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***PATRICK DOLLAN(1885-1963) AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT***

***IN GLASGOW***

Daniel Carrigan OBE B.A. Honours (Strathclyde)

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College of Arts  
University of Glasgow  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the life and politics of Patrick Dollan a prominent Independent Labour Party (ILP) member and leader in Glasgow. It questions the perception of Dollan as an intolerant, Irish-Catholic 'machine politician' who ruled the 'corrupt' City Labour movement with an 'iron fist', dampened working-class aspirations for socialism, sowed the seeds of disillusionment and stood in opposition to the charismatic left-wing MPs such as James Maxton who were striving to introduce policies that would eradicate unemployment and poverty. Research is also conducted into Dollan's connections with the Irish community and the Catholic church and his attitude towards Communism and communists to see if these issues explain his supposed ideological opposition to left-wing movements.

The thesis will test these perceptions by examining Dollan's role within Glasgow Corporation, the Glasgow and Scottish Federations of the ILP and the public and voluntary organisations that Dollan was involved in. Full use is made of contemporary and socialist newspapers, Glasgow Corporation Minutes, ILP conference reports and minute books, public records and archives. The objective is to look at the growth and development of the Labour movement in Glasgow and establish whether Dollan was indeed a fetter on the 'forward march of Labour' or deserves recognition as someone who made a positive contribution to the labour movement by enhancing the lives of the Scottish working class.

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## INTRODUCTION

### REPUTATION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Patrick Joseph Dollan (1885 - 1963) was a Labour activist throughout his adult life. He was a prominent 'Red Clydesider' and long-serving Glasgow councillor (1913-46). He held posts as City Treasurer, Leader of the council Labour group and Lord Provost (1938-41) for which he was knighted. Thereafter, he went on to hold other public service roles in the energy and civil aviation fields and also became the first Chairman of East Kilbride Development Corporation in 1947.

Whilst his civic contribution may have been noteworthy what makes Dollan particularly interesting to Labour historians was his avowed opposition to the popular and charismatic James Maxton - the apogee of 'Red Clydeside' - and his less charismatic but arguably more competent colleague, John Wheatley. Dollan, despite their earlier close working relationship and friendship, came to believe that Maxton and his inner circle of Clydeside MPs were advocating unrealistic and unpopular policies such as alliances with Communists and the adoption of 'red-blooded' socialism, as in the 1928 Cook-Maxton manifesto, which represented a rejection of Labour's stance of reformism and gradualism. These strategic differences which ultimately led to them being on opposing sides when Dollan fought tenaciously in a vain attempt to halt the Maxton-inspired Independent Labour Party's (ILP) disaffiliation from the Labour party in 1932 together with the consequences of this split for the labour movement in Glasgow will be examined in detail in this thesis.

Dollan's organising and political skills, his Irish and Catholic connections, together with his council activities, have seen him presented by critics as some kind of Tammany Hall Council 'boss' and associated with features of intolerance, control and self-aggrandisement.<sup>1</sup> He is viewed at best as controversial, and at worst as a negative political figure by many historians.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the oft-portrayed idealistic James Maxton, Dollan is routinely painted as a politician without scruples or principle who ruled the party in Glasgow and Scotland with a rod of iron and sought to obstruct idealists such as Maxton and John Wheatley, from winning the Labour movement for their brand of socialism which was more radical than that of Dollan and the Labour leadership.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of any previous substantive biography of Dollan,<sup>4</sup> this thesis

