed that three years previously when the farm had made a loss of £5,000 the weather was blamed. The following year they lost £8,000 and this time it was idleness amongst the cows, this year they had lost £10,000. Happily for the socialists, both Labour candidates were returned, whilst Sadler, the Lib-Lab. candidate, was defeated.⁶⁴

Three months later, in January 1912, Cripwell, the chairman of the Labour Party, moved a resolution at a Trades Council meeting that the Council should co-opt the three sitting Labour members of the City Council. This resolution was opposed by one delegate who argued that "there are other members with brains on the City Council as well as the three Labour men." On being put to the vote the resolution was rejected by 43 votes to 30.⁶⁵ A month later the socialists were involved in two important bye election contests. Arthur Hayday was involved in a three-cornered fight in

Wollaton Ward. His election address concentrated on the Stoke Farm scandal, accusing the Liberals of an attempted white-wash. George Berry, who fought in Manvers Ward, made the same points and to the delight of the socialists, after a fierce contest, managed to win the seat with a majority of 8 :

Manvers Ward

G.F. Berry (I.L.P.)	1,477	
J.T. Kiddier (Conservative)	1,469	maj. 8.

Wollaton Ward

A. Cullen (Liberal)	1,128	
A. Pollard (Conservative)	1,050	
A. Hayday (B.S.P.)	585	maj.78.

The I.L.P., of course, were delighted with Berry's victory and their 1912 outdoor propaganda campaign set out to capitalise on what seemed to be an accelerating shift to the left of working class opinion. During 1912 this seeming shift was demonstrated within the N.M.A. in a lot of discussion around the suggestion that a socialist should be invited to fight West Nottingham. At one stage a resolution was submitted which sought to invite Robert Smillie to address the Council. In the event this resolution was ruled out as frivolous with the support of George Spencer (then nominally a member of the I.L.P.) Despite this set back the Nottingham I.L.P. reported in July 1912 "we are confident of our efforts, more cannot be done than we are doing, we are working at high pressure."⁶⁶ In this period the I.L.P. was active with the Trades Council and the B.S.P. in agitation around the demand for the release of Tom Mann, imprisoned for publishing the famous "Don't Shoot" appeal. This campaign and the agitation around the Stoke Farm scandal were being partly financed by the sale through advertisements in the Labour Leader of Nottingham lace curtains and parcels of assorted lace. It seems likely that this venture into retail business was forced on the branch as a result of the general impoverishment of the local branch which, nevertheless, was able in October to stage a magnificent demonstration, with Snowden as the main speaker. This left the branch "well satisfied with its work; good crowds and many new members."⁶⁷

The established political parties were by now becoming increasingly worried at the threat posed by the socialists, and there are signs that they were busy trying to consolidate their position. In June, for instance, Pendleton, who had been a Lib-Lab. Councillor for some time, wrote to sever his connection with the Trades Council. In July the I.L.P.'s Labour Journal was complaining of a Liberal-Conservative ploy which was keeping a Labour Party representative of the committee appointed to administer the Insurance Act, and as the local elections approached it became clear that both of the major parties were in the process of working out an alliance aimed at defeating the labour candidates.

Early in October it was announced that G.O. Richards would defend his Bridge Ward Labour seat at the forthcoming municipal elections. His election address called for the introduction of evening Council meetings, a universal penny tram fare, 6d an hour and one rest day a week for Corporation employees and the establishment of a Works Department for the use of direct labour. Richards argued that the City Council was as yet "composed of men who represent solely the interests of the property owning and capitalist class. It is imperative, if progress is to be made, that a more powerful Labour group should have a say in the administration of City affairs; four men out of sixty-four can but act as pioneers."⁶⁸ Later, Berry and Hayday were nominated for Manvers and Wollaton Wards respectively. A week later E.H. Lee was adopted as the Liberal candidate for Bridge Ward, making the point at his opening meeting that "the Liberals and the Conservatives face a common enemy." That some kind of Liberal-Conservative deal had been struck was soon obvious as the Conservatives neglected to nominate for the Labour-held seat.

Lee was certain that many Tory voters would support him, but to make certain of winning he made great efforts to capture the Lib-Lab. vote making use of W.Trustwell, "a trade unionist of long standing" who was produced at meetings by Lee to say "working men should support Mr. Lee because he had passed from the ranks of a trade unionist to become a master...I am a labour man but I can't stand the socialists."⁶⁹ Later at a meeting in

support of Lee Councillor Atkey and other well-known Conservatives were present to hear Sir Edward Fraser, the Liberal leader, say:

"In this town we have a small, unscrupulous body of men who are trying by any and every means to promote their propaganda, if you vote for the socialist candidate you vote for the promotion of principles which can only spell disaster in the city and in an imperial way, disaster for the country."⁷⁰

The socialists, however, remained confident and only two weeks before polling they sprang a surprise by nominating a further three candidates. Eatough, well known in the town as the leader of the 1911 railwaymen's strike and a member of the Trades Council Executive, was nominated for the Meadows Ward. T.B. Griffin, a local dentist and a member of the Fabian Society, was named for Trent Ward, and Harry Taylor, secretary of the Prudential Insurance Agents Association and a well known I.L.P. speaker agreed to fight Robin Hood Ward.

The Liberals and Conservatives seemed to have been in alliance in almost every ward which was being contested and Lee at his eve of poll meeting made it quite clear that it was the socialist threat which really concerned them. "I would never have consented to oppose a Labour candidate" Lee claimed "but I do not consider Mr. Richards a Labour candidate. He is a member of the I.L.P., a socialist body."⁷¹ The campaign itself was fiercely fought by the socialists who used as their main weapon a specially printed I.L.P. pamphlet "All about Stoke Farm". This pamphlet pointed out that on the first opportunity after his election in 1908 Councillor Gutteridge had demanded a special inquiry into the working of the Corporation-owned farm. Subsequently it was proved that the farm's wage sheets contained the names of "persons who were not and never have been employed upon the farm as workmen." The local politicians tried to claim that there had been no dishonesty but the I.L.P. insisted:

"What the ratepayers want to know is why Sir Edward Fraser the Liberal leader who has ruled the city so many years has allowed this sort of thing to go on. He claims to be a financier and yet under his personal supervision as leader of the dominant Liberal Party a department

involving capital expenditure of something like £400,000 has been allowed to be handled without check in a way that would disgrace the management of a fried fish shop." 72

This pamphlet is a good demonstration of the way in which all of the groups on the left felt a strong compulsion to infuse their material aims with both moral and spiritual elements. The Stoke Farm scandal although not quite on the same scale as those then being perpetrated by Horatio Bottomley was quite enough to shock the more provincial mind of the Nottingham voter although its impact was not enough to prevent the socialists being defeated in all of the six seats which they were contesting. Immediately after the poll was declared the Nottingham Express was able to gleefully proclaim: SOCIALIST ROUT IN NOTTINGHAM.

This setback is a useful illustration of the fact that the machine of history does not always run smoothly, but proceeds instead by fits and starts. For the Nottingham socialists the loss of the seats held by Berry and Richards was a real tragedy, and the failure to make progress in other wards came as a real disappointment. For some amongst the local activists these defeats were only explicable in terms of a straightforward Liberal-Conservative plot. The Labour Leader, reporting the results, explained that "in Nottingham a great tribute was paid to the growing power of our movement by the Liberals and Tories combining for the purpose of defeating our candidates. The Liberals and Tories have won one seat each from us in consequence, but our greatest victories are not always those in which we have majorities."⁷³ Although there is no evidence that the two events are connected the defeats coincided with the departure of Sam Higginbottam who had been appointed as a full time National Organiser for the Labour Party. The I.L.P.'s year ended on something of a low note at a special meeting to say goodbye to the secretary who over the previous four years had done so much to rejuvenate the local group.

During the course of 1913 the local labour movement seems to have been on the defensive. The City Council spurred on perhaps by the I.L.P.'s

electoral defeats of 1912 prohibited outdoor meetings of the N.U.R. and laid down prohibitive restrictions as to meetings held in hired halls. This provoked a mass protest meeting against the action of the Watch Committee with speakers from the trade unions, the B.S.P., the I.L.P. and the Labour Party. This protest was not, however, sufficient to deflect the Watch Committee and they refused the Trades Council permission to sell shamrocks in the streets in aid of the Dublin strikers.⁷⁴ Early in the year the Trades Council had called a special conference at which it was alleged that Nottingham had the "worst Corporation in England." After a long discussion about the Council's use of "sweated" labour, Councillor Gutteridge told the meeting that he wanted the Trades Council to realise that "every committee of the Corporation was prepared to fight to the last ditch any advancement of trade union principles."⁷⁵

Evidence to support this view is provided during the course of 1913 by a long dispute involving tin-plate workers used by the Gas Committee. At the heart of the argument was the men's refusal to work with non-union labour. At the end of a seven month strike the men returned to work on the understanding "that the man Spencer should, as far as possible, be kept away from the union men, and that the seven men who had been blacklegging be removed to another department." Thus a dispute which aimed to remove one blackleg had created seven more who, it seems, had been paid bonus payments of £10 and £5 by the Gas Committee. This bitter dispute seems to have outraged the Trades Council who, in pointing to the political lessons to be drawn from it, asked the town's trade unionists to "remember the premium placed upon blacklegism by the bonus which was paid for their services during the dispute."⁷⁶

Politically, the town's socialists insisted throughout 1913 that they were making significant progress. The B.S.P. which was meeting weekly at the William Morris Institute, claimed that "the branch is making considerable progress thanks to the strenuous work of a few comrades and their determination to refuse to allow their activities for socialism to be

hampered or deadened by petty personal disputes."⁷⁷ The I.L.P. in the same period proclaimed in the columns of the Labour Leader that "Nottingham is not asleep." The branch, it was claimed, was making a canvass of the Eastern Division "with a view to showing the way to win a Parliamentary seat in the near future."⁷⁸ In June a new branch at Beeston was formed and it was claimed that "at last those interested in the Socialist movement in this ancient city show signs of arousing themselves from a spirit of 'doce far niente.' During the coming week the H.Q. of the branch will be moved to healthier and more compact premises... and we will celebrate this event by a reunion of all members, and will, it is hoped, secure the support of a large band of the rank and file to set to in real earnest to realize the object of the N.A.C. and double the membership."⁷⁹ Later, at the I.L.P.'s annual demonstration in the Victoria Hall it was announced that W.C. Anderson, an ex-chairman of the I.L.P., would be fighting for a Nottingham Parliamentary seat. Anderson was supported at this rally by Margaret Bonfield and the packed audience seemed to indicate that something might be moving. In April 1913 the membership of the I.L.P. in Nottinghamshire had been split into two Federations. Of these, the Southern group included Nottingham, Long Eaton, Carlton, Stapleford, Daybrook and Netherfield. The Conference which established this new arrangement was well attended and, according to the Labour Leader there was "every indication of a forward movement." Later, Arthur Key won a seat for the I.L.P. on the Carlton Urban District Council. At Hucknall, F.J. Goodall, the I.L.P. candidate, was returned at the head of the poll, defeating five Liberals and four independents, indicating, according to the socialists, that "the miners are moving", whilst at Netherfield, a railway centre, there was further evidence of political change when Harris of the I.L.P. won an important seat. At about this time Keir Hardie was in the area and he and two colleagues who had been deported from South Africa as Labour leaders spoke at a large public meeting in the Nottingham Market Square. Later, Hardie addressed a crowded meeting in the Co-operative Hall at Netherfield, and

all the signs were that the local movement was about to enjoy something of an upsurge.

In fact, the opposite seems to have been the case. The loss of Higginbottom was, of course, a major blow and in addition the branch seems to have transferred its Labour Leader order to local newsagents with the predictable consequence that its circulation in the town dropped considerably. The move to new, more "compact" premises is difficult to understand unless financial problems had forced the branch to leave the Freechurch Street rooms which they had so proudly asked Katharine Glasier to open only a year or two earlier. All of these signs of an I.L.P. decline were emphasised in the 1913 electoral campaign when the local socialists fielded only one candidate.

Certainly the Nottingham Express saw it as "significant" that only one socialist was nominated for the local elections. The candidate, Arthur Turney, was a young I.L.P. member who earned his living as an Insurance District Manager. His campaign concentrated on the slum housing conditions of many parts of the town. At his eve of poll meeting he claimed that :

"Objection had been taken by the Tories to the statement of the Medical Officer of Health that there are 5,000 houses in Nottingham absolutely unfit for human habitation. Despite the criticism this statement was absolutely correct. If the standard set were what his own view of a house should be, there would be found many more than 5,000 unfit houses in the city. His idea of a habitation was not a kennel even if it were kept clean...there was a feeling of unrest among the working classes of Nottingham and a feeling of suspicion that was amply justified." 80

Turney's defeat by a majority of 191 in a straight fight with a Conservative must have disappointed the I.L.P., but as the local newspapers pointed out, his own vote was large enough to suggest that he would be seen again. The Nottingham Express reported that the socialists had worked hard, and that for a young and untried candidate, Turney had certainly not been dis-

graced. At the I.L.P. club after the declaration of the result, Councillor Gutteridge argued that "allowing for the handicap under which they were placed, he thought the vote had been an absolute credit to them...strictly limited in capital, they could not, therefore, make any display, what work had been done had been done by helpers at great personal sacrifice."⁸¹

In fact the Tory candidate had been helped by six motor cars, whilst the entire Nottingham labour movement was only able to muster one motor cycle and side car.

In April 1914 the despondency which must have followed the defeat of Turney began to lift when Gutteridge, who was once again the secretary of the Nottingham I.L.P., reported that the branch had managed to clear £20 of old debts and was now £12 to the good. In recent weeks it was reported, the branch had made 40 new members and it seemed that the I.L.P. might be at the beginning of a new upsurge. In the same month the B.S.P. Dramatic Society entertained the I.L.P. branch and the unity demonstrated here was again in evidence at the May Day demonstration :

"On Sunday labour united in one man at Nottingham, and a monster procession was organised by the I.L.P., the B.S.P., the Trades Council and the Labour Party. In the morning there were three platforms in the Market Place, the principal speakers being Mr. Will Thorne M.P., Mr. W.C. Anderson, Mr. Gutteridge and Mr. R.Mee. In the evening there was another large meeting, the principal speaker being Mr. Anderson. The meetings were records for both size and enthusiasm. Councillor Bowles presided and introduced Mr. Anderson as a prospective Labour candidate for East Nottingham."⁸²

In June the I.L.P. outdoor campaign was well under way and late in the month it was reported that a great labour demonstration had been held in Beeston when 3,000 assembled to hear Keir Hardie, Anderson and the local leaders. Towards the end of July Anderson was in the town again to attend the I.L.P. garden party which interestingly was held in the grounds of the Trent side retreat of Sir Jesse Boot. This fund-raising event seems to have been a success, although the seeming well being of the Nottingham branch of the

I.L.P. needs to be seen against the views of Councillor Murby of Leicester who, during the course of the summer campaign, delivered a stirring speech which contained a graphic contrast between "Go-Ahead Leicester" and "Poor Old Stick-in-the-Mud Nottingham." ⁸³

On the face of it, Murby had a point. At the end of a long period of struggle the industrial organisation of the town's workers still left a great deal to be desired. Residual differences between the skilled and the unskilled still bedevilled trade union organisation, the Lib-Lab. ideology of important individuals amongst the local leadership continued to be a major retarding agent. Meanwhile the Nottingham socialists were now split into five separate organisations. Of these the S.P.G.B. branch was tiny and unwilling to enter the political fray, retaining its political virginity only at the cost of failing to produce anything at all. The B.S.P. and the S.L.P. were stronger but both were relatively weak and ineffectual, whilst the I.L.P. which was the largest and most important socialist group was not as strong as it had been some years previously and its efforts to make progress in the electoral field had been signally unsuccessful. Beneath the surface, however, things were beginning to move. The 1,426 votes registered by Turney in 1913 would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier. In November 1914 Turney was allowed to take over Gutteridge's seat unopposed after the pioneer socialist had been forced to retire through illhealth. More significantly, following the Trade Union Act of 1913 the Trades Council set up a joint meeting with the Labour Party to ensure that "the forces that make up our movement can be more effectively united... we sincerely hope that everyone will sink their personal feelings and give the scheme their support in order that the aspirations of our movement may be urged with increased strength in the Council Chamber." ⁸⁴ Unfortunately, however, it was not to be until five years later, after a catastrophic World War, that the seeds sown by Gutteridge and his band of pioneer socialists would flower, amply repaying the personal sacrifice which so many of them had made.

THE NOTTINGHAM ENVIRONMENT AND THE
HOUSING OF THE WORKERS

1. Report of an Enquiry by the Board of Trade into Working Class, Rents Housing, and Retail Prices. (1906).
2. Labour Leader August 12th, 1909.
3. Roberts, Cecil. The Growing Boy (1967).
4. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council April 28th, 1913.
5. Board of Trade Enquiry.
6. Board of Trade Enquiry.
7. Board of Trade Enquiry.
8. See for instance, Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1897).

THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL INDUSTRY

1. The Knitters Circular and Monthly Record January, 1896.
2. Samuel Bower claimed that the Board of Arbitration had been broken down by the employers who "will not have it". Evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour 1892.
3. See the biography, Collison, William. The Apostle of Free Labour (1913).
4. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council January 20th, 1897.
5. Mins, N.T.C. January 11th, 1899.
6. Evidence of W.A.Appleton, Parliamentary Commission on Home Work 1907.
7. Parliamentary Commission, 1907.
8. Minutes, Lace Makers' Society November 13th, 1897.
9. The Lace Trade in Nottingham and District (pamphlet 1905).
10. The Lace Trade in Nottingham and District.
11. The Lace Trade in Nottingham and District.
12. The Lace Trade in Nottingham and District.
13. Mins, L.M.S. October 5th, and November 12th, 1904.
14. Nottingham Lace Trade Arbitration Proceedings and Award (1905)
pp. 20, 33, 37.

ENGINEERS, COLLIERS, AND RAILWAYMEN

1. Nottingham Daily Express February 18th, 1897.
2. Labour Leader April 23rd, 1898.
3. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council March 16th, 1898.
4. Mins, N.T.C. December 2nd, 1896.
5. Mins, N.T.C. October 14th, 1908.
6. Mins, N.T.C. September 20th, 1905.
7. Social Democrat March, 1910.
8. Hodkinson, George. Sent to Coventry (1970). p. 24.
9. Mins, N.T.C. May 27th, June 24th, 1908.
10. Beatrice Webb, diary January 15th, 1896.
11. Aaron Stewart, son of a victimised miner, helped to establish the N.M.A. Appeared on the platform at the first N.M.A. demonstration in 1884. Between 1884-1886 was the part time secretary of the N.M.A. In 1886 he published a series of letters in Labour Tribune which were critical of the weakness of trade unionism amongst Nottinghamshire miners. In 1886 he became president of the N.M.A. and was active in support of the eight hour day. Stewart supported withdrawal of N.M.A. support for Broadhurst, although he remained a Liberal all his life. Bellamy Joyce., and Saville, John., (eds) Dictionary of Labour Biography Vol I. (1972). pp. 312-13.
12. Roberts, Cecil. The Growing Boy (1967) p. 51.
13. The Council of the N.M.A. at its meeting in April 1892 agreed to claim the following rates for boys as the minimum day rate:-

For boys starting work at the age of twelve	1s 4d
For boys starting work at the age of thirteen	1s 6d
For boys starting work at the age of fourteen	2s 0d
14. Hancock was elected as Lib-Lab M.P. for Mid-Derbyshire in 1909.
15. L.L. July 16th, 1898.
16. Minutes, Nottinghamshire Miners' Association October 30th, 1897.
17. L.L. August 6th, 1894.
18. Mins, N.M.A. July 13th, 1895.
19. N.D.E. October 4th, 1910.
20. N.D.E. October 1st, 1910.
21. Nottingham Guardian February 28th, 1912.
22. Lenin, V.I. 'The British Labour Movement in 1912' in Lenin On Britain p. 151.
23. Minutes, Railway Clerks' Association Nottingham Branch February 28th, 1897.

24. Mins, R.C.A. March 20th, 1897.
25. Mins, N.T.C. January 18th, 1899.
26. Mins, N.T.C. September 7th, 1908.
27. Hodkinson, p. 24.
28. Mins, N.T.C. September 10th, 1911., and Holton, R. British Syndacism 1906-1914 (1976) p. 106.

WOMEN WORKERS

1. Report of an Enquiry by the Board of Trade into Working Class, Rents, Housing, and Retail Prices (1906).
2. Labour Leader June 28th, 1907.
3. Quoted in, Masterman, C.F.G. The Condition of England (1911 edn) p. 149.
4. Webb Trade Union Collection, Section A XXXIX.
5. Webb, Section A XXXIX.
6. Webb, Section A XXXIX.
7. Webb, Section A XXXIX.
8. Webb, Section A XXXIX.
9. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council September 20th, 1905.
10. Mins, N.T.C. December 9th, 1908.
11. Beatrice Webb, undated diary entry, 1895.
12. L.L. June 5th, 1897.
13. L.L. August 12th, 1909.
14. Mins, N.T.C. June 27th, 1906.
15. Mins, N.T.C. July 13th, 1913.
16. Minutes, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire branch, National Union of the Womens' Suffrage Society.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRADES COUNCIL
AND ITS RESPONSE TO UNEMPLOYMENT

1. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council September 5th, 1894.
2. Mins, N.T.C. September 1st, 1897.
3. Nottingham Daily Express January 8th, 1898.
4. Industrial Council, Enquiry into Industrial Agreements (1913) Cd 6953, 2931.
5. Royal Commission on Trade Disputes and Trade Combinations (1906) Cd 2826, q 3060.
6. Mins, N.T.C. May 12th, 1897.
7. Mins, N.T.C. December 22nd, 1897.
8. Mins, N.T.C. February 25th, 1903.
9. Mins, N.T.C. December 16th, 1903.
10. Clarion January 13th, 1905.
11. Mins, N.T.C. March 18th, 1905.
12. Mins, N.T.C. January 10th, 1906.
13. Mins, N.T.C. April 29th, 1908.
14. Nottingham Trades Council, Annual Report 1908.
15. Mins, N.T.C. December 8th, 1909.
16. N.D.E. October 17th, 1910.
17. N.D.E. October 24th, 1910.
18. Mins, N.T.C. January 5th, 1910.
19. Mins, N.T.C. December 6th, 1910.
20. Nottingham Trades Council, Annual Report 1912.
21. Mins, N.T.C. March 27th, 1912.
22. Mins, N.T.C. March 27th, 1912.
23. Nottingham Trades Council Annual Report 1913.
24. N.T.C. Annual Report, 1913.
25. Mins, N.T.C. April 13th, 1892.
26. Mins, N.T.C. April 20th, 1892.
27. Mins, N.T.C. July 13th, 1892.
28. Mins, N.T.C. January 25th, 1892.
29. Mins, N.T.C. May 20th, 1899.
30. The Distress Committee Report for 1907 recorded 191 unemployed registered in January 1907, against 579 for January 1906.
31. Mins, N.T.C. May 29th, 1907.
32. Mins, N.T.C. September 11th, 1907.

33. N.D.E. November 12th, 1908.

34. Beveridge, William. Unemployment: A Problem of Industry (1909) p. 148

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE I.L.P. 1893-1899

1. Workman's Times January 21st, 1893.
2. W.T. January 21st, 1893.
3. W.T. July 8th, 1893.
4. Redfern, Percy. Journey to Understanding (1946) p. 19.
5. W.T. August 26th, 1893.
6. W.T. September 9th, 1893.
7. Nottingham Daily Express October 26th, 1893.
8. N.D.E. October 30th, 1893.
9. N.D.E. November 1st, 1893.
10. N.D.E. October 19th, 1893.
11. N.D.E. October 19th, 1893.
12. N.D.E. November 2nd, 1893.
13. N.D.E. November 2nd, 1893.
14. N.D.E. May 7th, 1894.
15. Labour Leader May 12th, 1894.
16. L.L. May 12th, 1894.
17. L.L. April 7th, 1894.
18. L.L. March 31st, 1894.
19. L.L. April 7th, 1894.
20. L.L. April 28th, 1894.
21. L.L. May 19th, 1894.
22. L.L. August 25th, 1894.
23. I.L.P. National Administrative Council Minutes, May 28th, 1894.
24. L.L. June 2nd, 1894.
25. Nottingham Forward November, 1934.
26. L.L. August 11th, 1894.
27. N.F. November, 1934.
28. L.L. July 14th, 1894.
29. The strength of Lib-Labism amongst both the miners and the lace workers must have been particularly depressing.
30. L.L. July 21st, 1894.
31. L.L. July 28th, 1894.
32. L.L. August 11th, 1894.
33. L.L. November 10th, 1894.
34. I.L.P. results in major towns :
 Bristol 36%, Salford 31%, Rochdale 38%, Burnley 32%, Stockport 16%,
 Bradford 29%, Halifax 30%, Nottingham 24%, Keighley 40%, Glasgow 34%,
 Leicester 37%, Southampton 34%, Liverpool 25%. L.L. November 10th 1894.

35. L.L. November 10th, 1894.
36. L.L. December 29th, 1894.
37. L.L. January 26th, 1895.
38. Clarion February 16th, 1895.
39. L.L. May 4th, 1895.
40. L.L. May 4th, 1895.
41. L.L. May 18th, 1895.
42. L.L. June 29th, 1895.
43. Glasier, Bruce. Diary entry June 28th, 1895.
44. Glasier, diary July 10th, 1895.
45. Sillitoe, Alan. Raw Material (1978 edn) p. 32.
46. L.L. March 13th, 1897.
47. L.L. August 17th, 1895.
48. L.L. August 17th, 1895.
49. L.L. September 21st, 1895.
50. L.L. December 17th, 1895.
51. Yeo, Stephen. "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain 1883-96" in History Workshop Autumn 1977, pp.5-57.
52. Christie was still living at the same Nottingham address, "Rocky Mount" Carlton.
53. L.L. July 11th, 1896.
54. L.L. November 14th, 1896.
55. L.L. December 5th, 1896.
56. L.L. December 5th, 1896.
57. L.L. January 2nd, 1897.
58. L.L. July 10th, 1897.
59. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council July 6th, 1897.
60. Justice September 18th, 1897.
61. Justice October 2nd, 1897.
62. Justice October 9th, 1897.
63. St Anns' Ward, Skerritt Lib-Lab 651. Danbney Conservative 446.
Manvers Ward, Hardstaffe Lib-Lab 1423. Barnett Conservative 1124.
Wells Independent Liberal 423.
64. N.D.E. November 2nd, 1897.
65. Mins, N.T.C. June 9th, 1897.
66. L.L. January 15th, 1898.
67. L.L. January 15th, 1898.
68. Minutes, Nottinghamshire Miners' Association April 30th, 1898.
69. Mins, N.T.C. May 25th, 1898.
70. N.D.E. October 8th, 1898.

71. L.L. August 27th, 1898.
72. L.L. August 27th, 1898.
73. L.L. September 10th, 1898.
74. Mins, N.T.C. December 21st, 1898.
75. L.L. November 26th, 1898.
76. Katharine Glasier to Bruce Glasier, undated manuscript letter.
77. Roberts, Cecil. The Growing Boy (1967) p. 73.
78. See for instance Price, Richard. An Imperial War and the British Working Class (1972).
79. Mins, N.T.C. January 25th, 1898.
80. Mins, N.T.C. August 2nd, 1898.
81. Mins, N.T.C. October 25th, 1898.
82. Blewett, N. The Peers, The Parties and the People: The General Election of 1910 (1972).
83. The opinion of Harry Quelch.
84. Morton, Vivien., and Macintyre, Stuart., 'T.A. Jackson a Centenary Appreciation' in Our History No: 73 p. 18.
85. Blatchford, Robert. My 80 Years (1931) p. 204.
86. Redfern, Percy. Journey to Understanding (1946) p. 19.

THE LABOUR CHURCH

1. Hobsbawn, E.J. Primitive Rebels (1978 edn) p. 126
2. Hobsbawn, p. 131.
3. Snell, H. Men Movements and Myself (1938 edn) p. 55.
4. Redfern, Percy. Journey to Understanding (1946) pp. 100-103.
5. Labour Echo August 1896.
6. L.E. December 1896.
7. L.E. December 1896.
8. L.E. December 1896.
9. Labour Prophet November 1896.
10. Clarion April 17th, 1897.
11. Quoted in Labour Prophet November 1897.
12. Clarion January 1st, 1898.
13. Labour Leader February 26th, 1898.
14. Some sense of this is conveyed in Robinson, William. The History of the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society p. 4.
15. L.P. May 1896.
16. Labour Church Record July 1899.
17. Clarion May 21st, 1898.
18. L.C.R. July 1899.
19. L.L. August 3rd, 1901.
20. L.L. December 6th, 1902.
21. Clarion February 26th, 1904.
22. Clarion February 26th, 1904.
23. Clarion January 27th, 1905.
24. Clarion June 16th, 1905.
25. Clarion June 16th, 1905.
26. L.L. June 29th, 1906.
27. L.L. July 6th, 1906.
28. L.L. July 13th, 1906.
29. L.L. September 28th, 1906.

30. "A branch at Bulwell officially opened this week", I.L. September 14th, 1906.
31. I.L. March 29th, 1907.
32. Pelling, Henry. Origins of the Labour Party (1976 edn) p. 143.
33. Hobsbawm, p. 142.
34. Robinson, W., p. 5.
35. Pelling, used to describe the "new unionists" but equally appropriate for the members of the Labour Church. p. 116.

THE CLARION COMMONWEALTH

1. Cowley, D.W. The Origins of the Revolt of the British Labour Movement from Liberalism 1875-1906. (Ph.D. London 1952). p. 1.
2. Saville, J. "Trade Unions and Free Labour: The Background to the Taff Vale Decision" in Briggs, Asa., and Saville, J. (eds) Essays in Labour History (1967 edn) pp. 317-350.
3. Pelling, Henry. Origins of the Labour Party (1976 edn) p. 97.
4. Clarion May 7th, 1892, letter from H.S. Turner.
5. Nottingham Trades Council Minutes, February 22nd, 1893.
6. Clarion December 1st, 1894.
7. Fincher, Judith. The Clarion Movement a Study of a Socialist attempt to implement the Cooperative Commonwealth in England 1891-1914 (M.A. Manchester 1971)
8. Clarion April 27th, 1895.
9. Labour Leader December 14th, 1895.
10. Clarion June 27th, 1896.
11. Clarion January 9th, 1897.
12. Clarion February 13th, 1897.
13. Clarion March 13th, 1897.
14. Clarion December 18th, 1897.
15. Clarion July 16th, 1898.
16. Clarion July 16th, 1898.
17. The Clarion van also visited Radford from which it seems that the mining community was the main propoganda target. Clarion July 16th, 1898.
18. Nottingham Daily Express January 8th, 1898.
19. Clarion July 23rd, 1898.
20. Clarion March 11th, March 26th, 1899.
21. Clarion December 22nd, 1900.
22. Clarion October 13th, 1900.
23. Clarion December 15th, 1900.
24. Clarion April 6th, 1901.
25. Wheatcroft, Harry. The Root of the Matter (1974) p. 8.
26. Clarion April 25th, 1902.
27. Clarion May 8th, 1903.
28. Clarion April 29th, 1904.
29. Clarion May 13th, 1904.
30. Clarion June 3rd, 1904.

31. Clarion July 8th, 1904.
32. Clarion November 3rd, 1905.
33. Clarion August 4th, 1905.
34. Clarion May 18th, 1906.
35. Clarion July 13th, 1906.
36. Clarion February 1st, 1907.
37. Clarion January 17th, 1908.
38. Clarion July 3rd, 1908.
39. Clarion August 14th, 1908.
40. Clarion August 21st, 1908.
41. Clarion November 27th, 1908.
42. Clarion January 1st, 1909.
43. Clarion January 29th, 1909.
44. Clarion March 18th, 1910.
45. Clarion April 15th, 1910.
46. Clarion July 15th, 1910.
47. Clarion March 17th, 1911.
48. Clarion July 19th, 1912.
49. Clarion July 11th, 1913.
50. Mallon, J.J. "Robert Blatchford and Merrie England" in The Listener
December 9th, 1948.

LABOUR POLITICS 1900-1908

1. Bealey, Frank. and Pelling, Henry. Labour and Politics 1900-1906 (1958) p. 1.
2. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council February 14th, 1900.
3. George Robinson to Labour Representation Committee, May 24th, 1900.
4. Nottingham Daily Express October 1st, 1900.
5. Mins, N.T.C. October 24th, 1900.
6. Mins, N.T.C. October 24th, 1900.
7. The politics of the alliance of miners and lace workers which controlled the Trades Council, was a reflection of a situation in which a substantial skilled workforce earning good wages had built a culture based on the Chapel, Trade Union, and Cooperative Society.
8. Between 1899-1907, for instance, the annual average of days lost through industrial action was less than three million and in no year was the total as large as five million. By contrast, 1891-1898 had an average of over twelve million. Clegg, H.A. Fox, Alan. and Thompson, A.F. The History of British Trade Unions since 1889 Vol 1 1889-1910 (1961) p. 326.
9. Mins, N.T.C. January 3rd, July 4th, August 8th, October 24th, 1900.
10. W.H.Bishop to Ramsay MacDonald, March 25th, 1901.
11. Bishop to MacDonald, April 15th, 1901.
12. Minutes, Beeston Trades Council October 21st, 1901.
13. George Lane was employed as a checkweighman at Bulwell Colliery, N.D.E. November 2nd, 1901.
14. Mins, N.T.C. December 4th, 1901.
15. Mins, N.T.C. December 8th, 1901.
16. Mins, N.T.C. September 25th, 1901.
17. Bealey and Pelling, p. 77.
18. G. Murray to Ramsay MacDonald, July 30th, 1902.
19. Murray to MacDonald, September 17th, 1902.
20. W. Appleton to Ramsay MacDonald, December 3rd, 1902.
21. Appleton to MacDonald, December 23rd, 1902.
22. MacDonald to Appleton, December 31st, 1902.
23. Mins, N.T.C. December 31st, 1902.
24. Labour Leader January 11th, 1902.
25. L.L. December 14th, 1901.
26. L.L. December 14th, 1901.
27. Mins, N.T.C. July 2nd, 1902.

28. Nottingham Southern Division Liberal Party to Ramsay MacDonald, February 20th, 1903.
29. Appleton to MacDonald, May 12th, 1903.
30. Mins, N.T.C. April 8th, 1903.
31. Mins, N.T.C. May 6th, 1903.
32. Mins, N.T.C. May 6th, 1903.
33. J. Thorneloe to Ramsay MacDonald, May 14th, 1903.
34. Mins, N.T.C. June 17th, 1903.
35. L.L. November 20th, 1903.
36. Mins, N.T.C. September 16th, 1903.
37. This committee also included representatives of the miners, railwaymen, gasworkers, and building trades.
38. Lace Makers' Society Annual Report and Accounts December 31st, 1902.
39. Pelling, Henry. Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain (1979 edn) p. 15.
40. Nottingham Bakers and Confectioners to MacDonald, March 27th, 1904.
41. MacDonald to Nottingham Society of Carpenters and Joiners, August 8th, 1904.
42. Trade Union Congress 1908 Souvenir Book.
43. Appleton to MacDonald, November 4th, 1904.
44. Mins, N.T.C. January 20th, 1904.
45. Mins, N.T.C. May 1st, 1905.
46. Mins, N.T.C. May 31st, 1905.
47. Trade Union Congress 1930 Souvenir Book.
48. Arthur Richardson, educated at East Bridgford National School and Magnus Grammar School Newark. Apprenticed grocer 1877 became wholesale representative 1880 and took over business in Nottingham. A J.P. for Nottingham and later Lib-Lab M.P. for South Nottingham 1906-1910 when he was defeated. Elected Liberal M.P. for Rotherham in 1917 and subsequently represented that Division until 1918 when he was defeated whilst fighting South Nottingham in the "Coupon Election". Unsuccessfully contested Melton Mowbray as a Liberal candidate in 1922, 1923, and 1924.
49. L.L. February 2nd, 1906.
50. Mins, N.T.C. August 22nd, 1906.
51. Nottingham Star September 11th, 1906.
52. N.S. September 11th, 1906.
53. G.O. Richards to MacDonald, December 29th, 1906.
54. L.L. May 11th, 1906.
55. L.L. September 21st, 1906.

56. Gregory, Rey. The Miners and British Politics 1906-1914 (1968) p. 29.
57. T.A. Pierce to MacDonald, July 31st, 1906.
58. MacDonald to Pierce, August 2nd, 1906.
59. L.L. August 17th, 1906.
60. L.L. August 2nd, 1906.
61. Mins, N.T.C. November 12th, 1907.
62. L.L. November 22nd, 1907.
63. L.L. January 31st, 1908.
64. Clarion June 26th, 1908.
65. Gregory, p. 32.
66. L.L. July 24th, 1908.
67. L.L. August 21st, 1908.
68. L.L. September 11th, 1908.
70. L.L. September 11th 1908.
71. L.L. September 11th, 1908.
72. L.L. September 11th, 1908.
73. Mins, N.T.C. July 22nd, 1908.
74. Mins, N.T.C. August 19th, 1908.
75. The Nottingham "Right to Work" Committee was part of a national movement. See Brown, Kenneth. Labour and Unemployment 1900-1914 (1971)
76. N.D.E. October 8th, 1908.
77. N.D.E. October 8th, 1908.
78. "Three unemployed men from Nottingham had a private interview with Mr John Burns to whom they were introduced by Mr. Arthur Richardson M.P. The deputation urged that immediate measures of relief should be taken, and stated that there were more than 4000 persons in Nottingham who were in desperate straits..." (meanwhile) " a band of the unemployed between 200-300 strong marched through the streets of central London accompanied by a strong escort of police ...carried red flags bearing inscriptions such as 'Work or Riot, Which?'" The Times October 16th, 1908.
79. Morley to MacDonald, October 26th, 1908.
80. MacDonald to Morley, October 26th, 1908.
81. Ernest Gutteridge Election Address 1908.

82. N.D.E. October 24th, 1908.
83. The Nottingham Labour Journal November, 1908.
84. N.L.J. November, 1908.
85. G. Wainwright to MacDonald, November 10th, 1908.
86. N.D.E. November 3rd, 1908.
87. N.L.J. November, 1908.

ATTEMPTS AT CONSOLIDATION 1908-1914

1. Labour Leader May 7th, 1909.
2. L.L. February 23rd, 1909.
3. L.L. March 7th, 1909.
4. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council August 18th, 1909.
5. Roberts, Cecil. The Years of Promise (1969) p. 13.
6. L.L. May 21st, 1909.
7. Mins, N.T.C. May 26th, 1909.
8. L.L. August 12th, 1909.
9. Sheffield Telegraph July 2nd, 1909.
10. Bruce Glasier, manuscript diary July 16th, 1909.
11. MacDonald to Hancock, August 25th, 1909.
12. MacDonald to Hancock, September 8th, 1909.
13. Higginbottom to MacDonald, September 14th, 1909.
14. MacDonald to Hancock, September 15th, 1909.
15. Mins, N.T.C. September 15th, 1909.
16. Mins, N.T.C. September 15th, 1909.
17. Nottingham Guardian November 1st, 1909.
18. Pegg the Social Democratic Federation candidate worked as a lace designer and draughtsman; his election campaign included a demand for the introduction of a 30s minimum wage and a 48 hour week.
Nottingham Daily Express November 2nd, 1909.
19. Secretary Nottingham Labour Party to MacDonald, November 3rd, 1909.
20. L.L. October 22nd, 1909.
21. N.D.E. September 25th, 1909.
22. N.D.E. September 24th, 1909.
23. N.D.E. October 14th, 1909.
24. Nottingham Trades Council Annual Report 1910.
25. N.G. January 4th, 1910.
26. Birmingham Weekly Post January 1st, 1910.
27. Roberts, Cecil. The Growing Boy (1967) p.121.
28. N.G. January 19th, 1910.

29. N.G. January 15th, 1910.
30. N.D.E. January 8th, 1910.
31. N.D.E. January 6th, 1910.
32. N.D.E. December 6th, 1910.
33. N.G. January 15th, 1910.
34. N.G. January 5th, 1910.
35. N.D.E. January 20th, 1910.
36. The Conservative candidate in the East Nottingham Division for instance was eventually charged with having bribed a total of 1470 voters.
37. Mins, N.T.C. February 2nd, 1910.
38. Mins, N.T.C. March 30th, 1910.
39. N.G. December 1st, 1910.
40. Election result:
- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|------|----------|
| J.A. Morrison | Conservative | 6274 | |
| D. Stewart-Smith | Liberal | 4804 | maj 1470 |
41. D.H. Lawrence writing to the Rev. Robert Reid, December 3rd, 1907. In Boulton, James (Ed) The Letters of D.H.Lawrence (1979).
42. Fraser, John. Life's Contrasts quoted in Boulton.
43. Hillman, H. The East Nottingham Election Petition of 1911 and the Election of 1912 newspaper cuttings scrapbook.
44. N.G. November 29th, 1910.
45. L.L. April 22nd, 1910.
46. Mins, N.T.C. May 15th, 1910.
47. L.L. June 10th, 1910.
48. Mins, N.T.C. October 18th, 1910.
49. Mins, N.T.C. October 18th, 1910.
50. N.D.E. October 15th, 1910.
51. N.D.E. October 27th, 1910.
52. Mins, N.T.C. April 26th, 1911.
53. Mins, N.T.C. April 26th, 1911.
54. N.D.E. September 8th, 1911.
55. L.L. January 20th, 1911.

56. Clarion April 23rd, 1909.
57. The Socialist November, 1911.
58. Mosley, T.M. 'Cosmo' Memories and Personalities p. 16.
59. Mosley, pp. 16, 10, 9.
60. Bartrop, Robert. The Monument (1975) p. 30.
61. The Socialist, December 12th, 1912.
62. Mins, N.T.C. October 11th, 1911.
63. N.D.E. October 25th, 1911.
64. Election results:
- | | | | | |
|----------------|------------|--------------|------|---------|
| Manvers Ward: | Gutteridge | I.L.P. | 1788 | |
| | Kiddier | Conservative | 1370 | maj 418 |
| Meadows Ward: | Bowles | I.L.P. | 935 | |
| | Derbyshire | Conservative | 785 | maj 150 |
| Brextowe Ward: | Spay | Conservative | 1310 | |
| | Sadler | Lib-Lab | 1242 | maj 68 |
65. Mins, N.T.C. January 31st, 1912.
66. L.L. July 11th, 1912.
67. L.L. October 3rd, 1912.
68. George Richards, Election Address, 1912.
69. N.D.E. October 16th, 1912.
70. N.D.E. October 24th, 1912.
71. N.D.E. October 30th, 1912.
72. Nottingham branch of the Independent Labour Party pamphlet, All About Stoke Farm (1912).
73. L.L. November 7th, 1912.
74. Mins, N.T.C. November 5th, 1913.
75. Gutteridge was at this time denied membership of any of the Council Committees. Mins, N.T.C. May 12th, 1913.
76. Mins, N.T.C. November 5th, 1913.
77. Socialist Record October 1913.
78. L.L. April 17th, 1913.
79. L.L. June 19th, 1913.
80. N.D.E. November 1st 1913.