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<sup>1</sup> Tammany Hall is the term used to describe the political machine that effectively controlled New York Democratic Party politics from the 1860s to the 1930s by dispensing nominations and patronage to its adherents many of whom, at least initially, were of Irish stock. It became associated with and corruption under its infamous leader William M. "Boss" Tweed. See J. J. Smyth, *Labour In Glasgow, 1896-1936*, (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000), p. 114. Dollan was not the only Glasgow politician to be accused of practising 'Tammany Hall' politics. Beatrice Webb, a senior Labour politician and historian said of John Wheatley the Shettleston MP and former cabinet minister, in her diaries published in 1932, that, 'In the USA he would have succeeded as a local boss. He is a good mob orator and would have revelled in the intrigue and corruption of the machine; he would have been acute and good-natured in dispensing offices and bribes among his followers.' Quoted in Ian S. Wood, *John Wheatley*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> Sean Damer, *Glasgow: Going for a Song*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 154; J. J. Smyth, *Labour In Glasgow*, pp. 113-20; Ian McLean, *The Legend of Red Clydeside*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1999), p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> William Knox, *James Maxton*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 105; William Knox, ' "Ours is not an ordinary Parliamentary Movement": 1922-1926' in Alan McKinlay and R.J. Morris, eds, *The ILP on Clydeside*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 174; Alan McKinlay and James J. Smyth, 'The end of 'the agitator workman': 1926-1932' in *The ILP on Clydeside*, ed. by Alan McKinlay and James J. Smyth; Harry McShane and Joan Smith, *Harry McShane-No Mean Fighter*, (London: Pluto Press, 1978), p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> The biographical sources we have for Dollan are: Helen Corr and William Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', in *Labour Leaders 1918-39*, ed. by William Knox, (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1984), pp. 92-99; Glasgow, Mitchell Library, P. J. Dollan, Unpublished (and incomplete) 'Autobiography', undated (1953?). There are a number of newspaper cuttings containing articles and interviews with Dollan in Pat Woods, 'A Miscellany' collection, within the Mitchell Library; Irene Maver, 'P. J. Dollan', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography at <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>>, (hereafter DNB), [accessed 5 April 2012].

will evaluate Dollan's reputation and legacy to ascertain whether historians, many of whom relied on secondary sources and contemporaries' accounts, have painted an accurate picture of him. But before turning to the historiography it would be instructive to survey Dollan's early life to understand the circumstances and environment that led to him developing political consciousness and becoming a socialist in the first place.

Dollan was born in Baillieston in 1885 and shared a one-roomed miners' row house with his parents, who were of Irish immigrant stock, together with ten surviving brothers and sisters. He left school aged ten and went to work in a Shettleston rope factory, then in a grocer's store, before following his father into the local pit where he became active in the local Lanarkshire miners' union. He joined the ILP around 1908. Dollan then followed an upwardly-mobile path of 'Samuel Smiles' type self-improvement and 'respectability' by enrolling in educational evening classes, the drama club and the Clarion Scouts.<sup>5</sup> In 1910, Dollan left the world of manual labour when John Wheatley, former miner and at the time, a fellow Lanarkshire ILP colleague and mentor offered him a job in his recently established publishing firm. Within the next few years Dollan embarked on a journalistic career which saw him writing for several Labour-sympathising newspapers such as *Forward* and the *Daily Herald* which complemented his growing political activism.<sup>6</sup> He met his future wife Agnes Moir (1887-1966), at a

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<sup>5</sup> Samuel Smiles's book, *Self Help*, published in 1859, advocated personal reform and self-improvement as a way out of poverty. Juliet Gardiner and Neil Wenborn eds, *The History Today Companion To British History* (London: Collins and Brown, 1995), p.699; It was not uncommon within a Scottish context for aspiring working-class individuals to distinguish themselves from the 'roughs' by gaining the mantle of 'respectability'. See Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 65.

<sup>6</sup> Dollan, 'Autobiography', p. 169; Irene Maver, P. J. Dollan DNB entry.



Clarion Scouts event. Agnes had become a factory worker at age eleven which was necessitated by 'family poverty' and was an ILP activist before marrying Patrick in 1912.<sup>7</sup> She went on to become a rent-strike organiser, trade union official, peace activist, Labour councillor and parliamentary candidate. Both Patrick and Agnes, therefore, became politicised and honed their class-consciousness during the Edwardian era in Glasgow at a time when, arguably, 'class conflict reach[ed] unprecedented heights on Clydeside' and the emerging labour movement was firmly planting the roots of 'Red Clydeside'.<sup>8</sup>

We will see in chapters one and two that Dollan stood out from his fellow councillors due to his total immersion in party activities. After becoming a founding member of the Shettleston branch of the ILP then its secretary in 1910, he went on to be elected as chairman, first of the Glasgow ILP, and then of the ILP's Scottish division.<sup>9</sup> This activity led to Dollan serving on the ILP's National Administrative Committee (NAC) and its policy committees, and attending its conferences. Thereafter, he was to play a prominent role on the national ILP stage, often sitting alongside Ramsay Macdonald, the sometime prime minister, and other cabinet ministers. Additionally, as we show in chapter one, he worked closely with other labour movement luminaries including those in the Clyde Workers Committee (CWC) for whom he produced a bulletin during the 'forty hours strike' in 1919. He was involved in rent strikes alongside

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<sup>7</sup> Helen Corr, 'Lady Agnes Dollan', in Knox ed., *Labour Leaders*, pp. 89-92; Helen Corr, Agnes Dollan entry, DNB; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p.49.