81. N.D.E. November 3rd, 1913.
82. L.L. May 7th, 1914.
83. L.L. July 18th, 1914.
84. A special Joint Conference with the I.L.P. was held on January 31st, 1914.

PART THREE

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN WARTIME

1914-1918

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND 1914-1918

Nottingham, like the rest of the British nation, was wholly unprepared for war. This was true of individuals, most of whom had no apprehension of the impending crisis and of the town's major industry, most of which was run down and in no condition to meet the demands of total war. In August 1914 the city presented the customary look of an old industrial town, a textile centre superimposed upon an old mining district; the workers who earned their living in the traditional industries of lace, hosiery and coal were naturally preoccupied with their own problems and concerns and few amongst them can have had any conception of the major upheaval which was to be the consequence of war amongst the advanced industrial countries.

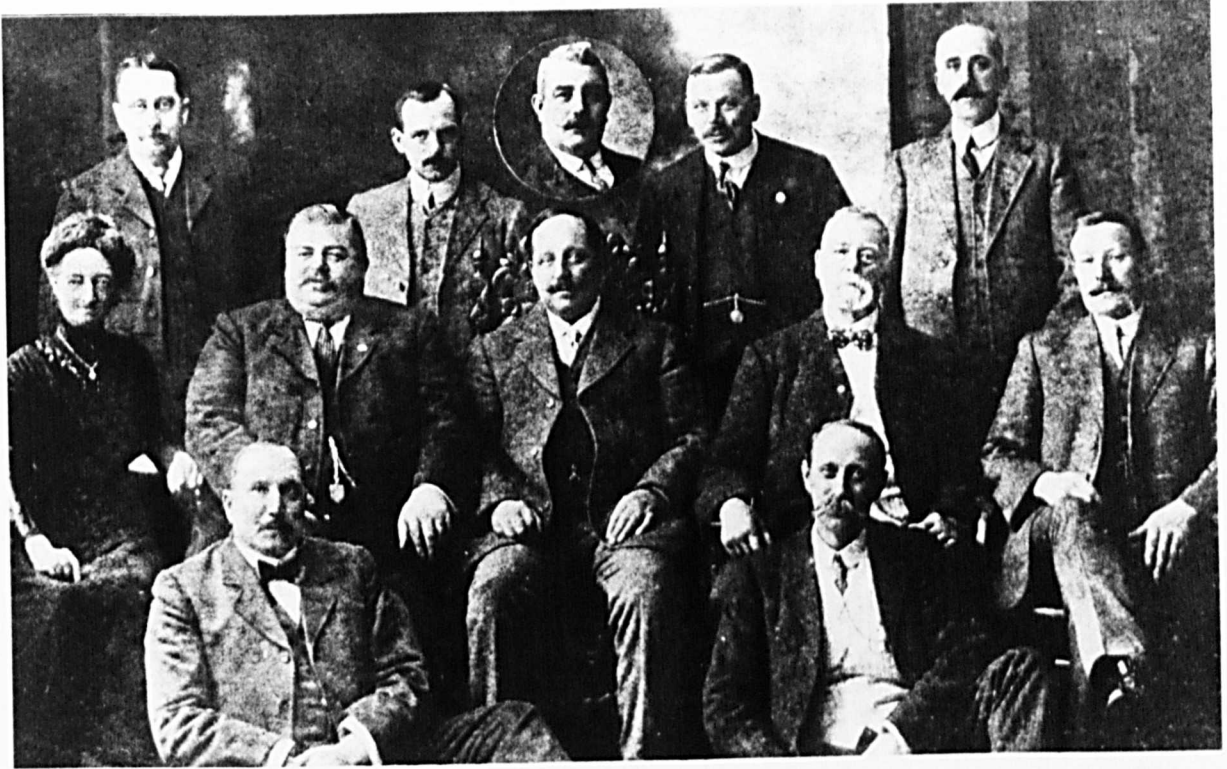
At the beginning of the conflict unemployment remained the major concern of the town's workers. In October 1914 the local Labour Party pre-
tested that "over 100 men employed in the Nottingham Postal Service have responded to their country's call...to replace them some 70 temporary auxiliary men were engaged...all of these men have received notice and many were discharged on Saturday last and to meet this shortage of labour the postal service has been cut from six to four deliveries a day." ¹ At the same time the Trades Council War Emergency Committee demanded that the local government begin public works in Nottingham to help the unemployed, whilst reporting that "76 out of 110 Trade Unions in Nottingham returned 1,064 of their members totally out of work and 4,409 partially." ²

The National Union of Railwaymen had already drawn attention to many vacancies which had gone unfilled. Writing to Labour Party Headquarters the Nottingham and District Joint Committee pointed out that "a great number of railwaymen had been called to the colours, and others dismissed, their places are not being filled and consequently work is having to be done by those who are left, causing excessive work and overtime to be made, whilst other men who could fill these positions are unemployed." ³ The dis-

location represented here was, of course, very quickly put right and as the war continued very rapid changes took place. Full employment and with it the unionisation of women, the altered distribution of income and with it a changed authority structure within the family and perhaps most important of all, through their association with the Government machine, the compromising of many official trade union leaders and the consequent development of a new unofficial movement.

The effects of the war on the lace trade, Nottingham's oldest staple industry, were amongst the most dramatic and catastrophic. The manufacturers and the trade unions had been bewailing its declining position for several years before 1914. Permanent and fundamental changes in women's fashion had helped to create a major crisis which, it was claimed, had crippled the industry's prospects. Predictably, the war years accelerated these trends, not only by curtailing the demand for lace fabrics and trimmings, but also by helping to ensure the replacement of lace with cotton and rayon. Even in the provision of window dressings, lace was quickly losing ground to woven fabric, especially for newer houses with smaller casement windows. Against this background the making of mosquito and sandfly nets for armies overseas could not make up for the loss of fashion markets and by the end of the war the trade had shrunk to about half its pre-war size.

By December 1914 the Board of Trade was reporting that the skilled engineers who built lace machines were on short time, and it seems likely that as the war continued those amongst this important group of workers who had not been called to the colours would have drifted or been directed into the manufacture of munitions.⁴ Something similar seems to have happened to many of the women lace workers. In November 1914, for instance, it was claimed that "employment in the lace trade, which was bad before the war, is now still worse."⁵ Against this background some of the female workers were drafted into the hosiery industry which was already busy with Government contracts. It also seems likely that as the war continued some of



The Nottingham Trades Council Executive immediately before the outbreak of the First World War. At this time Hayday the president was still a member of the B.S.P. Askew of the Nottinghamshire Miners Association was an I.L.P. supporter. Miss Atkins of the Female Cigarmakers was the only woman representative twenty three years after the formation of the Trades Council.

the women lace workers would find their way into the armaments industry. These trends continued as the demands of the war economy intensified. In January 1915 employment in all sections of the lace trade was reported to be very bad. The majority of lace operatives, it was claimed, were only on half-time, and because of this situation it is not surprising that the lace trade unions came under increasing pressure to allow the recruitment of additional numbers of cheaper female workers.⁶ The male lace workers were, however, very reluctant to allow the relaxation of workshop regulations. Their Society insisted that twisthands must always be men, although the auxiliary work of winding, warping and threading might be performed by men or women. The male work force, however, remained deeply hostile to the idea of women twisthands and their Executive sent delegates to the Home Office to argue against the principle.⁷ By November 1916, however, it seems that this resistance was beginning to break down and it was reported that several firms were now employing women and girls on machines previously operated exclusively by men.⁸

The "dilution" of the traditional labour force which is being identified here was, of course, a major feature of the war years. The job of directing the substitution of women for men in Nottingham industry was undertaken by a local sub committee of the National Advisory Committee upon Women's War Employment. This organisation was active in helping major undertakings like the Raleigh Cycle Company or Boots, the major drug firm, to switch significant parts of their operation to the support of the national war effort, by utilising the labour of large numbers of female workers.

In the case of the Raleigh Cycle Company, the war initially brought a great sales boost. By September 1914 the Government had ordered several thousand bicycles and in addition a great many motorists returned to the bicycle as the most economical form of transport. Frank Bowden, the Company's proprietor, in order to encourage the patriotism of his work-force, made the same allowance as the War Office to the dependents of all

employees who had volunteered, and in October 1914 it was reported that 250 of the firm's employees had either volunteered or been called up.⁹ Later the Company produced a special constable's bicycle as well as two special Army models, the "Scout" and the "Military". Shortly after the outbreak of war a large part of the factory was turned over to the making of munitions. The automatic machinery used for the making of Sturmev-Archer gears was ideally suited for making fuses, and the giant presses used for making sheet-steel parts were converted to the manufacture of magazine pans for the Lewis machine gun. It was reported that such problems as were encountered in the introduction of these changes were solved by the foreman of the Press Shop and Colonel Lewis, the inventor of the gun.¹⁰ By the end of 1915 the Company was employing a work-force of 2,000 and at the end of 1918 this had risen to over 5,000. Many amongst this work-force were drawn from the ranks of the town's women workers, and it is surprising that the surviving records contain no evidence of significant unrest amongst the traditional male skilled labour force at this dilution of their craft and traditional agreements.

The first reaction of Boots, the famous drug firm, to the war was to produce a range of goods "for the men at the front". These included water sterilisers, anti-fly cream, vermin powder, foot comfort, 'tinned heat' (a pocket stove at 7½d.), pocket air pillows and a pocket case of compressed medicines. Later, aspirin, phenacetin and atrophine were produced in very large quantities for Government contracts. The firm was also involved in trying to combat the effects of poison gas. Simple respirators, flannel helmets and a more elaborate box respirator were all manufactured in Nottingham. Since the need for these products was very urgent a night shift was introduced in September 1916. The work-force involved in the making of these items peaked at 900 in April 1918.¹¹ Most of the workers were girls and their output reached a maximum of 85 tons of granules and 90,000 respirators a week. The assembly of the gas masks took place on a moving belt and the flow system of production was so intense that it led to a good deal of un-

rest amongst the women workers. As a consequence early in 1917 the management reduced the working week by stages from 53 to 48 hours, with the result that total output increased, much to the management's surprise. As the war continued the number of women workers increased so that by 1918 the firm was employing 2,966 against 1,546 in 1914.¹²

A great many women were directly employed in the making of munitions. By the end of 1915 there were three women for every man in the munitions industry. In Nottingham, however, it was not until the spring of 1916 that any significant number of women entered the shell and gun factories. This delay came about because the factories in which the work was undertaken had to be specially built. In November 1915 the Nottingham press reported that men were working day and night to complete a new gun factory in the Meadows district of the town. A month later it was claimed that articles which had appeared in the press concerning the wages which the Nottingham lace girls would be able to earn when the local munitions factories began production was causing consternation among the local lace manufacturers. Lace girls earning between ten shillings and fifteen shillings working short time in the lace factories would, it was claimed, be taking home thirty-five shillings a week with overtime after a week's work in the gun factory.¹³ On December 30th 1915 the Nottingham Express claimed the 5,000 hands would shortly be needed. Several thousand applications had already been received and between 500 and 600 women had already been accepted. Most of these, it was reported, were women who had not perviously worked in a factory and 75 per cent were estimated to be the wives or mothers of serving soldiers. Nottingham's second major munitions factory was built in the same period at Chilwell, about four miles from the city centre. By the end of the war 10,000 were employed on this site, which covered 260 acres. Large numbers of the labour force were women volunteers and many of these were involved in a tragic accident in July 1918 when a huge explosion in the mixing shop caused 389 casualties including 134 dead. After the Chilwell explosion the local newspapers reported that the

women workers had behaved splendidly and were "pressing to be allowed to return to work."¹⁴ By the end of the war it was estimated that 35,000 women were employed on war contracts in the Nottingham area.¹⁵ Many other women had entered commerce, the banks and office work of all types. Others were used by the Nottingham Post Office on both deliveries and sorting, and the town's trams made use of female workers from February 1916 when 62 women conductors were taken on. By July 1915 the Nottingham Chamber of Commerce was urging the Government to relax the Factories Act in order to help utilise female labour and three months later one Nottingham firm of window cleaners had replaced its entire male labour force with women. The vast majority of the women and girls involved in these changes had little or no trade union consciousness. The record of the town's trade union branches in organising women left a good deal to be desired and it seems likely that even in those cases where women had previously been employed many had remained outside the unions' organisation. Some months after the outbreak of war, however, the Trades Council began to realise the importance of bringing them within the unions' sphere of influence. During 1915, of 163 authorised Trades Council delegates, only 6 were women. By early 1916, however, the Council, after recognising that "a number of societies, through the dilution of labour, have been placed in a difficult position, many of the unions not being open to female members",¹⁶ decided that the time had come to sponsor a "definite system of organising." Happily, this campaign seems to have had some success and in June it was reported that nearly 500 women workers had joined the General Workers in a six week period.¹⁷

The hosiery industry, too, found itself transformed as a consequence of the war. Within weeks of its outbreak enormous orders from the War Office for socks, underwear, pullovers, balaclavas and gloves for the forces had been placed. By May 1915 at least a quarter of the hosiery machinery in the town was employed on Government contracts. At the end of that month it was reported that "despite the increased productive capacity of this district for the supply of hosiery, the demand continues to be

greater than the possible output and most firms are only booking fresh business for delivery at a long period ahead."¹⁸ Because of demand of this kind and under pressure from the Government and the manufacturers the hosiery unions found themselves by December 1915 having to attend a special conference which had been convened by J.H. Rogers, Superintending Inspector of Factories, to discuss the terms on which women could be admitted to hosiery factory departments which had previously been restricted to men. The agreement which followed had an immediate effect; before the month was out it was reported that the male labour shortage had been "largely surmounted".¹⁹ The pressure on the hard-pressed hosiery industry increased as the war demands intensified. As early as December 1914 the Board of Trade reported that the skilled hosiery machine builders were working overtime; a year later about 25 per cent of the hosiery operatives were working overtime of ten hours a week or more and this trend continued throughout the war.²⁰

The close link between working-class enlistment and the economic situation in the town is well demonstrated in the contrast between Nottingham and Leicester. For the first time in its history the Boot and Shoe Union recorded no unemployment once the Army had begun to place huge contracts. Leicester was a major centre for the making of boots and during 1915, on average, only 124 Leicester men joined the army for every 432 from neighbouring Nottingham.²¹ The exact Nottingham recruitment figures are impossible to come by but in June 1915 a survey of trade union branches in the town with a combined membership of 17,751 revealed that 3,150 had joined the army.²² It seems that in proportion to those available for enlistment, the Nottingham workers were as patriotic as any in the country.

As the war continued the production boom brought with it a serious labour shortage. The Nottingham newspapers became full of advertisements for every kind of worker. After the passing of the first of the Military Service Acts in January 1916 which introduced the principle of conscription

the labour shortage became even more acute and in response to the pressures which this created, wages began to increase gradually and initially at least, these increases were enough, when taken with the prevailing patriotism, to avoid too many strikes. Throughout the war years the Board of Trade Gazette records many of the increases awarded to Nottingham workers. In March 1915, for example, the Nottingham brassworkers were granted an increase of 3s. per week. In April 1916 Nottingham electricians claimed a 2d. an hour increase and Sir William Robinson, the arbitrator, decided that the minimum wage should be 9³/₄d. an hour, to be "regarded as war wages due to the abnormal conditions now prevailing." In May 1916 the Nottingham gas workers were awarded a halfpenny an hour increase by Sir George Asquith, and in October 1917 the Nottingham Building Trades Council won advances of between a halfpenny and three-halfpence an hour.

As the war continued economic pressures began to generate a serious clash of interest between different groups of workers. Skilled workers of all kinds resented the breakdown of old agreements and the introduction of unskilled labour. In July 1915 Arthur Hayday, the full-time official of the General Workers, assured a mass meeting in Nottingham which had been arranged in order to appeal for munitions workers, that "at the termination of hostilities any relaxation of trade rights that had been permitted would not be allowed to react to the prejudice of the workmen."²³ At this meeting it was claimed that 500 men had handed in their names as willing volunteers. Amongst the craftsmen of all trades, however, a real resentment was beginning to emerge as machines were set up to be operated by women and unskilled labour. Later, as the awe which had been felt by many before the mystery of 'craft' began to evaporate, and as the wages of machine minders threatened to rise well above those of their mentors, the elaborate trade union structure of rules and restrictions began to splinter and break down. As it did so, the grudging acceptance by organised labour of these fundamental and far reaching changes signalled that the Government could not expect the patriotism of the workers to last for ever.

THE TRADE UNION RESPONSE

In February 1914 a resolution placed before the delegates of the Nottingham Trades Council condemning the action of the Labour papers which carried Army advertisements was narrowly lost. Six months later the brave rhetoric of those behind the resolution, like many other aspects of pre-war society, quickly evaporated, once hostilities had begun. The threatened strikers and anti-war protest did not materialize. The secretary of the Trades Council summed up the feelings of many :

"We find ourselves plunged into a catastrophe without our knowledge or consent. This action is not of our seeking, nor is it the will of the industrial workers of those nations now urging war, neither can the people at this stage stop the war although they may at any rate do much in the direction of mediation at the appropriate time ... in the meantime people are suffering as they always suffer. Most of us will not only lose those who are near and dear to us, but also wives and children will undergo privation." 1

The incipient anti-war sentiments being expressed here were shared by many of the activists of the Nottingham labour movement. The vast majority of the wider working class, however, seem to have been swept up by the vulgar mass chauvinism and anti-German hysteria which greeted the outbreak of the war. Cecil Roberts, the Nottingham author, remembered Bechstein pianos having the maker's name covered with strips of black velvet and German dachund dogs being kicked to death in the streets in a grotesque expression of national pride. ² Whilst publicly outraged at this kind of unthinking brutality, those in power must have welcomed such manifestations of crude patriotism, since the intelligent elements amongst them already recognised that if the war was to be won the key to success was the mobilisation of the labour movement, both psychologically and materially.

Towards this end the German invasion of Belgium had the effect of converting most of the labour movement to a vigorous though not uncritical prosecution of the war. Most activists other than those whom Royden Harrison has characterised as the "super patriots" were usually confused in their attitudes, and it is too easy as Ross McKibben has pointed out, to claim that the unions supported the war whilst the socialists did not. Some members of the B.S.P., for instance, like Hayday, the President of the Nottingham Trades Council, demonstrated strong jingoistic tendencies whilst an organisation like the A.S.E. was genuinely divided.³ For the most part, however, those active in the Nottingham unions during the First World War were as patriotic as any in the country and the Trades Council was proud to be able to claim that the town's workers were as keen "to answer the drum" as the men of any other district.⁴

In the early stages of the war most Nottingham workers were carried along on a patriotic wave which drew its strength from the vigorous assertion of the common traditions of the total population, and by February 1915, according to statistics compiled by the War Emergency Workers National Committee, 3,500 members of the Nottingham Miners Association had already enlisted.⁵ G.D.H. Cole has pointed out that "a nation at war (we are told) must set aside for the time being all minor antagonisms: industrial and social dissensions must give way before the supreme need of the nation as a whole."⁶ Certainly this was true throughout the First World War and constant references in the newspapers to the "National Tradition" or the "National Heritage" helped to undermine to some extent the separate traditions of different classes. In Nottingham the power and authority of this appeal was demonstrated early in the war. Later, the strength of patriotic feeling was underlined when a pacifist resolution that the Trades Council not be represented on the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee was lost by a large majority and Arthur Hayday was elected to serve on the committee. Like the majority of union leaders, he took a patriotic rather than a pacifist view of the war, and his dominating per-

sonality helped to isolate many of the pacifist elements who as the war continued were forced to drift further and further from their moorings. Despite a degree of tension between the pro and anti-war elements on the Trades Council the appeal of patriotism continued to exercise a powerful grip on the collective psyche of millions of ordinary workers. In Nottingham this was underlined early in 1915 when the Trades Council formed a War Emergency Committee. This Committee involved Richards and Bowles of the Labour Party, Taylor and Turney of the I.L.P. and Oakden and Keble of the B.S.P. No doubt some of these agreed to co-operate in the hope of doing something about food shortages and the like. By October 1915, however, the War Emergency Committee was busying itself with a special recruiting week.⁷

All of this demonstrates that the appeal of King and Country was extremely strong. Even convinced socialists rushed to volunteer. Cyril Goddard remembers his 49-year-old father joining the Army :

"He had been active in the S.D.F. but he thought we had got to defeat German militarism, you see..."⁸

Later, Goddard Senior deserted and his son recalls that at his Court Martial which took place in Leeds towards the end of 1917, he threatened to desert again once the opportunity offered. According to Cyril Goddard an Army Captain who was present told his father that he did not blame him. This anecdote, apocryphal though it might well be, was used by Goddard to illustrate not only the extent of patriotic feeling at the beginning of the war, but also as a pointer to the onset of "war weariness" by the end of 1917. By this time "war weariness" was a feature of civilian as well as military life and as the working class in particular came under pressure from shortages of food and housing and rising rents and prices, institutions like the Trades Council came into sharp conflict with the local Council as well as the National Government.

Soon after the outbreak of war the Trades Council had begun to organise action in an attempt to force food rationing, rent control and the scaling down of conscription quotas. This agitation was to become

extremely important in helping towards the wartime creation of a locally rooted mass labour movement. This process began in August 1914 when the Trades Council quickly took up with the authorities the problems which they expected the working class to face. At a special meeting after the Declaration of War, for instance, the Council called on the Government to "take over official control of the staple foodstuffs and arrange for its equitable distribution."⁹ The same meeting also demanded the introduction of rent control and as the war continued the conflict between the organised workers and the Government sharpened and increased in intensity. In October 1915 it was reported that of the latest batch of 420 Nottingham volunteers, 210 were pronounced unfit and against this background the Trades Council continued to concern itself with the price and distribution of food.¹⁰ In January 1916, for instance, the Trades Council passed a resolution calling for an increase in the scale of out-relief. In June the same delegates, after first rising unanimously to show respect for Lord Kitchener who had lost his life at sea, went on to pass a resolution which called on the Government to "stop the plundering on the part of capitalism and the making of huge dividends out of the needs of the people."¹¹ By October it was necessary to be more explicit and after a large demonstration in the Market Place the Trades Council wrote to the Prime Minister, protesting "against the continued exploitation of the people by the ever increasing price of foodstuffs." According to the Council these price increases were due to the action of profiteers "who sought to take advantage of the people's needs." The time had come, it was argued, to take over "control of the necessaries of life and to arrange for their equitable distribution."¹²

The Trades Council Annual Report for 1916 makes it clear that the high cost of food was uppermost in the minds of the town's trade unionists. As well as passing resolutions on the question, the Trades Council interviewed the local Members of Parliament and organised a joint conference on the topic with the local Labour Party, and Co-operative

Society. In June, at a Trades Council meeting, Arthur Hayday claimed that whilst in London recently he had noticed:

"that taxicabs and private cars still drove to the theatre and ladies were still richly dressed and wore all their valuable paraphernalia and seven and eight course dinners were still being served in the expensive hotels." 13

Later, at another Trades Council meeting the point was made that whilst the soldiers were fighting "there was a handful of men sucking their blood through greed." 14

At the same time an attempt to increase the rents of working class dwellings was met by a vigorous Trades Council protest to the Nottingham Property Owning Association. This, according to the Annual Report, aroused the indignation of the workers "but still the crime of fleecing the workers goes merrily on." Increasingly outraged by profiteering and fiddles of all kinds the Trades Council made the point :

"Sacrifices have been made on every hand ... but the greatest have been made by the organised workers. Not only have they shared in the general sacrifice to the fullest extent but they have sacrificed rights and principles fought for by their forefathers, and which they themselves have fought and starved for. All they have in return are promises ... " 15

Interestingly, there are signs that as early as May 1916 the patriots amongst the local Labour movement were in some areas already beginning to think along similar lines to the left wing pacifists. At a special After the War Conference organised by the Trades Council and the W.E.A., a large assembly of local representatives of the town's labour interests crowded into the People's Hall. Here, Zimmern, the treasurer of the W.E.A., claimed that there could be no return to pre-war conditions because of :

"changes which had taken place in the whole organisation of industry and the change in the attitude and spirit of the workers. "

Miller, a local I.L.P. activist, developed this theme declaring that they had given away all their liberties during the war and would not get them

back without a fight. They would have to "fight industrially and politically and it would be the hardest fight labour had ever had to wage."¹⁶ The unrest being demonstrated here was very widespread. Even the Nottingham Express, intent as it normally was on maintaining patriotic morale, was sensitive enough to sense something in the air. "Indications are not wanting in Nottingham" it reported, and that, in spite of the calm surface of the political sea "there is a strong undercurrent of discontent sweeping among certain sections of the labour movement."¹⁷

Amongst the other subjects occupying the minds of the Trades Council delegates during 1916 which point to the break-down of many old certainties was the Burston School Strike which had begun in 1914. This topic was the subject of a special meeting in October. Mr. Roberts of the Strike Committee and Mr. Corfell of the N.U.T. attended to urge that "all affiliated societies render all financial support."¹⁸ This appeal was enthusiastically supported but an interesting request in January 1916 from the Police and Prison Officers' Union for help in organising the local police was not so well received. After a long discussion the Trades Council instructed its secretary to reply that in the view of the delegates the time was "inopportune." That the request was made at all, however, is a useful pointer to the cracks which were developing in the foundations of pre-war society.

As the war went on and victory became more uncertain, opposition of many kinds developed, especially to conscription, and state controls of one kind or another. Unrest, however, was largely held in check by patriotic feeling and the regularity of employment. A.R. Griffin, the historian of the Nottinghamshire Miners, argues for instance, that the miner was a "model patriot", every week subscribing 1d to the Red Cross Ambulance Fund and contributing to special levies to help Old Age Pensioners with an extra 2/6d a week. To some extent at least the N.M.A. became a recruiting sergeant, helping to "comb out" men for service in the armed services, whilst the leadership also became involved in helping to coerce

persistent absentees into attending regularly for work, as well as advocating shorter holidays.¹⁹

As the war progressed, however, even "model patriots" grew frustrated and disillusioned. Gradually the wave of patriotic fervour which characterised the beginning of the war began to diminish, and a strong leftward swing of the political pendulum began to develop in many trade unions and other working class organisations. In the N.M.A. this is best seen in the struggle around the suggestion that the union should withdraw from the M.F.G.B. political fund. The prime mover behind this proposal was the old Lib-Lab. Hancock, who by now was involved with the most right wing in the labour movement. In December 1916 Hancock had become the Vice President of a fundamentally anti-union organisation known as the British Workers League. By the middle of 1915 Hancock, together with another pre-war leader of the N.M.A., George Alfred Spencer, was determined that the union should itself become a political unit and :

"frame its own policy and rules and completely
control its own fund and political interests
both imperially and locally." 20

By now Hancock had lost the Labour Party whip in the House of Commons. Twenty years previously he had epitomized the Lib-Lab character and outlook. Now, although the principle of independent labour representation had been established, Hancock was redoubling his efforts to avoid the reality.

Hancock and Spencer were, however, out of step with the general mood. The opposition to their ideas was led by Herbert Booth, recently returned from the Central Labour College, and W. Askew, the N.M.A. delegate to the Nottingham Trades Council. These two men and supporters of the I.L.P. distributed 30,000 leaflets entitled 'Trade Unions and Political Action' amongst the Nottinghamshire miners, and by the end of 1916 there were signs that they were winning the battle of ideas. At the end of December 1916 the members of the N.M.A. were asked if they were in favour of contesting the Mansfield Division at the next General Election; 7,511 said

they were against 2,427 who opposed the idea, a majority of 5,084.

Asked if they favoured nominating a Labour Party candidate the majority was 3,405. This result was an indication that right wing elements like Hancock and Spencer were losing control and it led the Labour Leader to report :

"For the last eighteen months there has been an agitation in Nottinghamshire for secession from the M.F.G.B. for political purposes springing mainly from local official sources. On the other hand, there has been a counter campaign carried on by a non-official rank and file committee." 21

Later the rank and file militants were able to force the issue to a special ballot which effectively squashed the attempted breakaway. In retrospect, however, this struggle was really only the first round in a fight which George Alfred Spencer was to win when after the 1926 General Strike he established the Spencer Union.

Spencer and Hancock were motivated by a desire to break away politically from the I.L.P. anti-war group in the M.F.G.B. To the left of the I.L.P. other elements were active. In June 1917 the N.M.A. Council passed a resolution which called attention to the "mischievous agitation a few men are trying to create in the county."²² Hancock, Spencer and the rest of the official leadership are here concerned at the propaganda of syndicalists. Of these, Jack Lavin, an Irish exile who had been a member of the Socialist Labour Party of America, was the most prominent. Lavin had helped to found a branch of the S.L.P. which was influential amongst miners in the north of the county. In addition a left wing group which included Tom Mosley, who was the Gedling checkweighman and the secretary of the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society, was also active. These elements vigorously engaged the Lib-Labs., and at a debate at Eastwood in 1917 between a leading left-winger and George Spencer it became clear that the left was in the ascendancy when from the 1,700 miners present, Spencer was supported by only eleven.²³

Meanwhile developments amongst other groups of workers were also indicating a degree of electricity in the atmosphere. Whilst the trade union bureaucracy was invited into the ministries of Whitehall, where they were able to enjoy the warm glow of social acceptance, the workers in the factories began to feel cheated and defenceless. Hard evidence that this was the case had been accumulating for some time but the strike movement of May 1917 which involved 200,000 engineering workers over a period of more than three weeks heavily underlined the growing bitterness of important groups of workers. Two Government decisions were responsible for precipitating the strike wave : the decision to abolish the Trade Card scheme, and the decision to extend dilution to private work. The strike, as James Hinton has pointed out, originated in Lancashire which, like Nottingham, was heavily involved in the manufacture of textile machinery.²⁴ Consequently, the threat of dilution on commercial work represented a potent issue around which a good deal of trouble could be generated. This fear was probably at the centre of Arthur Hayday's mind when on May 6th he told the Nottingham May Day rally that although "there was a temporary rift in the industrial workers lute it was the duty of the workers as a body to see that the trouble was merely temporary." Hayday was followed by Dick Mee of the Printers, who warned the rally of the dangers of industrial conscription. According to Mee, the workers must "hold fast to their rights or he was convinced that every bit of liberty would be whittled away. The game had been played insidiously and even now some of their leaders has misled them. (Hear Hear). Winning the war on the cheap at the expense of the workers was a policy they were determined should not continue."²⁵ Ten days later the Nottingham Express reported that at "one of the principal works in the city between 400 and 500 skilled men came out on strike yesterday. There is no friction between the men and the local management, the stoppage is due to the men's anti-path to the action that is being taken by the Government in regard to the

card system." ²⁶ Later Morley, the secretary of the No.3 A.S.E. branch, explained that the strike was "quite unauthorised" before explaining that a special meeting to receive the report of an engineers' delegate meeting with representatives of the Government had heard an appeal from the A.S.E. Executive "that no stoppage of work take place." Personally, added Morley "he had not the slightest idea that any strike was taking place." ²⁷ This admission makes it clear that the strike call had come from unofficial elements and at this stage was outside the control of the official trade union organisation. Five days later, however, the strike was called off. The local press had told the strikers that there was no excuse for the withdrawal of their labour. "It is as inexcusable" wrote the Nottingham Express "as the laying down of arms by soldiers on the battlefield or the refusal of the fleet to perform their lawful duties." ²⁸ It seems that the decision to return to work had followed a mass meeting addressed by Mr. Thackery of the Ministry of Munitions. No doubt Thackery's appeal was liberally spiced with appeals to the engineers' patriotism and, according to the local press, a promise from the Prime Minister to deal with their grievances "inspired the men that no further hitch is likely." ²⁹

Unfortunately, no record of the unofficial strike movement in Nottingham has survived. It needs to be recognised, however, that the movement in the town seems to have been weak. A number of possible explanations suggest themselves. Underlying and to some extent explaining the vigour of the unofficial movement in other centres was the militant ambitions of the Workers' Union. In Nottingham, however, this organisation had still to establish itself. Its application to join the Trades Council in March 1914 had been rejected after objections from the Gas Workers, Builders and Wheelwrights, and there is no doubt that the Gas Workers, under the forceful leadership of Hayday, were much less militant. The relative modernity of the engineering industry in Coventry has been advanced by James Hinton as one reason for the emasculation of the shop stewards' movement in that town, and to some extent the same argument helps

to explain its weakness in Nottingham. Both towns had light engineering industries developed from the bicycle boom of the 1880's and '90's and the high proportion of semi-skilled workers used by employers like the Raleigh Cycle Company had already done much to undermine the traditional labour aristocracy, whose wartime traumas did so much to throw up the unofficial movement in other areas.

In addition, Ministry of Munitions officials, together with their allies amongst the official leadership of the Nottingham unions, must be given much of the credit for the containment of militancy in the town. The strike wave of May 1917 seriously alarmed the Government and through the Ministry of Munitions they quickly began the job of underpinning the authority of moderate trade union officials by pressing for "the constitution of officially approved workshop committees, with functions more or less defined, (which) would help to check the more revolutionary tendencies of the shop steward movement by bringing it into an ordered scheme."³⁰ It seems likely that in Nottingham where the munitions factories were not opened until the spring of 1916, a policy of official incorporation was introduced from the start. In June 1917 H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught (the King's uncle) together with Prince Alexander of Battenberg, General Sir John Maxwell and General Rees, visited the Chilwell munitions factory, where they were welcomed by Lord Chetwynd, who was in charge of the works and Mr. Heath, the works manager. According to the local press the visitors were given a complete tour of the works, being given a cordial reception by the workpeople. During the visit the Duke "expressed solicitude for the welfare of the workers" and it is probable that this intelligent concern was another factor in helping to mute unofficial unrest. Certainly this was the view of one Nottingham observer who, after pointing to the fact that labour troubles were practically non-existent in the town's munitions factories, went on to explain their success by reference to the official encouragement which was given to the appointment of shop stewards, the payment of high wages, and the provision of

Nottingham and District Trades Council.

9, HEDDERLEY STREET,
NOTTINGHAM,

OCTOBER 24th, 1916.

ORGANISATION OF WOMEN WORKERS.

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

At the last meeting of the Trades Council a report was given of meetings of the Engineering, Textile, Distributive, Printing, Vehicular, and Miscellaneous Trades Groups having been satisfactorily held for the furtherance of the above object, and the following scheme received unanimous approval:—

1. That a Manifesto inviting the organisation of women on general lines be issued, the same to be separately headed for each specialised section, with the names of the affiliated societies attached.
2. The societies recommended should then undertake the distribution of the Manifesto, with any suitable explanatory literature of their own, and defray the cost proportionately of the Council's printing bill.
3. The Executive to be authorised to arrange, in conjunction with the societies, for indoor, or where suitable meal time, meetings, the union or unions affected to supply the principal speakers, supplemented by Trades Council speakers. The expenses of any room or meeting place necessary to be borne by the unions concerned, who are also to defray any outlay in connection with the provision of their own speakers. The Trades Council to meet the same as regards the Council speakers.
4. In groups, where more than one society is recommended, joint organising meetings should be held.

The Manifesto has been drafted and is now in the hands of the printers. I shall be pleased if you will at once inform me of the number you will require.

The Executive earnestly requests that if your Branch is directly concerned they will arrange for organising meetings at the earliest possible date, and promise you their full support. It is also desirable that they should be kept informed of your intentions in order to prevent clashing. Co-operation between the societies is advisable, and given sufficient interest being shown by the rank and file, this movement should be of great benefit to all concerned.

Yours faithfully,

GEO. THUNDERCLIFFE, *Secretary.*

As the First World War continued the number of women employed in Nottingham industry rapidly increased. Against this background the Trades Council launched a major campaign to unionise female labour.

"sumptuously fitted baths, canteens, changing rooms and outdoor recreation facilities."³¹

When the Commissioners appointed by the Government to look into industrial unrest visited Nottingham in June 1917 they concluded that the unrest in the town had been caused mainly by high food prices and the distortion of differentials :

"Unrest in the East Midlands would cease if the problems connected with food were dealt with drastically...the maladjustment of piece rates made it possible for some unskilled workers to earn twice as much as a skilled man." ³²

This explanation for the unrest amongst Nottingham workers was to some extent supported in a long "Open Letter" allegedly from one of the town's "labouring men." Addressed to the Commissioners on Industrial Unrest the letter, after explaining that the writer had a wife and six children to support, continued :

~~to purchase the bare necessities in groceries comes to 20-22 shillings a week. Of the remaining 19 shillings rent, insurances, clothing, boots, gas and coal have to be considered...no luxuries at all...and then there is the bit of Sunday dinner to be reckoned. For a family of eight you want 2 lbs of potatoes at least (we have to manage with 1) they are 5d and 6d a lb. Then meat for 2s 6d you can scarcely see what you have bought. Garden peas are too dear and loose peas which we bought because they could be made to serve two meals are actually 9d a pint. I'm saying nothing about fruit for pies or puddings, or any little dainty for Sunday tea-time... Sirs, do you wonder at unrest. Can true Englishmen stand it for long, when in their struggles they see and feel the greedy grasping hand of the profiteer snatching the very life blood of their children."~~ ³³

The Commissioners also made the point that the spokesmen of many of the organisations from whom they had taken evidence in Nottingham "expressed distrust in and total indifference to any promise the Government might make, whilst some referred to 'Russia' and openly declared the one course open for Labour was a general 'down tools' revolutionary policy to secure reforms." In Yorkshire and the East Midlands, declared the Commission :

"a minority of very advanced and visionary workers had inflamed practically the whole body of skilled men affecting hundreds of thousands of workers. Even those who did not support the shop stewards had lost all confidence in their Trade Union officials."³⁴

On the basis of what actually happened, however, it must be admitted that the revolutionaries in Nottingham were isolated from the great mass of workers. The leadership offered by the militants was decisively rejected. The social base from which the strike movement drew its strength in the centres of the north did not exist in Nottingham, and although mounting casualty lists, rising prices and stories of profiteering, undermined support for the war amongst militant elements, these alone were not enough to sustain a really significant unofficial movement.

These last factors, however, did continue to generate a good deal of unrest. At the May Day demonstration in 1917, for instance, one speaker, after bitterly denouncing the Government's inability to control food prices, went on to assert that "for the sins of omission committed here, in some countries those responsible would long ago have been gibbeted." Later Halls of the Railway Workers welcomed the Russian Revolution before going on to condemn "rascally scoundrels who had attempted to thwart the people. Plutocrats existed in England today as bad and as rotten as any in Russia ... far too many were trying to feather their own nests at the expense of the workers."³⁵ A month later Will Thorne, speaking on "Trade Unionism and the Russian Revolution," told a large crowd in Nottingham's Market Square that they should join the trade unions and keep on the side of the allied cause until the end of the war. The time had not come, declared Thorne "when they could clamour for peace and in the meantime they had to deal with the miniature Czars of this country...the profiteers."³⁶

Thorne's appeal to the patriotism of the Nottingham workers was extremely powerful. Reinforced as it was in the national and local newspapers with constant appeals to "shun the hun" it was capable of transcending the increasingly wretched life of ordinary workers. At a meeting

of the Trades Council in June 1917, for instance, an overwhelming majority of the delegates endorsed the action of the National Union of Seamen, who had refused to carry the pacifists MacDonald and Jowett to a conference in Stockholm at which representatives of the German Labour Movement were to be present. "We are indebted to these men for the action they have taken" declared Arthur Hayday, to the cheers of the delegates. Hayday had just been in London during an air raid and he told the meeting that although "he would not recount what he had seen, his blood was at boiling point." The resolution endorsing the action of the seamen was endorsed with only ten votes against.³⁷ Hayday's own strong feelings were partly the result of his son having been twice torpedoed in the merchant service, but his views were typical of those held by many rank and file trade unionists who saw the pacifism of MacDonald and the conscientious objectors as somehow equal to treachery. Despite the developing criticism of the war and the increasing bitterness of ordinary workers the Nottingham Express could justifiably boast in May 1917 that the Nottingham miner was "a famous patriot." Later the local press praised a decision of the Nottinghamshire Miners Association to invest its total funds of £25,000 in tank bonds. Decisions like this make it clear that despite the efforts of the militants and the increasing fatigue and disillusion which by 1918 was coming to represent a serious threat to the social fabric, most Nottingham workers loyally supported the war effort.

SOCIALIST ATTITUDES AND LEFT WING ACTIVITY

In retrospect it seems very odd, as Ralph Miliband has pointed out, that in the decade before the outbreak of war socialists should seriously have believed that the working classes of the countries involved, faced with the choice of national as against international solidarity, would opt for the latter.¹ In the event, of course, the vast majority of the working class supported the war. That included amongst them were many members of the socialist organisations is undeniable. Not surprisingly, therefore, the disagreements between those who opposed the war and those who were prepared to support the war effort drove a sombre breach across the history of the British Socialist Movement. This was certainly the case in Nottingham where the difference of opinion may well have helped to retard the unofficial shop stewards movement which developed in other parts of the country.

Early evidence of these disagreements came shortly after the outbreak of war. During the course of 1913 T.A. Pierce, a leading member of the I.L.P., had taken part in a local debate on the subject of Compulsory Military Training. Opposed by a local Liberal, Pierce on this occasion took the orthodox I.L.P. line and condemned war and all its supporters. Once the guns began to fire, however, his views rapidly changed and like many others Pierce rushed to join the colours.² As the casualty lists lengthened popular attitudes hardened, isolating the anti-war element even more. Fenner Brockway has recorded something of this shift in public opinion in his book Inside the Left :

"In the first month of the war there was little bitterness against those of us who opposed it, but by the autumn patriotic feeling had mounted and I heard stories of party members who were suffering boycott, animosity and sometimes physical assault." 3

The strength of patriotic feeling in Nottingham seems to have been very strong and the I.L.P. in particular was weakened by the desertion not only of Pierce, but of the branch chairman and treasurer as well.

These resignations were added to in May 1915 after the socialists associated with the Clarion newspaper had launched a patriotic pressure group known as the Socialist National Defence Committee. The manifesto of this group claimed that "a handful of pseudo socialists" were breaking the national solidarity and weakening the national effort in the face of the enemy. According to Robert Blatchford and his fellow sponsors it was the duty of "true British socialists to expose and repudiate the errors of these dreamers. Some of them are extreme pacifists; some are aliens by birth, blood or sentiment, all of them are consciously or unconsciously the agents of German Kaiserdom..."⁴ This appeal drew a quick response from patriotic socialists in Nottingham. Councillor Arthur Turney, formerly the chairman of the town's I.L.P., wrote :

"I do not agree with peace at any price policy of I.L.P....some of our best members have left the party and more are going."

H.J. Kebbell, a member of the Nottingham B.S.P., was also an early supporter writing to tell the Clarion :

"Bravo comrade! The time is fully ripe. Let us know what we can do."

A week later it was reported that a branch of the Socialist National Defence Committee was being formed in the town, and J. Cockerill, a leading member of the Nottingham I.L.P. wrote to say.

"I was a member of the I.L.P. for 15 years and treasurer for 10 years, yet one of the most gratifying moments of my association with them was when I severed my connexion as a result of their attitude to the war." ⁵

All of this helps to make it clear that shortly after the outbreak of war many Nottingham socialists had quickly abandoned the internationalism which was a central element in their professed philosophy.