<sup>8</sup> William Kenefick and Arthur McIvor eds, *Roots of Red Clydeside 1910-1914?* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1996), p.14.

<sup>9</sup> Dollan, 'Autobiography', p.173.

his wife in 1915, and active in, and a historian of, the co-operative movement.<sup>10</sup> This thesis will traverse Dollan's political life and reveal that Dollan, as well as being a prominent councillor, also became an anti-war campaigner an imprisoned conscientious objector, a housing and rents campaigner, a journalist for the labour movement's journals, a propagandist for the striking CWC and a keen co-operator and member of the Clarion scouts.<sup>11</sup> He is viewed by some as the architect of the 1922 parliamentary election success in Glasgow and Labour's historic municipal breakthrough when it took control of the Council in 1933.<sup>12</sup> Dollan's participation in, offices held, and energy expended within the labour movement, are not in contention by those who have written about him. What may be in contention, however, is whether this energy was expended productively on behalf of the working class. What we will explore, therefore, in the following chapters is why he is so poorly regarded by many of these writers.

In many accounts of 'Red Clydeside' and Scottish history between the wars, Dollan is not referred to in sympathetic tones in the same way as fellow ILPers Maxton, Wheatley, or (to a lesser extent) David Kirkwood, William Gallacher, Harry McShane or John Maclean. There are no published biographies of Dollan. He has failed thus far to inspire an academic cheer-leader to give him more than a few pages because it seems that he does not inspire empathy or solidarity in the way that Maxton did. It will be argued here that there are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, as we will see in chapter

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<sup>10</sup> Dollan was commissioned to write a local co-operative history. See Glasgow, University of Glasgow, Broady Collection, Doc. C 12, P. J. Dollan, *Jubilee History of The Kinning Park Co-operative*, (Glasgow: Scottish Cooperative Wholesale Society, 1923).

<sup>11</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', pp. 92-99; Maver, DNB entry.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid; Maver, DNB entry; T.C. Smout, *A Century Of The Scottish People 1830-1950* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), p. 274; Iain McLean, *Legend*, p. 242;

one, Dollan was seen as a negative figure from around 1923 when he challenged Maxton's opposition to the party leadership and Labour government and thereafter placed a check on Maxton's ability to impose his will on the ILP in Scotland.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, as chapter three will clearly demonstrate, Dollan had no truck with Communists, their front organisations, or unity campaigns following the founding of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1920.<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, Dollan has often been portrayed as someone who restricted free thought and internal party democracy, gained favour by dispensing patronage, and abused his power through calculated party branch closures and expulsions of members.<sup>15</sup> Fourthly, it has been suggested that he sold out and became an establishment figure by accepting a knighthood and other baubles like 'quango' chairmanships and honorary degrees.<sup>16</sup> We might also add the ancillary issue of Dollan's links with Catholicism - a faith which is often viewed as being anti-socialist and possessing anti-democratic characteristics in the Glasgow of the early years of the twentieth century and a pertinent issue, as we will see in chapter three, when looking at how Dollan is viewed in the context of labour history in the West of Scotland.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ian S. Wood, 'Hope Deferred: Labour In Scotland in the 1920s.', in *Forward! Labour Politics in Scotland 1888-1988*, ed. by Ian Donnachie, Christopher Harvie and Ian S. Wood (Edinburgh, Polygon, 1989), p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41; Knox, *James Maxton*, p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> McKinlay and Smyth, 'End of the agitator workmen', p. 180; Ewan A. Cameron, *Impaled Upon A Thistle*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 161.

<sup>16</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 97; W. W. Knox, *Industrial Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 301.

<sup>17</sup> Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 125; Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 200-03.