By and large, as Professor Arthur Marwick has pointed out, Britain on the outbreak of war in August 1914 "on the surface at least was united and enthusiastic."⁶ Beneath the surface, however, there were many socialists and pacifists who were determined to put up a spirited resistance to the pervading pro-war patriotic hysteria. As the war approached the Nottingham Trades Council had recorded the view that "if ever there was a time when the full meaning of the word 'brotherhood' should be displayed, 'tis now."⁷ Now as the ultimatum announced by Prime Minister Asquith approached its time limit the socialists and anti-war elements joined together to organise a vast meeting against the war in the Nottingham Market Place. Tom Mosley, the checkweighman at Gedling Colliery, remembered:

"Dick Mee was the principal speaker. He had been in the army as a mere boy in the Boer War, and he described with startling realism how it felt to thrust a bayonet through a fellow human being."⁸

Others active in the town's labour movement took their opposition to the war to the length of conscientious objection. Some, like Arthur Statham, were drawn into political activity by their hatred of militarism. Asked what he was doing in the First World War Statham relied :

"I was doing service in about five of His Majesty's prisons. I joined the I.L.P. in 1915 and became involved with the left through my pacifist outlook toward the war...later it became a social reaction to the war more on socialist than on religious grounds...I discovered the Labour Leader...then I found the No Conscription Fellowship, that was my entrance to the movement, prior to that I'd no contact with it at all."

Brought before a Tribunal in March 1916 Statham was eventually Court Martialled :

"I went to a military prison for the first sentence, then I went to a civil prison and then I went to Dartmoor...I was there for nearly two years with about 1,100...socialists, religious quakers, all the lot...there, of course, one's education was immensely stimulated by all these influences."⁹

Another Nottingham conscientious objector was Harry Wheatcroft who later became internationally famous as a rose grower. Wheatcroft was a member

of the I.L.P. and he appeared before a Tribunal, the President of which was Atkey, a prominent Conservative motor dealer. According to Wheatcroft's account he tried :

"to explain the socialist philosophy I had observed since a boy, but my application was simply dismissed in about five minutes or so ... there were one or two from upper or middle class families who received some consideration, but the children of working class parents were not expected to have a conscience." ¹⁰

After being Court Martialled Wheatcroft was sentenced to two years' hard labour. Conscientious objectors like Statham and Wheatcroft were, of course, a minority. As the war continued, however, a much larger group began to emerge who were hostile to the extension of governmental authority.

Right at the outset of the war the Nottingham Trades Council had insisted that :

"The workers of Nottingham will never be compelled or driven. They have said they will not have conscription and they mean it." ¹¹

This determination to resist compulsion, together with the indignation generated by profiteering helped to provide a fertile soil for the socialists and they quickly began to take advantage of it. In August 1915, for instance, R.C. Wallhead spoke for the I.L.P. at two open air meetings on the Forest. Faced with the predictable patriotic heckling Wallhead, according to the Labour Leader, was able to "trounce in true Wallheadian style the exploiters of the people." Included amongst the opposition on this occasion was an erstwhile I.L.P.'er and his presence indicated that the socialist organisations had indeed lost some of their members. The local I.L.P. acknowledged this loss in June 1915 when they admitted :

"Our branch has been affected by a few resignations because of the war. There is no reason to feel dispondent as it has been the means of unearthing other comrades equally capable of filling the gaps left by the defections." ¹²

Since the I.L.P. resignations included the branch chairman and treasurer, there might well have been an element of bravado in this claim. The branch, however, seems to have held together well and in November 1915 it was

reporting that Walton Newbold had spoken to the "largest and most appreciative audience the branch has had this session, literature sold well and three new members joined."¹³

Other aspects of socialist activity seem to have been continuing almost normally at this stage of the war. The Clarion Fellowship held its annual whist drive and dance in February 1915. The Clarion Cycling Club continued to meet on Saturdays and Sundays and from June to September throughout the war the Clarion supporters were in camp at nearby Bradmore.¹⁴ Superimposed on this seeming normality, however, the patriotic socialists were heavily involved in support for the war. In February 1916 the Clarion supporters set up a "Welcome Home for Tommies" scheme. Clarionettes like Mrs. Brightstone of Walter Street opened their homes to returning soldiers and the William Morris Institute which was controlled by the Clarion group opened every night and Sunday morning when "soldiers were especially welcome." In March 1916 the Clarion Club entertained about 50 convalescent soldiers who were shortly to return to the front. After an excellent tea provided by the lady members "an hour or so was spent in games, cards and billiards being the favourite." Later, a smoking concert in which returned soldiers took part was held, and the Cycling Club from time to time sent money to ex members serving with the colours.¹⁵ Many of the socialists involved in this kind of activity would have also supported the writer of a letter headed "Pacifist Piffle" which the Clarion printed in June 1916. After complaining about the "poisonous piffle saturating some B.S.P. branches" the author went on:

"The Nottingham branch is unfortunately one of these and one has to listen to the usual nonsense about this being a capitalist war; that England and her allies are every bit as vile in warfare as Germany and her allies; and that the duty of every horny handed (incidentally wooden headed) socialist work-¹⁶ing man is to stop the war by any and every means."

Throughout the war years sentiments of this kind continued to represent the views of many who had been active members of one or another of the socialist organisations. Some like Arthur Hayday who had been an J.D.F.

Councillor in West Ham and at the beginning of the war was a B.S.P. member as well as president of the Nottingham Trades Council, felt so strongly that they were prepared to sit on Tribunals and play their part in judging those socialists who claimed to be conscientious objectors. Many others volunteered to fight or, if too old, "did their bit" in working for one aspect or another of the war effort.

Meanwhile, those who opposed the war did their best to sustain and support each other. In May 1916, for instance, I.L.P. members came together for a very enjoyable evening which had been arranged for "the double purpose of showing our appreciation of the young members of the branch who come under the Military Service Act and to secure some help for the family of Mr. Maclean of Glasgow." No one, according to the Labour Leader "not in the know, would for one moment dream that possibly within a week many of the young men present would be guests of His Majesty because they refused to be traitors to the great cause of humanity."¹⁷

A fortnight later three of these young men, Harry Lowe, Richard Papworth and Thomas Parker, found themselves in court, charged with breaking a bye-law after distributing a pamphlet called The Tribunal outside St. Mary's Church after service. The case against all three was dismissed. That it was brought at all, however, indicates how far authority was prepared to go in its efforts to enforce its control.¹⁸

Shortly afterwards the open air propaganda season started. The local I.L.P. came together with the Union for Democratic Control which had by now established a branch in Nottingham for a series of meetings which attracted :

"vast audiences both morning and night, they listened very attentively, and not a word of dissent was heard. Many people signed peace memorials." ¹⁹

Later the programme included Fenner Brockway speaking on "Labour and the War" and "War and the Way Out" and Miss P. Lynch of the Workers Socialist Federation, at a meeting on the Forest, launched a "scathing indictment of the sharks who are growing rich out of the necessities of the poor."²⁰ Mrs.

Bruce Glasier was also in the town during July and she made two speeches which were "eloquent appeals for peace through negotiation instead of through brute force." "Never", according to the Labour Leader "have we seen such large crowds in the open air held in so tense an attitude." At the end of August Clement Bundock one of the I.L.P.'s national speakers, spoke to a large outdoor meeting on "What is the way to Peace." This meeting was remarkable because although rain came in the early evening "Mr. Bundock spoke under an umbrella, the audience stood solid as he appealed to them to demand peace by negotiation." Obviously anti-war feeling was now on the increase. The Nottingham I.L.P. reported that in a very short space of time they had sold 100 copies of E.D. Morel's book The Truth About The War and as the summer campaign came to a close there were signs of an increasing tempo in the propaganda of the I.L.P., B.S.P. and S.L.P.

As the winter months began the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society booked C.P. Trevelyan to speak on "Peace by Negotiation". Shortly before the meeting was due to take place, however, the authorities of the Mechanics Institute, where the debate was due to take place, withdrew permission, owing, they claimed, to the intervention of the local Watch Committee. Instead the meeting was held in the Headquarters of the B.S.P. where a large audience made it plain that they resented the crude attempts of the local authorities to curtail democratic discussion. This meeting and others like it pointed the way for an increasing number of Nottingham men and women as the early enthusiasm for the war began to wane. By July 1917, for instance, the local I.L.P. was able to claim that its membership was "slowly but surely increasing." In August Tom Mann spoke at a meeting on the Forest and after a speech which was described as "a real mental tonic" a resolution which approved a policy of peace by negotiation was passed with only four votes against it. At this meeting 70 copies of the Labour Leader were sold and the local activists rejoiced that at last "real progress was being made."²¹ At the end of the 1917 outdoor propaganda campaign the I.L.P. moved to new rooms at 26, Lister Gate, before beginning an

ambitious series of indoor meetings. At one of these, Seymour Cocks, who was later to become the Labour Member of Parliament for Broxtowe, spoke on behalf of the U.D.C. and it was subsequently reported that 17 new members had joined the I.L.P. within a fortnight.

Throughout this period the standard of living of the town's working class was improved slightly although inefficient food distribution remained a major problem. Arthur Richardson, who had been elected Liberal M.P. for Rotherham in February 1917, described recent scenes in Nottingham during the course of a House of Commons debate. He claimed that when a queue of women and children, after standing for hours, were told that there was no margarine, a near riot broke out. Richardson added :

"I was at a big Nottingham meeting yesterday and a big trade union meeting the week before. These men are saying that if this thing goes on they will down tools and take the positions of their wives and children. Ministers would do well to listen to these men; they might realize the danger if this question is not dealt with." 22

The unrest to which Richardson is here referring reached its climax in May 1917. In this period the power of the trade union rank and file was increasing rapidly, at the same time as a similar growth in the power and influence of the trade union leadership. That these two developments could occur at one and the same time reflects the fact that factory employment in many areas was ceasing to have any neighbourhood element. Huge new undertakings like the Chilwell Ordnance Factory employed thousands of workers from a wide area and as a consequence the function of district trade union branches was being largely eliminated and the place of work organisation became increasingly important. The demise of geographically based union branches helped in turn to produce a qualitative change in the position of the workshop steward. As official trade union policies became increasingly identified with the Government, a breach between trade union leaders and working men and women developed which put the shop steward in an increasingly difficult position. On the one hand the steward became an indispensable part of the war machinery, essential oil to the working of industry, whilst on the other the steward was also often the 'spanner in the works.'

This development was, of course, at one level simply part of the confused and contradictory relationship between trade unions, management and the government. During the First World War, however, this relationship was further complicated because many stewards were apt to be critical of the structure of British society, and particularly after the Russian Revolution, of the whole of the capitalist system.

Support for the Russian Revolution was seen most dramatically in the events which surrounded the Leeds Convention. Nottingham, however, was not as involved in the agitation which followed the Convention as some other towns. At a special meeting in July the Trades Council considered an invitation to be represented at a Midlands meeting which had been called to consider possible further action. Halls of the N.U.R. moved that the Council be represented and this was supported by Cox of the Distributive Workers. After a heated discussion in which the opposition was led by Hayday, the motion to take part was lost by 43 votes to 15. Early in 1917, however, the Trades Council had expressed its indignation at the action of the then Russian Government in "sentencing some of its citizens to years of imprisonment, exile and deportation for Trade Union activity."²³ This resolution, together with the enthusiasm with which the Revolution was greeted in the town, make it clear that many workers in Nottingham welcomed and rejoiced in the Russian uprising.

Despite the enthusiasm with which the Russian Revolution was greeted by the town's committed socialists the majority of the rank and file remained most concerned about their own condition. In Nottingham even the most militant of the working class were unable to give the mass movement anything other than a trade union and purely local character. This was demonstrated again and again throughout 1917. In January, for instance, the Trades Council passed a resolution protesting against the "enormous and entirely unjustifiable increase in the price of the people's foodstuff."²⁴ Later in the year the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest, after visiting Nottingham, reported that :

"The nerves of the men and their families are racked by hard workshop conditions, low and unfair wages in some cases deficient housing accommodation, war sorrows and bereavements, excessive prices of food, the vagaries of the Recruiting Officer and withal by a feeling that their privileges as members of certain trade unions had been given up only to better the position of others." 25

In December the Mayor, Sheriff, the Town Clerk and Mr. J.W. McCraith J.P., the Chairman of the War Economy Committee were given a rowdy reception when they attended a Trades Council meeting as a deputation to urge economy in the consumption of food. Why, Trades Council delegates wanted to know, was food being preferentially distributed "to the advantage of the better off classes." 26

Although there was a great deal of strong feeling on issues of this kind, the local movement was still shot through with all sorts of contradictions. In July 1917 for instance, the Trades Council presented its ex-treasurer with a bank book containing £63. 7. Od. In itself this gesture was not unusual. The Trades Council had, however, approached the town's leading capitalist, with the result that Sir Jesse Boot made arrangements to allow Allcroft, one pound per month for life. Subsequently the Trades Council "enthusiastically passed a resolution of thanks to Sir Jesse Boot, for his munificent action." 27 At the same time the Trades Council was busy participating in special conferences on post war problems at which discussion centred on housing, rents, food and education as well as talking to the Chamber of Commerce about the suggestion that local Conciliation Boards should be set up in local industries. Meanwhile, Hayday continued as a member of the Recruiting Committee, and although the Trades Council was opposed to conscription, in August 1917 they agreed to co-operate in another Labour recruiting demonstration.

Despite this co-operation, however, only a month later in September 1917 the Trades Council came out strongly against conscription. Cyril Goddard, meanwhile, on his own initiative, was making sure that he would not die in the trenches like his brother who had been killed earlier.

Goddard, like many others, was opposed to the war and he recalled:

"I was a C.O. I was definitely...I could go into that...I just escaped the call-up by a matter of a bit of jiggery pokery on my birth certificate ... good luck."

The process of politicisation was a common experience during the war years.

Cyril Goddard remembered :

"I sort of gravitated to the Party. I'd worked with the B.S.P. at the time. I'd had previous contact with them through my Dad... it was definitely against the war."

Goddard's primary political influence in this period was undoubtedly his father, but there were many others :

"My old boss, who was interested, used to say 'Come up to the club'... so I wandered down to the club and a chap called Bert Smith (should be an honoured name in Nottingham)... if old Bert got a young chap he didn't let him go ... he brought me one of Jack London's books... 'Read this and I'll see you next week.' 'Cause I had to see him next week to take the book back. Well, from there ... I think he made more Socialists or Communists than anybody. He was an S.L.P. chap ... he was a damn good propagandist, not on the platform ... he never spoke... so I got interested and joined the B.S.P. and they gave me the job of junior sub-collector. "

A good many others were coming to the left during these years. The William Morris Institute was the main political centre of the town and Cyril Goddard remembered it being used as the B.S.P. meeting place :

"Now all the people that used the William Morris were not members of the B.S.P. To some it was a dance and a social but many that came perhaps initially lukewarm socialists, they joined the B.S.P. "

Cyril's wife Edith claims that because many engineers were deferred during the war a disproportionately high number were joining left-wing organisations. Her husband, however, makes the point that the pre-war generation were still very active underpinning the gradual growth of socialist thought and activity :

"There was my Dad, there was Dick Mee, there was Freddy Streets, there was Lee Dew, there was Crampton ... they were the mainstay. " 28

These recollections make it clear that despite the atmosphere created by the pro-war, patriotic majority, anti-war and socialist elements

were able to mount a spirited rearguard campaign. As the war continued the older generation of Nottingham socialists were able to convince increasing numbers of potential young recruits that the future lay with them. Even though the majority of Trades Council delegates were heavily committed to winning the war some of its delegates were active with the anti-war groups. Dick Mee of the B.S.P., for instance, started an outdoor campaign in July 1917. In the autumn of the year the I.L.P. commenced an indoor educational programme which included Harry Cox on "The Poetry of Democracy", Miss Chambers on "The Proposed Economic War Against Germany", Sam Higginbottom on "The Workers Peace" and Comrade Schofield on "The Changing War Aims of the Allies."²⁹ This series of meetings seems to have been very successful and the Labour Leader reports spoke of "rousing meetings together with an influx of new members.

Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers Suffrage Federation also seems to have had a good deal of influence amongst the Nottingham anti-war groups. In December 1917 one of Pankhurst's lieutenants visited Bulwell where an open air meeting in the Market Place despite "intense cold and darkness, attracted about 200 people."³⁰ The audience was orderly and interested, and after the meeting had broken up groups continued to discuss "adult suffrage and peace by negotiation." After this morning meeting a Sunday evening meeting in the Adult School heard Mrs Bouvier speak in "Russia Past and Present." It seems that Pankhurst's People's Charter campaign which had as its slogan "Peace, Socialism, Votes for All" had made a significant impact in the Bulwell area where Mrs Walker a local activist had carried out an energetic campaign and "made many members and started a good branch."³¹

Anti-war feeling intensified during 1918 and the Labour Party's Annual Conference which was held in Nottingham during that year provided a useful opportunity to gauge the strength of the desire for change which had been developing. The National Administrative Council of the I.L.P., together with the Labour Party Executive and the leaders of the Railwaymen

and Miners were housed in the huge Victoria Hotel, lesser delegates in small hotels and boarding houses throughout the town. The meeting which they had all come to attend pulled many strands together. At one level the gathering was just another national conference; at another it signalled a change of direction which would put the infant party on the road to truly national status. Numbered amongst those staying at the Victoria Hotel was Beatrice Webb who recorded in her diary :

"There are about 40 of the leading labour men in this hotel. But this crowd is sharply divided into members of the E.C. of the Labour Party and those who are primarily members of the N.A.C. of the I.L.P....there is no overt hostility, they all greet each other with good mannered intimacy, cloaking their differences in banter and chaff ... the leaders of the Labour movement are distinctly uneasy about the spirit of revolt among the rank and file which openly proclaims its sympathy with lurid doings in Petrograd... the whole body of delegates seem determined that the social order shall be different after the war and for the first time they are keen on the International." 32

The first real signs of this changing mood could be seen at the conference opening when clear indications of the rising spirit of the British Labour movement began to emerge. The 'Red Flag' opened the meeting and three cheers were called for, for the Russian Revolution, and for the International. When a delegate shouted for cheers for peace the hall rang with response. A cry from the audience: "Cheers for Mac" evoked a spirited outburst, and was followed by cheers for Trotsky and Litvinov. Throughout the meeting "delegates rose from their seats in the unbounded enthusiasm of their greeting with a hurricane of cheers." Later Litvinov, the Bolshevik representative in Great Britain, brought fraternal greetings and was "received with loud cheers, punctuated with tremendous applause." 33

The Clarion writer Alex Thompson, was deeply worried by these indications of change and warned his readers :

"Treason at the Labour Party palaver was plentiful and thick. Oh, how the rebels yelled and foamed and tore passion to tatters. Without exception, I think those who yelled loudest were all anti-British. They reminded me of the screeching cockatoos on their perches at the zoo, and to the purpose, said as much." 34

At this stage Thompson's concern that the "wild incitement to rebellion delivered by the Bolshevik ambassador" might lead to the spilling of blood in the streets of Nottingham was premature. The tank which was touring the English provincial towns to raise funds for war bonds was in Nottingham the week of the conference and the large crowd which heard Purdy, the conference chairman, speak at one of the pro-war midday meetings, was as patriotic as ever. Indeed the War Loan campaign with its big bulletin boards created more of a stir than the Labour's Party's conference in the town. It brought crowds of girls and middle aged men and women to the Market Square at noon. Agents of the British Workers League passed amongst them, handing out sheets denouncing the Labour Party, and although the sellers of the Herald, the Labour Leader and the Workers' Dreadnought were also present in the crowd there is little doubt that most of Nottingham citizens believed the dire warnings of the local press which worried itself about "socialist ruffians" trying to take over the country.

Beneath the surface, however, there were significant signs of change. At a social and concert for delegates in the I.L.P. rooms at Wheeler Gate, for instance, Richardson, who at this stage was still associated with the local movement as a Lib-Lab. delivered an address in which he defended the pacifism of MacDonal and many other I.L.P. members.³⁵ Another testimony of the shift in sentiment under way at this time amongst the rank and file of the labour movement was a speech by Robert Smillie at Nottingham in January 1918. Smillie in this period was an outspoken leader of the Left. Now, as the war neared its end he welcomed signs that most active and rebellious sections of the movement were succeeding in their efforts to secure a more general shift to the left :

"This mining country of Nottingham may be taken as one of the most backward in Great Britain. From the advanced labour and political points of view, it has always been considered reactionary and the home of liberal-labourism as opposed to independence. It is now showing a wonderful movement of a revolutionary character."

Smillie went on to explain that he had addressed three mass meetings in the

area during the past week. On the previous night he had spoken to over two thousand men and women. Some of the audience were railway workers but the men were chiefly miners :

"At these meetings every reference to an early settlement of the war by negotiation, every reference to the building up of the International ... every statement that liberalism and conservatism, the old political parties, should be thrown aside and all classes of the democracy unite together in the building up of a people's party... was cheered to the echo." ³⁶

Correctly, Smillie made the point that only a few months before he would not have been allowed to make these speeches in Nottingham. Quite clearly an important change in many of the basic attitudes of ordinary workers was under way.

It needs to be remembered, however, that the kind of denunciation which characterised MacDonald and Snowden as Bolsheviks even though today it has a slightly ludicrous ring, was very powerful in a period when jingoism was such an important element in the life of the country. Arthur Richardson, speaking at a meeting of the I.L.P. in March pointed out that the socialists were not only up against "the militarism and Prussianism of Germany but the jingoism of the British press."³⁷ To illustrate this point a month or two later the local press reported a visit to the town by Arthur Henderson "for the purposes of stirring up the local Labour Party." By all accounts Henderson was given a rough reception. "Day after day" he claimed, he was described as "a pacifist, a defeatist, a Bolshevik." At this point he was interrupted from the audience: "What's the matter with a Bolshevik?" This drew from Henderson a vehement denunciation of Bolshevism. "If you want me to lead the labour movement as a Bolshevik I give you notice that I am done with the job."³⁸ In fact, of course, Henderson and the rest of the official leadership were quite safe and in retrospect their fears seem wildly exaggerated.

Anti-war feeling intensified throughout 1918. In February the I.L.P. heard Comrade Farrow speak on "The Awakening of Labour" before the meeting was handed over to Miss Hague of the Women's Peace Campaign. In

March an ex-Army Lieutenant spoke to the I.L.P. on "English Prussianism" and Bundock of the Labour Leader talked to the branch on the "Secret Treaties" which had been revealed by the Russians after the Revolution. This agitation occupied the I.L.P. through the rest of the year. George Lansbury spoke in June and in July the visit of Fred Jowett M.P. was a major event.

"The crowd at our meeting in the morning was the largest on the Forest this summer... an extra supply of Labour Leaders and Heralds was so quickly disposed of; we had none for the evening meeting." 39

Jowett spoke for over 60 minutes on a "Lasting Peace by Agreement." A month later the Nottingham branch of the I.L.P. was reported as "doing well, quietly perhaps, but it is surely making headway under difficult circumstances." In March 1918 Sylvia Pankhurst had spoken again in Nottingham and it was reported that after a social and reception at Bulwell "many new members had been recruited into the Workers Suffrage Federation". A month later Mr. E. Croft of the N.U.R. and chairman of the Nottingham Food Vigilance Committee spoke for the W.S.F. and a week later Boswell, the local secretary of the N.U.R., took the chair at a meeting organised by the W.S.F. on "Trade Unions and Political Action". By June 1918 W.S.F. meetings had been banned by the City Council although the group continued to use the Market Place for labour meetings.⁴⁰

The Nottingham branches of the S.L.P. and the B.S.P. were also active in anti-war protest throughout the war. The internal politics of small socialist groups are always difficult to follow but it seems that some members of the Nottingham branch of the B.S.P. had joined the S.L.P. in December 1917. At this time the membership of the S.L.P. was about 30 strong, but by June 1918 it was claiming 50 Nottingham members. The S.L.P. ran a series of 12 lectures during the winter of 1917-1918 and in February 1918 it commenced a successful Economics class. In March it was announced that Jimmy Stewart had been appointed organiser of the Nottingham branch of the S.L.P., and during the summer of 1918 he was involved in running a vig-

orous outdoor campaign designed to make "the sparks fly this year."⁴¹ These meetings included two meetings at Hucknall, Bulwell, Kimberley, Eastwood and Ilkeston, as well as three meetings at Pinxton, Long Eaton and Sandiacre with a special meeting for the N.U.R. at Basford.

Underpinning the growth of support for socialist organisations was the continuing poverty of many workers. Despite relatively high war time wages many workers remained poor. Shortly before the war ended, for instance, the Trades Council was heavily involved in protest activity about the price of food. In October 1918 they passed a resolution protesting at the high price of milk, which they saw as detrimental to the child life of the city.⁴² The Trades Council was also instrumental in the setting up of twenty national kitchens for the supply of food at cost price. The teacher in charge of one of these wrote that the women and girls in the neighbourhood who worked in the lace factories were not properly fed, whilst another Nottingham kitchen reported its patrons as being from an extremely poor class, chiefly ragged children and mothers from poverty-stricken homes.⁴³

In February 1918 there were disorderly scenes in the town's shambles when a butcher was accused of holding back meat for privileged customers. Similar scenes around a market place butter stall and a flood of letters to the local papers about profiteers help to reflect the overall poverty of many workers. In March 1918 a large deputation from the Nottingham, Bulwell and Cinderhill Co-operative Societies visited the Trades Council to underline the point. The Co-operators involved alleged the withholding of food supplies from the Co-ops, claiming also that private traders were operating a ring when asked to eke out meat, bacon and lard, often using abusive language to the Co-op. members who tried to buy food from them.⁴⁴ Because of pressure of this kind the Trades Council intensified its activity on food control, insisting on the setting up of communal kitchens, the provision of extra rations for workers in heavy industry, and the opening of special horse meat shops.

As the end of the war drew near the socialists like the Trades Council began to anticipate the future. Unlike the Trades Council, however, the socialists were totally opposed to joining the employers in talks about the setting up of Conciliation Boards. George Watts, one of the town's leading left wingers, advised that "the capitalist system would break down after the war and the employers were, therefore, trying to delude the workmen to join in bolstering their inefficient system."⁴⁵ In September Bruce Glasier turned the thoughts of the I.L.P. to the future in a talk on Keir Hardie in which all concerned "felt lifted onto a higher plane of thought."⁴⁶ Only a day or two before the Armistice a large I.L.P. audience heard Miss Hobhouse explain during a talk on "The Psychology of the People in War Time" that militarism kills thought through iron discipline... people become credulous and are led astray by every rumour."⁴⁷ No doubt the Nottingham socialists would have extended this analysis in order to explain the credulity of working people in the class war which they believed they were fighting.

Although many middle class memoirs of the First World War remark with amazement on the solid equanimity, sturdy endurance and wry humour of the soldier in the trenches, there is little doubt that beneath the surface calm, some changes were taking place in the collective psyche of the working class, both in and out of uniform. Even before the November Armistice the signs were there for those that wanted to see. In January 1918, for instance, a Nottingham hosiery factory suffered its third fire in six days. Some weeks previously a war bonus strike by about 100 workers had resulted in the strikers' places being filled by blackleg labour. Not surprisingly this development created very bitter feelings. Whilst Mr. Pike, one of the owners, was trying to put out the fire with buckets of water, a large number of strikers gathered and began to shout: "Let it burn!" and "Fetch them out." Later, when the flames which destroyed the factory shot through the roof there was a tremendous shout of "Hurrah" betraying the

same sense of secret exultation which had characterised the Luddite attacks in the town more than one hundred years before.⁴⁸

A less dramatic but nevertheless significant indication of working class rebellion came at the end of a long correspondence in one of the local newspapers about what the middle and upper classes were pleased to call "the servant problem." This correspondence culminated in October 1918 with a letter signed by one who called herself "Another Maid." Although obviously desperate to keep her job the writer's deep resentment burst through. "I was glad to see an appeal for a union... I am asked to buy all and keep free from debt and pay ready money on £18 per year. After doing my best in the kitchen and having more laundry work to do, can one wonder we are tired of the struggle and try to get out of it."⁴⁹

By the end of 1918 as Robert Graves has pointed out, there were two distinct Britains:- the fighting forces, meaning literally the soldiers and sailors who had fought in the war, as opposed to the garrison and line of communication troops, and the rest, including the Government. The reiterated conviction of the "rest", whether genuinely felt or not, was that the fighting forces were heroes and had a prior claim to anything good obtainable. The fighting forces accepted this as their due, understanding that the nation's gratitude would continue once the war was over. Many of those demobilized at the end of the war seem to have subscribed to a kind of "ideal anarchism" which had at its core two principal hopes; first, a crushing of the German government by a defeat of the German army, second, a clean sweep in "Blighty" of all oppressors, cheats, cowards, skrimshankers reactionaries and liars who had plagued and betrayed Tommy Atkins during the war.⁵⁰

This anarchic mood was essentially destructive. Few wished to "build a new world" as the politicians promised; most simply wanted to rebuild the old one. The average discharged private soldier thought fondly of stepping back into civvies and resuming his old job at the Raleigh Cycle Works, or the Players Tobacco Factory, with the sole difference that he

would no longer be "messed about" by people in authority. By itself this mood had been felt before but never on the scale which developed in 1918. Some young emancipated women workers thought the same. Any girl who had earned good wages in the munition factory at Chilwell, or at the Royal Ordnance Factory in the Meadows and had come to like the regular hours, the friendship of other workers and the strict but impersonal discipline, was unlikely to want to return to domestic service in which the domination of "some old cat" would expect her not only to work long hours for little money, but show complete subservience.

The problem that now faced the government and the local authorities and what was conveniently called the "vested interests" was how to smother the threat of revolutionary upheaval which the fighting forces constituted. Initially the menace of mutiny was defused by scrapping the plans for ordered demobilisation. Unfortunately, this decision had the effect of creating chaotic unemployment with the consequence that the Lloyd George government found itself forced to use as far as it dared its wartime coercive powers in order to try to control the situation.

Eventually, some kind of order and stability was restored but in the hearts and minds of thousands of returning soldiers something had changed. One Nottingham veteran, for instance, remembers :

"Before we came back into England in 1919, our colonel warned us against red agitators. If he hadn't mentioned them it would never have occurred to me to think about it. But when I got home I began to look around. I worked against a lad who'd been brought up in an orphanage, but he had the finest turn of mind of anybody I've ever met. I think I owe a lot to him, his comradely tutelage."⁵¹

This experience could be multiplied many thousands of times. The lessons which were to be learnt in the years between the end of the war and the General Strike in 1926 were to be bitter ones. At the end of 1918, however, as the armed forces began to return to Lloyd George's "Land Fit For Heroes" the main emotion in the hearts of soldiers and civilians alike was hope.

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND 1914-1918

1. Nottingham Labour Party to Rt. Hon, Herbert Samuel M.P., October 20th, 1914.
2. Nottingham Trades Council War Emergency Committee to Board of Trade, October 2nd, 1914.
3. Nottingham and District Joint Committee of the N.U.R. to Transport House, August 14th, 1914.
4. Board of Trade Gazette, December 14th, 1914. p. 438.
5. B.T.G. November 1914, p.395
6. B.T.G. January 1915, p. 17.
7. Annual Report and Accounts, Amalgamated Society of Operative Lace Makers and Auxiliary Workers June 30th, 1916.
8. B.T.G., November, 1916.
9. Cycle Trader, October, 1914.
10. Bowden, G.H. The Story of the Raleigh Cycle (1975) p. 40
11. Chapman, S. Jesse Boot of Boots the Chemists (1973) pp. 96-102
12. Chapman, p. 100.
13. These reports generated a good deal of discussion within the local Chamber of Commerce who were also worried that the local female population would grow rusty in the household skills. Nottingham Daily Express December 11th, 1915.
14. N.D.E. July 3rd, 1918.
15. Nottingham Journal and Express December 18th, 1918.
16. Nottingham Trades Council, Annual Report 1916.
17. This influx of women members does not however seem to have had any influence on the leadership of local union branches, and no additional women delegates seem to have found there way through as Trades Council delegates. N.D.E. June 9th, 1916.
18. N.D.E. May 29th, 1915.

19. N.D.E. December 31st, 1915.
20. B.T.G., December, 1917, p. 17.
21. Winter, Dennis Death's Men (1979) p. 34.
22. Nottingham Trades Council, Annual Report 1915.
23. N.D.E. July 2nd, 1915.

THE TRADE UNION RESPONSE

1. Nottingham Trades Council, Annual Report 1914.
2. Roberts, Cecil. Years of Promise (1969) p. 70.
3. Harrison, Royden., 'The War Emergency Workers' Committee 1914-1920' in Briggs, Asa., and Saville, John., Essays in Labour History 1886-1923. (1971) pp. 211-259.
4. Nottingham Trades Council Annual Report 1915.
5. Cole, G.D.H. Labour in War Time (1915) p. 61.
6. Cole, pp. 1-2.
7. N.T.C. Annual Report, 1915.
8. Cyril Goddard, tape recorded interview. (January 9th, 1969).
9. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council, August 6th, 1914.
10. Nottingham Daily Express, October 7th, 1915.
11. Mins, N.T.C. June 14th, 1916.
12. Mins, N.T.C. October 25th, 1916.
13. N.D.E. May 25th, 1916.
14. N.D.E. June 15th, 1916.
15. Nottingham Trades Council, Annual Report 1916.
16. N.D.E. May 25th, 1916.
17. N.D.E. May 27th, 1916.
18. Mins, N.T.C. October 28th, 1916.
19. Griffin, A.R. The Miners of Nottinghamshire 1914-1944, (1962) p. 22.
20. Griffin, pp. 38-43.
21. Labour Leader December 14th, 1916.
22. Minutes, Nottinghamshire Miners' Association, June 30th, 1917.
23. Griffin, p. 40.
24. Hinton, James. The First Shop Stewards Movement (1973) p. 198.
25. N.D.E. May 7th, 1917.
26. N.D.E. May 17th, 1917.
27. N.D.E. May 17th, 1917.
28. N.D.E. May 18th, 1917.
29. N.D.E. May 21st, 1917.
30. It is interesting to note that Appleton the ex General Secretary of the Lace Makers' Society was now part of these efforts, although according to one ironmoulder not very successfully. "Workers, who have just come hot haste from the inferno of the foundry, with the heat the grime, and the smoke still in their blood and nostrils, are not easily influenced by the bourgeois manners, polish, and well

groomed appearance of the type of Appleton." Bell, Tom., Pioneering Days (1941) p. 105.

31. Nottingham Journal and Express, July 1st, 1918.
32. Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest (1917) pp. 35-36.
33. N.D.E. June 28th, 1917.
34. Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest, pp. 35-36.
35. N.D.E. May 5th, 1917.
36. N.D.E. June, 25th, 1917.
37. Mins, N.T.C. June 14th, 1917.

SOCIALIST ATTITUDES AND LEFT WING ACTIVITY

1. Miliband, Ralph Parliamentary Socialism (1979) p. 39.
2. Mosley, T.M. 'Cosmo' Memories and Personalities p. 28.
3. Breckway, Fenner. Inside the Left (1942) p. 48.
4. Clarion May 14th, 1915.
5. Clarion, June 4th, 1915.
6. Marwick, Arthur The Deluge (1967) p. 33.
7. Nottingham Trades Council Annual Report 1914.
8. Mosley, p. 8.
9. Arthur Statham, tape recorded interview. (January 11th, 1969).
10. Wheatcroft, Harry The Root of the Matter (1974) p. 24.
11. Nottingham Trades Council Annual Report 1915.
12. Labour Leader, June 10th, 1915.
13. L.L. November 25th, 1915.
14. See for instance Clarion June 4th, and September 17th, 1915.
15. Clarion, February 25th, 1916.
16. Clarion, June 22nd, 1916.
17. L.L. May 11th, 1916.
18. Nottingham Daily Express May 25th, 1916.
19. L.L. June 1st, 1916.
20. L.L. June 23rd, 1916.
21. L.L. August 2nd, 1917.
22. L.L. December 27th, 1917.
23. Minutes, Nottingham Trades Council March 24th, 1917.
24. Mins, N.T.C. January 27th, 1917.
25. Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest (June 1917) pp. 35-36.
26. Mins, N.T.C. December 19th, 1917.
27. Mins, N.T.C. July 11th 1917.
28. Cyril Geddard, tape recorded interview. (January 9th, 1969).

29. L.L. October 18th, November 17th, November 22nd, November 29th, 1917.
30. Workers' Dreadnought December 22nd, 1917.
31. W.D. September 8th, 1917.
32. Beatrice Webb, diary, January 21st, 1918.
33. L.L. January 24th, 1918.
34. Clarion, February 1st, 1918.
35. N.D.E. January 14th, 1918.
36. Kellogg, Paul H. and Gleason, A. British Labour and the War (1919) p. 36.
37. N.D.E. March 23rd, 1918.
38. Nottingham Guardian November 4th, 1918.
39. L.L. July 9th, 1918.
40. W.D. June 1st, 1918.
41. The Socialist June, 1918.
42. Mins, N.T.C. October 30th, 1918.
43. National Kitchens Report Redoubt Street, and Bath Street, February 18th, and February 28th, 1919.
44. Mins, N.T.C. March 20th, 1918.
45. L.L. April 25th, 1918.
46. L.L. September 26th, 1918.
47. L.L. November 7th, 1918.
48. N.D.E. January 19th, 1918.
49. N.G. October 23rd, 1918.
50. This mood is well portrayed in the incredible career of Private Percy Topliss, a Nottinghamshire soldier who had been employed before the war as a coal miner. Topliss, after a series of incidents became the centre of a British Army mutiny at the end of the First World War. Eventually after he had been sentenced to death he escaped to England where he lived the life of an audacious outlaw, masquerading in a multitude of disguises, organizing a unique black-market in army stores and equipment. After a number of narrow escapes during which he returned to the Nottingham area in the guise of a demobbed officer Topliss became involved in a six-week chase up and down the country which eventually ended in his being

killed in a police ambush in 1920. See Allison, William. and Fairley, Jehn. The Monocled Mutineer (1979).

51. Quoted in Seabreeck, Jeremy. What Went Wrong (1978) p. 132.

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EPILOGUE

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EPILOGUE

Even the excitement of the General Election which Lloyd George called soon after the Armistice was not enough to jolt Nottingham from the mood of depression and anticlimax which followed the end of the War. Armistice Day, for instance, found the town subdued compared with the wild scenes elsewhere. Many public houses had no beer and shut their doors. The street lights were left shrouded as the Council did not have enough men to remove the anti-zeppelin covers. The church bells rang but only intermittently, for many ringers were still in France. For many, joy was not the first emotion that rose in their hearts, as an anonymous parent had reminded them in a letter to the morning paper:—

"It would be a gracious and kindly action on the part of the general public if, when peace is celebrated, they would modify their gaiety in consideration for the feelings of countless numbers who have been sadly bereaved and for whom there will be no home-coming family reunion but only a memory of a nameless grave." 1

Others were apprehensive of what peace might bring. Lord Henry Bentinck, the Tory M.P. for South Nottingham, told a large meeting gathered in Pennyfoot Street that Nottinghamshire had 78,000 men in the forces, for whom there awaited few jobs, poor wages and scandalously neglected housing. A few streets away the Duke of Portland called for retribution from the Kaiser and those who had brought untold horror on the world. Later, he called on the Government to restrict the flow of undesirable foreigners and resist allowing Great Britain to become a "dumping ground for the scum of the continent."²

Subsequently, as the 1918 General Election campaign began in earnest, the socialists redoubled their efforts to inculcate a stronger anti-capitalist understanding among ordinary working class voters. The

Nottingham hustings excited the Labour Leader to remark that "Even Nottingham, the despair of Labour politicians, is waking up." ³ According to the I.L.P. the election campaign had bridged the gulf of "war differences" between the right and left wings of the local movement so that both were working wholeheartedly for the return of Labour candidates. Hayday, the candidate in West Nottingham, was said to be making great progress in a constituency in which he was involved in a straight fight with Richardson, the Lib-Lab who had won the seat in 1906. Hayday, the Labour Leader reported, was "carrying on a vigorous campaign against capitalism and its tool militarism and many who deplored his past attitude are gratified with his uncompromising opposition to conscription and the war against Russia." ⁴ Although standing as a Labour Party candidate, Hayday was also a member of the National Socialist Party, the Hyndmanite pro-war faction which split from the B.S.P. at its April 1916 conference. This group carried their patriotism and hatred of Communism to great lengths; Stuart Macintyre has pointed out that in the period after the war their vestigial Marxism was soon buried "under a mountain of vituperation against any kind of working class militancy." How far this was true of Hayday is difficult to say although his 1918 programme undertook to "kill Bolshevism, Capitalism and Militarism." ⁵

Arthur Hayday, who in 1918 was the president of the Trades Council, had been preferred to Richardson, the 1906 Lib-Lab, who was forced to fight the election as a straight forward Liberal. Hayday was selected as the Labour Party candidate for West Nottingham in June 1918. Like many others he quickly realised that the female electorate, who were included on the register for the first time, would need to be wooed and at a Trades Council meeting in November he advised the men present to "have half an hour a day with their womenfolk to ensure that they voted Labour." ⁶ This advice may or may not have been heeded, but the Nottingham newspapers who before the war had seen Hayday as a very dangerous revolutionary, now seem to have decided that he was now a relatively safe candidate. "The Labour Party" declared



Arthur Hayday came to Nottingham sometime around 1909. He had helped Will Thorne found the Gasworkers Union and came to Nottingham as the Midland Organiser of that organisation. A member of the S.D.F. and later the B.S.P. he was elected Nottingham's first Labour M.P. in 1918.

the Conservative Nottingham Guardian "in putting forward Mr. Arthur Hayday, have selected a strong man. Mr. Hayday has played a conspicuously patriotic part in relation to the war and both in the volunteering days and on the tribunals he has done valuable service to the allied cause." ⁷ Not everybody was happy with his candidature, however, for just after the Armistice the Rev. H.D. Longbottom, speaking at the Cosmopolitan Debating Society on "Jesus Christ or Socialism", said of Hayday, who was in the audience: "You are financially supported by the Licensed Victuallers' Association, you buy votes from the filthy drink trade." ⁸ These remarks were potentially damaging since the Trades Council in this period was calling for the public ownership of the liquor trade and they so incensed Hayday that some members of the audience had to prevent him from going to attack the speaker.