### **Historiography- Dollan and the ILP**

In understanding the political context within which Dollan emerged it is critical to note that the ILP was the dominant left political force on Clydeside from around the turn of the century until it disaffiliated from the Labour Party in 1932. McKinlay makes this clear: 'until the early 1930s the ILP effectively was the Labour Party on the ground on Clydeside'.<sup>18</sup> However, as Hutchison states, at the end of the First World War, 'The working class was not yet united behind Labour. Many still adhered to Liberalism.'<sup>19</sup> By this time, as Smout recognised, 'big cracks had opened up in the facade of Liberal hegemony' and by 1918 there were 18 Labour councillors in Glasgow including Dollan.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, we are aware that in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World War, the Glasgow working class were becoming increasingly involved in strike activity, fighting for improved terms and conditions at work, and forcing employers to concede collective bargaining and recognise their trade unions.<sup>21</sup>

It was John Wheatley, not Dollan, who was the de-facto Glasgow Labour council leader from around 1913 until he departed for Westminster in 1922 with the other Clydeside MPs. It was from then, Ian S. Wood argues, that Dollan 'was content to build a real and ultimately formidable power-base for himself in Glasgow council politics'.<sup>22</sup> William Knox takes the view that the election of many prominent ILPers such as Maxton and Wheatley made possible 'Dollan's rise to prominence in the Scottish labour

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<sup>18</sup> Alan McKinlay, ' "Doubtful wisdom and uncertain promise" : strategy, ideology and organisation, 1918-1922', in *The ILP on Clydeside*, ed. by Alan McKinlay and R.J. Morris, (Manchester: MUP, 1991), p. 129; W.W. Knox and A. Mackinlay (sic), 'The Re-Making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century History*, Vol. 6, No 2, 1995, p. 175.

<sup>19</sup> I. G. C. Hutchison, *Scottish Politics In The Twentieth Century*, (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Smout, *Scottish People*, p. 263.

<sup>21</sup> Kenfick and McIvor, *Roots of Red Clydeside*, pp. 7-15.

<sup>22</sup> Wood, 'Hope Deferred ' p. 34.

movement' and allowed him, as chairman of the Glasgow ILP, 'the space (after 1922) with which to consolidate his hold on the local organisation. His power had been increasing due to his undoubted organisational ability.'<sup>23</sup> In this overview Knox also gives credit to Dollan for Labour's improved fortunes in Glasgow during the 1920 municipal and 1922 general elections. But for Dollan this is as good as it gets from this acclaimed labour historian as he is one of his most trenchant critics. In his book on Maxton, Knox argues that even if the ILP had not disaffiliated from the Labour Party it was unlikely that the left would have made progress because in important areas like Clydeside, Labour was 'under the control of machine politicians like Dollan'.<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere, he implies that Dollan was a class traitor: 'If the price for dealing with the problems of poverty and unemployment was to be the break up of the Labour Party, then for Dollan, party came before class.'<sup>25</sup> This chimes with Christopher Smout's assessment of Dollan's character as an 'unemotional organizer, Catholic, party machine man ... (who) manipulated' the electorate.<sup>26</sup> We note in this quote that Dollan's religion is raised by Smout. This Catholic or Irish connection is a regular feature in perspectives of Dollan. Damer makes it explicit when he says that in the 1920s 'the Irish political machine, now known locally as the Murphia, took its people into the Labour Party. This machine was oiled and greased by Wheatley's hand-reared boy, Paddy Dollan by now an ILP councillor and local politician of consummate skill'.<sup>27</sup> We now see a link being established between Catholicism, Irish ethnicity and local government 'machinery' which fits in with the populist view of the Tammany Hall 'boss' figure. I. G. C.

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<sup>23</sup> Knox, 'Parliamentary movement', p. 167.

<sup>24</sup> Knox, *James Maxton*, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> Knox, 'Parliamentary movement', p. 174.

<sup>26</sup> Smout, *Scottish People*, p. 274.