In East Nottingham Tom Proctor, a nominee of the A.S.E. and a keen member of the I.L.P. was late in the field and there is little doubt that his organisation was deficient, despite the fact that the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party listed East Nottingham as having selected a Labour candidate in 1914. ⁹ Proctor had been a leading member of the Nottingham S.D.F. in the 1880's. A native of Nottingham who had served his apprenticeship in the town, he had moved to Devonport and in 1918 was the chairman of the Plymouth and District Trades Council. Now he was opposed by an official coalition candidate and by a representative of the National Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers. It seems to have been generally agreed that Proctor was not a gifted speaker and the Nottingham Guardian claimed his views were too "classbound" to win many votes. In any event the Conservative-Liberal pact ensured that no Liberal stood against the official "coupon" candidate in this constituency and this, together with the appeal of Dennis Brooks, a Long Eaton piano tuner standing as a Discharged Soldiers' candidate, was enough to destroy Proctor's chance of winning. However, since 1918 was the first time that East Nottingham had been fought by a Labour candidate,

Proctor's 19.4% share of the vote was nothing to be ashamed of, although this did not stop him complaining that the town's labour movement had "more energy and enthusiasm 29 years ago when he was President of the Nottingham Labour Representation Association."¹⁰

Nottingham's third Labour candidate in the 1918 General Election had no kind of official organisation at all. Henry Mills stood in South Nottingham as an Independent Labour candidate, against Lord Henry Cavendish Bendick, the Coalition Conservative. An old I.L.P. supporter remembered Mills well :

"There was this chap called Mills who fought South Nottingham...this chap was a pure socialist, a market holder from somewhere down south, he came up with his wife and daughter and put his money down...the Conservative was a chap called Lord Henry Bentinck, one of the Portland family. He was looked on as a radical Conservative. This bloke was really amazing...he attacked royalty, he was just a pure socialist...he preached the ideals of socialism and gradually he drew people round him...he was terrific, he'd fill a hall...all without any organisation. The Tories hated him so much so that a gang of Tories waylaid him and threw pepper over him...from then on he had a bodyguard...he did very well, he was a great character."¹¹

In fact, Mills had been smothered in soot and temporarily blinded by two men disguised as chimney sweeps, who waylaid him outside one of his meetings. Although this incident may have won Mills a few sympathy votes the local press attacked him as "a total stranger backed by no party or even a section of a party."¹² His chief plank seems to have been republicanism and although the Nottingham Guardian claimed that "unionist, liberal and labour alike are all perfectly satisfied with the present member" Mills, with no organisation at all, was able to win 25.6% of the total votes cast.¹³

Of the three Labour nominees Hayday was the only successful candidate and was returned as Nottingham's first Labour Member of Parliament. Hayday claimed that his victory stemmed from the fact that "Labour recog-

nised the grievances of the discharged soldiers and sailors and were out to remedy them."¹⁴ In fact, a number of other factors were equally important. The Times correspondent, writing on the Labour Party's overall campaign, thought that the Labour Party "was better prepared for the election than any other", arguing that "Labour in the early days of the contest threw much more vigor into the campaign than the candidates and workers of other parties,"¹⁵ whilst Henderson told C.P. Scott that Labour success was "because they had an existing Trade Union organisation in every town."¹⁶ Certainly, Hayday's personal following amongst the town's trade unionists seems likely to provide part of the explanation for his success. Hayday was sponsored by the General Workers Union, of which he was a well known local official and the resources of this organisation were an important part of Hayday's political machine. Hayday's reputation during the war years as a doughty champion of the workers had been added to by regular reports in the local press which often listed increases in the pay rates of many groups of workers before adding "all the above increases have been obtained through the General Workers Union, of which Mr. Hayday is secretary."¹⁷ Hayday's position as president of the Trades Council was also of crucial importance. The Trades Council had unanimously agreed to affiliate to the Labour Party in July 1918. The five Labour Party representatives elected by the Trades Council delegates included four (Hayday, Halls, Staton and Wesson) who were well known as having views sympathetic to Labour but the fifth (Thundercliffe) had been a determined Lib-Lab. before the war. Thundercliffe's move into the 'Labour' camp was significant as it was representative of the final eclipse of Lib-Lab. influence in the Trades Council, and Hayday was undoubtedly able to capitalise on this change in the political atmosphere.

Hayday also went out of his way to represent himself as a candidate with broad political appeal. Early in his campaign he made the point in a speech which nicely balanced the assertion that "thousands of men had had to go through the flame, and they were not going back to the state of

things before the war" with the claim that the "shopkeeper, business people, and upper middle class citizens need not fear but that even-handed justice would be given them if he was returned."¹⁸ Although Hayday also claimed that "his sympathies would be mainly with the workers" his patriotic role in the war won him the support of middle class elements and of the Nottingham Guardian, which pointed out that throughout the war "Arthur Hayday played a conspicuously patriotic part. On the Tribunals no one was more prompt in unmasking any shirker who masqueraded as a 'conchie' ..."¹⁹ Hayday had often made it clear that he was not a "peace at any price man" and it seems likely that some voters may have supported him because of his patriotic record, particularly when it is remembered that Richardson, the Liberal candidate, was suspected of food profiteering.

The understanding arrived at between the two orthodox political parties whereby there would be no Liberal candidate in the Eastern Division and no Unionist in the West also worked in Hayday's favour since it left a clear field in the latter for the Liberal and Labour parties to come to grips. The Labour Party had long been restive under Liberal domination in this constituency. Things had been complicated by the fact that the previous member for West Nottingham, Sir James Yoxall, was the chief official of the National Union of Teachers, which gave him a quasi labour standing. Hayday's position in the constituency as a bona fide Labour candidate made things much easier. The regrouping of the Nottingham constituencies also strengthened Hayday's position. The rearrangement of the boundaries had been entirely favourable to the Labour Party's interest in West Nottingham since the Division was now entirely made up of the working class wards of St. Albans, Broxtowe and Wollaton. The working class element, as the Nottingham Guardian pointed out, and more particularly that "of the miners, was in the ascendancy, and in choosing Arthur Hayday the Labour Party have selected the strongest possible candidate outside the ranks of the miners."²⁰

Hayday was certainly a strong working class candidate, rooted

deeply in the local labour movement, fighting a campaign in a constituency with a strongly proletarian electorate. In the last analysis, however, he would not have won the seat had the objective circumstances not been right. At the 1918 Nottingham May Day meeting Robert Young, the General Secretary of the A.S.E., had told the audience: "Within a few months you will be called on to decide...whether you will be governed by a workers' party or a capitalist one...enormous wealth on the one hand and wretchedness and extreme poverty on the other."²¹ This contrast was worked on again and again throughout Hayday's campaign and there is little doubt that it found a ready response amongst many workers. Shortly before the election the local press reported that within the last few weeks thousands of men, women and girls had "been thrown on the labour market," and J.R. Clynes, speaking for Hayday early in December, made a good deal of capital from this state of things before going on to claim that "there was great unrest, not only amongst the men in the army but amongst the wage earners."²²

Writing in her diary early in 1918, Beatrice Webb had correctly aired the view that the British trade unionist was not in a revolutionary humour. His wife, standing in a food queue, was his most solid grievance and Hayday, with long years of experience behind him, certainly knew how to exploit the bitterness of the working class electorate. He was an effective campaigner and during the run-up to polling day concentrated on attacking housing conditions in the town, asserting that the reason why Nottingham had produced for a two-week period the highest death rate in the country from Spanish 'flu was because of the thousands of "unsanitary and overcrowded homes." Here, Hayday touched on a sensitive nerve, since in December 1918 the Trades Council had launched a major campaign to press for the removal of pail closets which were still a feature of many working class homes. The Trades Council and Hayday also came together to demand the setting up of public works for the unemployed, and both supported Councillor Bowles' demand that the use of German prisoners on the land, to the detriment of British agricultural workers, be discontinued.

Hayday's victory was mirrored by that of George Spencer, who polled over 6,500 votes more than the Conservative candidate to win Broxtowe for the Labour Party for the first time. In welcoming their victories, however, both men significantly failed to mention the defeat of Proctor in East Nottingham, and the Labour Party's failure to run a candidate in either Central or South Nottingham was ignored. Walter Halls, another keen member of the Nottingham I.L.P. and a leader of the N.U.R. in the town also stood as a Labour candidate in 1918. Halls fought the Northampton seat. Undoubtedly, Halls, Spencer and Hayday owed a great deal to the Nottingham Labour Movement, of which they had been members in a period full of complexity and uncertainty. That they became M.P.'s was significant of the new status and power of a movement which, for all its internal tensions, stood at the end of the war on the verge of inheriting real political power, both in Parliament and in the country's town halls. The events of the war had led to qualitative developments which resulted in a new set of loyalties and relationships. The war had forced a critical leap when latent and long heralded changes came to the fore. Once the war was over the establishment assumed that the old rhythm would be restored, but it never was. The big increase in trade union membership, most of whom had not assimilated the parochialism of the pre-war organisations, helped to produce a new willingness to work together. The two Nottingham victories were certainly significant of Labour's growing importance in the town and the area immediately surrounding it. What must be noted, however, is the local Labour Party's failure to establish a really successful divisional organisation. In May the Labour Party had asked the Trades Council for help in raising £200 per annum with which to pay a full time agent; the failure to do so, however, demonstrated that although the Party was strong enough to win Council seats, the appeal of Lloyd George's "Land Fit for Heroes" campaign and the overall jingoism of the Coupon Election was as yet too powerful to enable the socialists to win more than one Nottingham seat in the House of Commons.

It has been argued by Ross Mckibbin that the war was not of first importance in explaining the Labour Party's post-war success in general.²³ In the case of Nottingham, however, this analysis seems doubtful. Mckibbin himself points out that the war "enfranchised" all men and some women, and this, together with the upward rush of trade union membership and the break-down of the social and economic base of regional and parochial life, all worked to strengthen the Labour Movement. Throughout the country the Labour Party was inextricably linked to the trade unions. In Nottingham this link was particularly strong through the personalities of Hayday and the miners' leaders. The 1918 Coupon Election underlined these links and in Nottingham demonstrated above all that when the trade unions and the Labour Party came together the political opposition could be taken aback by the intensity and vigour of Labour's attack which made up in volunteer support and energetic canvassing what it lacked in cars and money. The 1918 election saw many working class voters in Nottingham finally cross into the Labour camp. Symptomatic of the move from the Liberals to Labour amongst the Nottinghamshire mining community was that of the collier family of Bernard Taylor, the Labour M.P., both of whose parents voted Labour for the first time in 1918.²⁴ The railway clerk father of Fred Perkins, previously a Conservative, became active in forming the South Nottingham branch of the Labour Party in 1918; and although the two pre-war Britains of the governing rich and the governed poor were still there after the war, it seems clear that in Nottingham the distinction between them was being understood by a larger proportion of the working-class electorate.

CONCLUSION

The time has now come to attempt a summary of the manner in which the Nottingham Labour Movement developed in the years between 1880 and 1918 from a relatively small and weak group of organisations representing only a political and industrial elite, to a fully modern mass movement. In so doing it will be sensible to compare developments in Nottingham with those in other towns and cities in order to try to understand what it was about the social and economic conditions of Nottingham which seemed to retard the progress and expansion of the local labour movement.

There has, of course, been a considerable amount of writing, in recent years, which has set out to attack the notion that there was anything inevitable in the rise of Labour. Research like that of Dr. D. W. Crowley has stressed the smallness of the early socialist organisations, the unrevolutionary temper of the masses and the complex accidents of personality or event which combined to slow the demand for self expression and fulfilment of ordinary workers.¹ Dr. P. F. Clarke has also emphasised the weakness of Labour's political appeal in the years before the First World War. Arguing that the Liberal Party was building up support in the great industrial cities, Dr. Clarke uses the evidence of the 1906 and 1910 General Elections to suggest that, despite the emergence of "class politics", many workers were, in fact, still subject to the gravitational pull of the Liberal Party. Dr. Clarke suggests that a Liberal revival was sustained in the early years of the Twentieth Century by opposition to the Boer War and Conservative reaction, as well as the ethic of "Progressivism" and support for social reform and anti-imperialism.²

On the other hand Paul Thompson, in a study of London politics between 1885 and 1914, maintains that the Liberal Party lacked a firm

working class base or a coherent political standpoint. Against this background he explains the slow development of independent labour politics in London by pointing to the structure of London industry, the prevalence of small scale trades and office work, as well as the extent of commuting and social segregation. For Thompson, changes in the political system were also vital factors in helping to break the political mould and establish the Labour Party as a major force in society. With each extension of the franchise it is pointed out the division of the parties on class lines rather than by sectional interest became more significant.³

The Nottingham experience goes some way to demonstrating that the two views are not necessarily incompatible. Certainly, the Liberal Party was able to retain its appeal for many of the town's working class voters for a very long time. Nearby Leicester, for instance, elected its first I.L.P. councillor in 1894. By contrast, Nottingham did not elect a socialist candidate until 1908, by which time the I.L.P. in Leicester had captured fifteen of the sixty-four council seats.⁴ In the Parliamentary field Nottingham failed to return a Labour Member of Parliament until 1918, whilst Leicester elected Ramsay MacDonald in 1906. Derby, the other main East Midland centre, returned J. H. Thomas in 1909 and Yorkshire towns like Bradford or Halifax witnessed the growth of a strong and vibrant labour movement much earlier than Nottingham. Sheffield, too, was well in front of Nottingham. Here the Labour Party took control of the Town Council in 1926; this did not happen in Nottingham until the landslide Labour victory of 1945. In Scotland, Glasgow provides another example of the rapid polarisation on class lines of local politics. Here, according to Dr. I. S. McLean, a vigorous labour consciousness drew strength from the structure of the local housing market and a campaign of rent agitation. At a time when the modern alignment of Labour versus Conservative was still far from establishing itself in Nottingham, the Glasgow Labour Movement between 1914 and 1922

developed to the point where it was able to capture ten of the city's fifteen parliamentary seats in the 1922 General Election.⁶

Given Nottingham's Nineteenth Century reputation as an "advanced town"⁷ the relatively slow growth in size and self confidence of the town's labour movement can indeed be partly explained by an enduring Liberal Party appeal. This appeal was at its most potent when aimed at the conceits and aristocratic exclusiveness of the town's skilled craft workers. This group's domination of local labour organisations had in the years before 1880 helped to ensure the stagnation of all forward movement. The resulting lack of political and industrial vitality had by and large led to the repudiation of militant policies in favour of pacifist diplomacy. This state of things had come about partly as a result of the manner in which many of the town's skilled workers had come to terms with their employers during a period of expanding prosperity. Conciliation and arbitration were at the heart of this process and it is significant that, during his years as a Nottingham hosiery manufacturer, the Liberal politician A. J. Mundella pioneered the social philosophy which argued in favour of an accommodation between capital and labour.

The ideas advocated by Mundella and his followers were powerful and compelling and they succeeded in striking deep roots in the minds of many Nottingham workers. In these circumstances it is not surprising that Mundella's philosophy was successful in establishing itself as an integral part of the mental outlook of key individuals amongst the leadership of the Nottingham workers. The most important of these, in the early years of this study, were William Bailey, the leading full-time official of the Nottingham miners, and W. A. Appleton, the General Secretary of the Lace Makers' Society. Each of these men played an important part in helping to delay the independent political development of the Nottingham workers. William Bailey, for instance, fought hard against the emerging Independent Labour Party. He was a keen supporter

of Henry Broadhurst, the Lib-Lab M.P. for West Nottingham. Later, he and Broadhurst quarrelled on the question of the introduction of an eight hour day for miners, but this disagreement should not be taken to indicate that Bailey's political views had changed in any way. Like other recently urbanised colliers, Bailey lived alongside Nottingham lace and hosiery workers, railwaymen and engineers. It seems likely, therefore, that his own Lib-Labism would have been reinforced by the views and aspirations of these groups so that it is not surprising that Bailey's own political career never went so far as to embrace the idea of independent working class political representation.

In the lace industry, too, Lib-Labism was as far as most workers were prepared to go. Towards the end of the Nineteenth Century, however, the aristocratic members of the Lace Makers' Society began to feel themselves pulled in separate directions. On the one hand some elements shared their employers' attitude to depression and the dangers of foreign competition with the consequence that they became steadily more moderate and reactionary. On the other hand, the rise of the semi-skilled worker threatened the exclusiveness of their position, with the result that some amongst them began to shift to the left. Both of these trends can be seen in the career of William Appleton, who became the General Secretary of the Lace Makers' Society in 1896. Initially, Appleton remained a committed Liberal. Throughout the 1890's and into the Twentieth Century he did his best to sabotage the efforts of the early socialists. By 1903, however, despite his continued anti-socialism, he had decided to throw in his lot with MacDonald and the Labour Representation Committee. Appleton, like Bailey, remained a moderate Lib-Lab, however, and in 1909 he was described by H.H. Asquith of the Board of Trade as "a decent old gentleman of Liberal views."⁸ His boast to MacDonald that the miners and lace makers could between them effectively counter the efforts of the socialists was probably true.

Certainly this alliance played an important part in slowing the advance of socialism and ensuring that large numbers of Nottingham workers remained firmly wedded to the Liberal Party until after the First World War.

The Lib-Lab attitudes of many miners and lace makers were mirrored by those of other important groups like the engineers, building workers and railwaymen. During the early years of the Twentieth Century this was certainly the case. Significantly, none of the Nottingham Labour organisations were able to produce a genuinely independent Parliamentary Labour candidate until after the First World War. Instead the Lib-Lab manoeuvring of Hancock, Bailey's successor as the leader of the Nottingham miners, aided and abetted by Appleton, ensured that the I.L.P. had to wait until 1908 before Ernest Gutteridge, its leading activist, could win election as Nottingham's first genuinely socialist councillor.

Of the other factors holding back the development of independent labour politics in Nottingham, special factors similar but not the same as those suggested by Dr. Thompson were without doubt at the centre of Nottingham's tardiness in achieving genuinely independent labour representation. Amongst these local factors, the very large numbers of non-unionised, a-political female workers was perhaps the most important. The size of this workforce was very large indeed. Between 1893 and 1895 for instance, it was demonstrated that of the group of girls between the ages of ten and sixteen some 23.2 per cent were in employment against a national average of 16.3 per cent. Of those between the ages of fifteen and twenty, whilst the national average of girls in work was 68.6 per cent the percentage in Nottingham was much higher at 82.7 per cent. In the hosiery and lace trades huge numbers of women were employed. Between 1886 and 1906, for instance, the number of women employed in the hosiery factories as a proportion of the total workforce increased from 62.2 per cent to 75.6 per cent. Meanwhile, as

if to underline the high numbers of female factory workers, the percentage of domestic indoor servants was only 25 per 1,000, whilst the national average for the urban districts was 38 per 100.⁹

The vast majority of this army of women workers were not organised into trade unions. The work in which they were engaged was differentiated from that of their male colleagues both in type and physical location within the workplace. Their rates of pay were much lower than those enjoyed by male workers. In 1909, for instance, women in the hosiery industry averaged 13s. 11d. per week against the 34s 7d. earned by men.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, very few women enjoyed positions of status or authority. In the hosiery factories as late as 1928 62 per cent of the labour force in the textile branch were women, whilst 92 per cent of the foremen and overlookers in the industry were men.¹¹

The firm belief of most men that women workers were incapable of holding responsible positions was underlined in 1915 when the Nottingham Chamber of Commerce, reporting the attitudes of local firms to the need to release men for service in the armed forces, claimed that :

"many firms do not seem to be over enthusiastic about this change, particularly where departmental heads are concerned. The Chamber suggested that this particular problem might be overcome by several departments being merged under the leadership of a man beyond military age and that he should be assisted by women."¹²

Later in 1916 the Chamber of Commerce suggested that to counteract the effect of the necessity of female employment during the war, employers should ensure that young girls devoted three afternoons a week to home management, cookery, machine and hand sewing "in order that standards of domestic knowledge should not decline."¹³

Many male trade unionists in Nottingham undoubtedly shared this chauvinist view. In addition they opposed women's employment because of the way in which employers used it to lower the general working class standard of living. In 1892, for instance, James Holmes of

the Midlands County Hosiery Federation claimed that :

"We find generally that married women in factories do a considerable amount of harm. First they come in such competition with single girls because they have got husbands at work, and they generally are the people who can afford to accept reductions in wages. The competition that the single girls experience from the married women doing the work in factories is such that it leads to a great amount of friction, and also we believe in our trade, generally to immorality." 14

Even Sam Bower, the most progressive of Nottingham's hosiery workers, shared many of these attitudes, and although he helped to form the Women Hosiery Workers' Union he was strongly against the employment of married women, 15

In a period when many of these views are once again topical it is important to acknowledge the truth of the claim that traditional male definitions of the working class are extremely limited. In towns like Nottingham with a large female labour force, this is particularly true. 16 One recent writer on the "labour aristocracy" has interestingly extended the point to suggest that in some industries the presence of large numbers of women workers in the productive process is sufficient to justly characterise them as "plebians" whilst the male worker, it is suggested, is more truly seen as an "aristocrat." 17 In the case of the Nottingham lace and hosiery industries a further subdivision should be noticed to take account of the huge numbers of female outworkers. This group would probably have been characterised by the rest of the towns literate population as part of what was often written about as "the dangerous class", the casual poor, or simply the "residuum." 18

The abysmal living conditions, of this section of workers, their irregular supply of work, poverty and disease, all conspired to place an intolerable strain on this group of workers which made it virtually impossible for them to incorporate themselves into a working class politics centred on skilled artisans. In 1909 much of this was

hinted at when the secretary of the Nottingham I.L.P. wrote of his distress after wandering through the town's slums on a hot day and, "seeing women workers sitting at the doors of their hutches, manipulating lace heaped on the filthy pavement." ¹⁹ Two years earlier, evidence given to the Committee of Inquiry on Home Work had claimed that, in going about amongst the town's lace makers, the first difficulty that had to be overcome was the abject apathy that existed amongst them. "You see, they are most of them, very many of them, working for the next meal and nothing you say about the meal for tomorrow affects them: they are not concerned about that. After you have aroused some interest in them you have also to arouse some courage."²⁰

The grey struggle of life in this abyss was, of course, shared by many Nottingham workers. The section of the workers characterised by Gareth Stedman Jones as the "casual poor" was certainly very numerous in Victorian and Edwardian Nottingham. The world of the artisan aristocracy who provided most of the energy for the emerging labour movement was almost totally separate from that of the unskilled and the casual poor, so that for the most part they remained unorganised, ignorant and inarticulate. Speaking in the House of Commons in 1929 Harry Snell, who had been one of Nottingham's socialist pioneers, recalled his experience as one of Nottingham's casual poor in the 1880's :

"Unemployment, which involves physical degeneration and the sense that a man is superfluous, is dismissed, unused, and unwanted is not ennobling, it is entirely debasing." 21

Snell went on to claim that unemployment was more likely to turn a man into a "loafer, a criminal or a revolutionist, than into a balanced creative citizen." The Nottingham evidence, however, seems to suggest that there was little real chance of the town's casual poor turning revolutionist. To all intents and purposes this group had no political tradition. Their aspirations were never really more than immediate or short term. For them, day followed day in a tedious and everlasting

fight against poverty, interrupted only by an infrequent burst of anger and frustration when chance seemed to offer hope of settling accounts with the rich and powerful.

Remembering his childhood before the First World War, Fred Perkins paints a vivid picture of life in the Nottingham slums which hints at the way in which the residuum helped to hold back the progress of the local labour movement:

"The slums of Nottingham were always Tory at first ... you see, there was Narrow Marsh, and the Bottoms and they were hawkers and tatters, not the proletariat but what we called the sulletariat (perhaps from the word 'sullage' i.e., refuse, scum, silt). They got their living in this way: some drew handcarts for commercial travellers, or there was an awful lot of poachers, down the Bottoms, you could find poachers' nets all across the streets, they made their living at it, rag gatherers, very few workers ... an awful lot of unemployed who just managed to scrape a living ... the pubs were owned more or less by Tories and there was free beer... and the Liberals did the same.. The Bottoms were Liberal, Narrow Marsh was Tory ... it was the Tories versus the Liberals." 22

The casual poor being described here were, of course, at the very bottom of the foundations of the social order. More often than not they were seen by the rest of the community as a threat, less perhaps for the fury of their revolt than for the fear that their despair might be infectious. Writing in 1909 C.F.G. Masterman characterised them as "prisoners" in a system which required them to silently accept that which fate had decreed as their lot. This image particularly when it is extended to include the thousands of outworkers, helps to explain why it was that in the crucial years before 1914 the Nottingham casual poor developed no real political awareness but remained instead a major obstacle in the way of the efforts of George Christie, Ernest Gutteridge, Sam Bower and the other leading socialists to integrate them into the local labour movement. 23

Having made the point it is important, however, to emphasise that the efforts of the early socialists to recruit women and the casual poor were themselves often weakened by confused and reactionary thinking.

Underlying the assumptions of many early socialists for instance, seems to have been the view that women represented a reactionary element in society at large. Writing late in 1894, for instance, Justice, the journal of the S.D.F., made the point :

"a very large number of women have municipal votes. These women in the main, all vote, and whenever they do, they vote reactionary." 24

Another Justice article went even further when generalising about the female sex :

"Insolent and servile by turns, intriguing, cajoling, deceiving, betraying, never less trustworthy than when she appears most faithful, woman, in a subject position, mischievously dominates in affairs in which, economically free, she might beneficially co-operate." 25

At bottom many of the early socialists seemed to believe that women demonstrated indifference, ignorance, and apathy, not only towards socialism but towards trade unionism as well.

None of this is to suggest that all men failed to realise the importance of incorporating women workers into the movement. Sadly, however, the voice of women, in the period covered by this thesis, does indeed seem to have been "hidden from history." 26 Their apparent absence is underlined by their near invisibility in the historical evidence traditionally used by labour historians and there is little evidence of them in the minutes and other documentation of the Nottingham Labour movement. No first hand accounts of active women socialists seem to have survived. The sole woman activist reported in the press of the 1880's and 1890's was Mrs. Shackleton, who was elected president of the Nottingham Socialist Club in 1890. A shirtmaker by trade and a member of the Female Workers' Union, she was active as a member of the Trades Council and in May 1894 was one of the speakers at the May Day Rally. Unfortunately, there are no records of Mrs. Shackleton's activities in the town's Socialist Club.

Little more is known of the women's branch of the Nottingham I.L.P. although Enid Stacy has left one interesting account :

"In Nottingham there is a band of nearly thirty women who form a kind of adjunct to the I.L.P. there. They have their own Guild and separate night of meeting in a club kept up by their own contributions, but in addition to this they pay a quota to the ordinary body of the party and come in large numbers to the propaganda meetings. Here they may be seen on or around the platform helping to start the proceedings and then with a rousing labour song, taking the chair or going round with the collecting bag."

It seems that this group had its own officers, President Mrs. May, Secretary Mrs. Humstead and Treasurer Mrs. Larkin. According to Enid Stacy they were :

"Intelligent socialists. I do not want it to be misunderstood that they could expound Karl Marx in learned fashion, or pulverise a political economist with his own weapons. Indeed, it is not needed, as they do not come across in their daily lives political economists; but they do meet with plenty of workers ... men and women alike....who give free vent to the ordinary silly travesties of socialism ... and these silly travesties they meet with their own sturdy common sense and thus play havoc with the chief hope of the capitalist and landlord class, viz., the ignorance of the masses as to what socialism really means." 27

This report apart, however, it seems clear that Nottingham's male trade unionists and early socialists failed to integrate fully more than a handful of women into the labour movement. Most male activists seem to have rejected women as a retarding agent with the consequence that few women developed beyond involvement in the range of social activity - the dances, whist drives and Clarion activity which performed such a valuable role in binding together the early pioneers.

In electoral terms the difficulties so far discussed were compounded in the period before the First World War by the boundaries of the Nottingham constituencies. These, whether by accident or design, achieved a mixture of social groups. As a consequence a working class majority was extremely difficult to achieve. West Nottingham, however,

had a sizeable working class population. It contained nearly all the miners and many lace workers. By 1910, however, there were still only 59 per cent of adult males registered as voters and it seems likely that in working class areas far lower levels of enfranchisement were achieved than in residential or commercial parts of the town. The Southern Division comprised the old town centre with its business and commercial interests, together with some very poor districts in which lived railwaymen and lace makers, as well as some miners. East Nottingham contained the heart of the lace trade, including the Lace Market. Two of its wards were substantially working class but the Division was most remarkable for a strong middle class presence. Taken overall, the Nottingham constituencies contained a variety of social groups amongst those on the electoral roll. There was no sharp social differentiation between Divisions as in some other large cities. Working class voters were important in all three constituencies, although not in sufficient numbers to predominate. In these circumstances the Nottingham Liberals, not having a double member constituency like their counterparts in Leicester, seem to have found it difficult to come to terms with the emerging Labour Party. Nevertheless, the efforts of the committed Lib-Labs amongst the town's trade unionists avoided any permanent split between Liberalism and Labour until after the First World War.

The appeal of protectionism represents another factor helping to arrest the development of the Nottingham labour movement. From about 1903 the desirability or otherwise of Tariff Reform became an issue of dominant public importance. In the Nottingham of 1890 Percy Redfern maintained that "not a castor oil plant in any parlour window in England dared peep on the world except from behind curtains of Nottingham lace."²⁸ By 1905, however, according to Appleton, the Lace Makers' Secretary, the lace industry was in a very bad way.²⁹ In these circumstances the influence of employers in both the lace and hosiery trade increased as they

argued in favour of protectionism. The widening appeal of Tariff Reform affected other occupations like metal manufacture and it was linked not only to the threat of foreign competition but to the personal popularity of certain candidates. The campaign of Captain Morrison in 1910 is one example, and the repeated electoral victories of Cavendish Bentinck make the point even more strongly.

In many ways the First World War acted as an important transitional stage between the early workers' organisations and the fully developed labour movement of the inter-war years. The vast majority of workers supported the war effort and the major upheavals which were witnessed in some other large towns did not materialise in Nottingham. The failure of the engineers in the town to produce an unofficial rank and file movement such as those which developed on the Clyde or in Sheffield was probably the result of a combination of factors. Firstly, the relative weakness of the Nottingham movement with its extremely strong Lib-Lab tradition must have been important. Secondly, the light engineering industry, based as it was largely on the making of cycles, had successfully introduced the dilution of labour well before the war broke out. Thirdly, the very high percentage of non-union female workers must have had a debilitating effect on the policies of unofficial activists, whilst the pro-war stance of Arthur Hayday of the General Workers, the most important trade union official in the town, helped to reinforce the attitudes of those who opposed the militants.

Equally important was the way in which the war, by accelerating the industrial side of the labour movement, altered the balance of power within the Labour Party, to the disadvantage of the I.L.P. and the other socialist groups. The system of arbitration and governmental control of certain industries encouraged the development of industry-wide pay settlements and this in turn helped to strengthen the position of the full time

trade union official, particularly in areas like Nottingham where no militant rank and file movement had developed. In this period individuals like Hayday were able to enhance their status as a result of involvement in the national recruiting effort and the system of tribunals, acquiring in the process a stake, if not in the country, then in the country's official business. In Hayday's case all of this was capitalised on at the end of the war when, in the 1918 Coupon Election, he became Nottingham's first Labour Member of Parliament.

In the period covered by this study those active in Nottingham's Labour movement witnessed a great many changes. In 1880 few working men had the vote, the word 'socialist' had been almost forgotten and the trade unions organised barely one worker in twenty. By 1918 a transformation had taken place. All men now had the vote and so had women over thirty, and the trade unions were a major power in the land. The Nottingham pioneers were at the centre of the struggle to achieve these changes. This was the real measure of their contribution to the modern movement.

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J.N.Brooks	Discharged Sailors and Soldiers	2166 maj 6342
11. Frederick Perkins, tape recorded interview. (February 24th, 1977).
12. N.G. December 14th, 1918.
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Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck	Coalition Conservative	10881
H. Mills	Labour	3738
		maj 7143
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17. See for instance N.J. August 27th, 1918.
18. N.J. November 20th, 1918.
19. N.G. December 14th, 1918.
20. N.G. December 14th, 1918.
21. Nottingham Daily Express May 6th, 1918.
22. N.G. December 13th, 1918.
23. McKibbin argues that the post-war labour movement was basically the same as the pre-war movement and that consequently the war was not of major importance in explaining the Labour Party's post-war gains.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1NOTTINGHAM POPULATION 1851 - 1901

Year	Population	Inter-censal % increase
1851	98,911*	-----
1861	122,095*	23.4
1871	138,876*	13.7
1881	186,575	34.3
1891	213,877	14.6
1901	239,743	12.1

* Estimated

Source: Board of Trade Enquiry into Working Class rents, housing and retail prices together with the standard rates of wages prevailing in certain occupations in the principal industrial towns of the United Kingdom. 1908.

APPENDIX 2PRINCIPAL OCCUPATIONS FOR MEN IN NOTTINGHAM 1901

<u>Male occupations (10 years & upwards including employers) No.</u>	
On railways	3,070
Carmen, Carriers, Carters, Waggoners	2,478
Coal and Shale miners :-	
Hewers	3,855
Others below ground	897
Workers above ground	566
Gardeners (not domestic) Seedsmen, Florists etc.	548
Engineering and Machine making	5,694
Cycle and Motor manufacture	884
House building etc.	6,767
Cabinet-makers, French polishers, Upholsterers etc.	993
Skins, Leather, Saddlery and Harness Makers	817
Paper box, Bag and Stationery Makers	201
Printers, Lithographers	1,578
Lace manufacture	6,925
Textile bleaching, dyeing etc.	616
Boot, shoe, slipper, pattern and clog makers	900
Tobacco manufacture	306
Brewers	337

Source: Board of Trade Enquiry into Working Class rents, housing, and retail prices, together with the standard rates of wages prevailing in certain occupations in the principal industrial towns of the United Kingdom. 1908.

APPENDIX 3PRINCIPAL OCCUPATIONS FOR WOMEN IN NOTTINGHAM 1901

Female occupations (10 years & upwards including employers)	No.
Domestic indoor servants (not hotels)	6,025
Laundry and washing service	1,027
Cabinet makers, French polishers, Upholsterers	236
Skins, Leather, Saddlery and harness makers	138
Paper box, Bag and Stationery makers	734
Printers, Lithographers	68
Lace manufacture	14,701
Milliners, dressmaking	3,270
Boot, shoe, slipper, pattern & clog makers	113
Tobacco manufacture	1,985

Source: Board of Trade Enquiry into Working Class rents, housing and retail prices together with the standard rates of wages prevailing in certain occupations in the principal towns of the United Kingdom. 1908.

APPENDIX 4BIRTH AND DEATH RATES IN NOTTINGHAM: 1902-1906

Birth rate per 1,000			Death rate per 1,000		
NOTTINGHAM	Great Towns		NOTTINGHAM	Great Towns	
1902	27.8	30.0	16.7	17.4	
1903	28.3	29.7	16.9	16.3	
1904	27.7	29.1	17.7	17.2	
1905	26.5	28.2	16.5	15.7	
1906	26.6	27.8	16.1	15.9	

Infant mortality per 1,000			Comparative mortality Fig.		
NOTTINGHAM	Great Towns		Nottingham	Great Towns	
1902	159	145	1,079	1,136	
1903	165	144	1,153	1,121	
1904	176	160	1,149	1,128	
1905	155	140	1,142	1,098	
1906	171	145	1,104	1,098	

Source: Board of Trade Enquiry into Working Class rents, housing, and retail prices together with the standard rates of wages prevailing in certain occupations in the principal industrial towns of the United Kingdom. 1908.

APPENDIX 5ARTHUR RICHARDSON ELECTION COMMITTEE1903

G. Simpson	Auxiliary Lace Makers
J.G. Hancock	Nottinghamshire Miners Association
Aaron Stewart	Nottinghamshire Miners Association
Fr. Wainwright	Building Trades Federation
Mr. Pearce	Independent Labour Party
Mr. Dilley	No. 1. Railway Servants
Mr. Habford	Tram and Vehicle Workers
W. Lane	Gas Workers
T. Welsh	London Order of Bricklayers
Mr. Tomlin	Warpers Association
G. Goff	Building Trades Council
Mr. Martin	Amalgamated Tailors Association
Mr. Clarkden	Associated Enginemen
G.S. Christie	Workers Electoral Federation
E. Knight	Railway Servants (Netherfield)
W. Boughton	Wollaton Miners
J. Jones	Clifton Miners
F. Hawley	Farriers

J. Thornley, Mr. Roger, Mr. Rothea, Mr. Mee, Mr. Pearson, Mr. Howill,
all representing the Temperance Federation.

Rev. Parkinson, Rev. Grant, Rev. Cankwell, Rev. Hill, Rev. Gulderidge,
Rev. Mitchell, Rev. Bagguley, all representing the Free Church Council.

The whole of the Trades Council Executive Committee.

APPENDIX 6

WAGE RATES IN NOTTINGHAM 1905 - 1906

Trades	Principal Occupations	Weekly wages
Building*	Bricklayers, Carpenters	38s. 7½d.
	Masons	40s. 9d.
	Plumbers	40s. 6d.
	Painters	38s. 3d.
	Plasterers	42s. 11d.
	Labourers	27s. 11d.
Engineering	Fitters and Turners	36s. 0d.
	Labourers	18s. 0d.
Furnishing	Cabinet-makers	38s. 3d.
	Upholsterers	38s. 3d.
	French polishers	36s. 0d.
Printing	Compositors	34s. 6d.
Lace	Lace makers (Levers)	40s. to 50s.
	(Plain net)	32s. to 42s.
Hosiery	Female machinists	11s. to 17s.

*These are the rates for a full week in summer, viz 51½ hours except for plumbers and painters who work 54 hours. In winter when hours worked are shorter and work intermittent, the weekly earnings are less.

Source: Board of Trade Enquiry into Working Class rents, housing and retail prices together with the standard rates of wages prevailing in certain occupations in the principal industrial towns of the United Kingdom. 1908.

APPENDIX 7RENTS IN NOTTINGHAM, OCTOBER 1905

Number of rooms per house	Weekly rents: October 1905 *
Three rooms	3s. 6d. to 4s. 9d.
Four rooms	4s. 6d. to 5s. 3d.
Five rooms	5s. 0d. to 7s. 0d.
Six rooms	6s. 6d. to 9s. 0d.

*Including rates.

Comparing with London the rent index for Nottingham was 56 compared with 100 in London.

Source: Board of Trade Enquiry into Working Class rents, housing and retail prices together with the standard rates of wages prevailing in certain occupations in the principal industrial towns of the United Kingdom. 1908.

APPENDIX 8RETAIL PRICES IN NOTTINGHAM: OCTOBER 1905

Commodity	Nottingham price	London mean price
Tea per lb.	1s. 6d. to 1s. 8d.	1s. 4.2d.
Sugar:		
Loaf per lb.	2½d.	2.4d.
Granulated per lb.	2d.	2d.
Bacon:		
Back per lb.	8d. to 9d.	10.35d.
Streaky per lb.	7d.	8.9d.
Eggs	12 to 14 per 1s.	15.2 per 1s.
Cheese:		
American Cheddar per lb.	8d.	7.1d.
Butter:		
Colonial per lb.	1s. 1d. to 1s. 2d.	1s. 0d.
Danish per lb.	1s. 2d.	1s. 2d.
Potatoes (7 lb.)	3d.	3.29d.
Flour (7 lb.)	9d. to 10d.	9.7d.
Bread (4 lb.)	4½d. to 5½d.	4.9d.
Milk (quart)	4d.	4d.
Coal (cwt.)	8½d. to 10d.	1s. 2.2d.
Paraffin (Gal.)	8d.	6.5d.

Source: Board of Trade Enquiry into Working Class rents, housing and retail prices together with the standard rates of wages prevailing in certain occupations in the principal industrial towns of the United Kingdom. 1908.

APPENDIX 9SUMMARY OF NOTTINGHAM WAGES, RENTS, RETAIL PRICES: 1905-1912

Rates of wages	% increase (+) or decrease (-)
Building: Skilled men	+ 4
Labourers	+ 4
Engineering: Skilled men	+ 3
Labourers	Nil
Printing - compositors	+ 3
<hr/>	
Rents (inc. rates)	- 4
<hr/>	
Retail prices	
<hr/>	
Meat	+11
Other food	+ 9
Total	+10
<hr/>	
Rents and retail prices combined	+ 7
<hr/>	

Source: Board of Trade Enquiry into Working Class rents, housing and retail prices together with the standard rates of wages prevailing in certain occupations in the principal industrial towns of the United Kingdom. 1912.

APPENDIX 10SELECTED WAGE RATES IN NOTTINGHAM DURING 1916

Auxiliary Male Lace		Piece Rates
Bakers	46/- to 36/-	per week
Blacksmiths	40/9	per week
Bobbin and Carriage Makers		Piece Rates
Boot and Shoe Operatives	34/-	per week
Bookbinders	37/-	per week
Boiler Makers	45/-	per week
Angle Smiths		
Platers	43/-	per week
Riveters	38/-	per week
Holders Up	32/-	per week
Brass Moulders	41/-	per week
Brass Finishers	39/-	per week
Bricklayers	11d.	per hour
Carpenters and Joiners	11d.	per hour
Carters	30/-	per week
Clerks (at aged 21)	35/-	per week
Engineers	(Bonus 3/- to 5/-)	43/- per week
Electricians	10d.	per hour
Female hosiery		Piece Rates
Ironfounders	43/-	per week
Postmen	27/- to 40/-	women 21/6 per week
Railwaymen: Checkers	32/-	Carmen & Loaders 29/- Porters 27/- a week
Toolmakers	43/-	per week
Tramwaymen, Motormen	(Bonus 2/-)	6½ to 7½ per hour
Conductors		6½ to 7½ per hour
Cleaners		6½ per hour

Source: 1916 Trades Council Annual Report.

APPENDIX 11A RED LETTER DAY IN NOTTINGHAM

"Sunday July 10th was a red letter day at Nottingham. The fame of the van had preceded its advent and numbers were anxiously waiting to see the "Eighth Wonder of the World". The van was drawn up in Sneinton Market, where a large crowd soon gathered to hear Comrade Belt. The meeting started at about 11 o'clock and the audience gradually increased until upwards of 1,500 were around the van. Comrade Keeling took the chair and explained the object of the van. Comrade Gutteridge followed with his "maiden" open air speech; Bacon kept the ball rolling for a time and Belt put in the "rousements" in his usual vigorous style. Just after the meeting began a large contingent of cyclists wheeled onto the scene, thereby adding greatly to the effect. "Geordie" Christie also came to the meeting and gave kind hospitality. In the afternoon the meeting was held in the Forest Fields. Keeling again acted as Chairman and Gutteridge, Tomlin (of Leicester) and Bacon carried on the meeting, about 600 present. After the meeting we adjourned to the Academy for tea provided by the Labour Church and the light hearted conversation and merry jests proved that Socialists are not perishing pezzers but people who enjoy life as well as most folk. The evening meeting was held in the Great Market. The Watch Committee having refused to allow the van to stand there, we hired two drays for a platform. The meeting commenced at 7 o'clock with Geordie in the chair. At a quarter past seven the van appeared, and was greeted with enthusiastic cheers. Not being allowed to stop anywhere in the market it was drawn round two or three times as a protest and then drawn off amid general cheering and some cussing. Comrade Keeling followed the chairman with a few remarks, after which Belt gave an address and the applause which greeted him showed that his work was greatly appreciated. During the meeting a Police Inspector demanded the removal of the drays. Upon being questioned as to what authority he had, it was found that there was no Bye Law against vehicles in

the Market on Sunday, but that he had received instructions from the Watch Committee. However, the meeting continued in spite of the Watch Committee and their factotums and a resolution condemning their action was carried unanimously, the two hands of about 3,000 people going up in favour. Much indignation was expressed on all hands at the attempt to hinder free speech and a strong stand will be made if necessary against such pettyfogging tyranny....."

Clarion: January 1st 1898.

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2. Private Papers
3. Printed Documentary Sources
4. Newspapers and Periodicals
5. Official Printed Sources
6. Theses
7. Personal Interviews
8. Selected Secondary Sources

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