<sup>27</sup> Sean Damer, *Going for a Song*, p. 154

Hutchison notes that the 'impact of the Irish Roman Catholic community on the development of Labour ...[resulted in] a well-drilled machine'.<sup>28</sup> Iain McLean argues that from around 1918, 'Labour welcomed the Catholics because the socialists came to realise how much they suffered from lack of an efficient political machine'. This apparently was reinforced, 'when Patrick Dollan began his long reign as city boss and ILP organiser'.<sup>29</sup> Worley also refers to him as a 'City Boss'.<sup>30</sup> In pointing to the Irish connection Smyth shows that following the dramatic migration of the Irish to the largely Presbyterian Scotland the 'terms "Irish" and "Catholic" became synonymous'.<sup>31</sup> He further argues, that the orthodox analysis of Irish involvement in the Glasgow labour movement is essentially a negative one which assumes that whilst their electoral support was crucial, they brought with them 'the corrupting influence of their "machine" politics'.<sup>32</sup> It was this 'machine', arguably, which for Knox explains the reason for Maxton's 'silence on social issues such as abortion, birth control and segregated denominational schooling'. Knox states that for Maxton, 'the Catholic Irish connection was a political necessity'.<sup>33</sup> Gordon Brown also points to the influence of the Catholic clergy in winning seats on the Glasgow Education Authority in 1919.<sup>34</sup> Ian R. Mitchell endorses this view but then adds that the Catholic clergy's 'influence on the Labour movement was disproportionate and negative'.<sup>35</sup> Thus, we can see that a theme is developing which seems to indicate that Irish ethnicity, Catholicism and politics leads to

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<sup>28</sup> Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> Iain McLean, *Legend*, p. 192.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2005), p. 54.

<sup>31</sup> Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 127.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>33</sup> Knox, *Maxton*, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Gordon Brown, *Maxton*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1986), p. 94.

<sup>35</sup> I. R. Mitchell, *This City Now: Glasgow and its working class past*, (Glasgow: Luath Press: 2005), p. 134.

a negative type of 'machine politics'. We will explore this in greater detail in chapter three.

That Patrick Joseph Dollan was of Irish and Catholic descent would have been obvious to his peers and those familiar with how names are often used to identify ethnicity and religion in the west of Scotland. Like Willie Gallacher and Harry McShane, fellow 'Red Clydesiders' from a similar background of Irish stock, Dollan deserted the catholic church before becoming a councillor, and was agnostic or secular and consequently played no part in Catholic activities during most of his active political career.<sup>36</sup> Robert K. Middlemas argues that he 'argued himself into a position beyond the Church's reach' and that he 'was lapsed for years ', albeit that after 'having been so long an agnostic, he returned to the Roman Catholic Church before he died' in 1963.<sup>37</sup> Knox is more precise, 'around 1911 Dollan severed his ties with Catholicism and became a secularist' before becoming reconciled to the Catholic faith during 'a long period of illness that forced him to retire from the GTC' (Glasgow Town Council).<sup>38</sup> Many historians, whilst emphasising his Irish connections neglect to take account of the fact that both Dollan and his father were born in Scotland.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as Helen Corr shows, he and his wife Agnes, (the daughter of an Orange lodge member who had a 'staunch Protestant upbringing') clearly displayed their antipathy towards organised religion around 1917, by giving express instructions to their son's school that he be excluded

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<sup>36</sup> See W. Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1936); Harry McShane and Joan Smith, *Harry McShane-No Mean Fighter*, (London: Pluto Press, 1978).

<sup>37</sup> Robert Keith Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), pp. 35, 100, 281.

<sup>38</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan' pp. 94, 98.

<sup>39</sup> Dollan, 'Autobiography'; Pat Woods, 'Miscellany'.

from religious instruction.<sup>40</sup> As we will see further in chapter three, this does not fit with the image so often presented of Dollan as the Irish-Catholic 'Tammany Hall' boss.

Strangely, this religious link is not often identified with Harry McShane or Willie Gallacher, both of whom were of Irish descent and baptised Catholics. Knox talks of 'Patrick Dollan, first Catholic Lord Provost of Glasgow'.<sup>41</sup> In surveying the Scottish political scene in the 1920s Fry says, 'Some Catholics such as ... Patrick Dollan ... were now numbered among the foremost Labour politicians.'<sup>42</sup> In talking of the tensions in the labour movement caused by the Spanish civil war Ewan A. Cameron states, 'it took the best efforts of Patrick Dollan, himself a Catholic, to prevent a serious rupture'.<sup>43</sup> Further, whilst acknowledging Dollan's break with the Church, Hutchison, nevertheless sees him as a reassuring figure to it because, 'although a lapsed Catholic, he was unshakeably anti-Communist'.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Tom Gallagher points to Dollan possessing 'unimpeachable anti-communist credentials'.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps, therefore, some make a false connection between Dollan's supposed anti-Communism and Catholicism due to the Catholic church's implacable opposition to Communism. Whilst he may have been tenuous in his Catholic affiliation there seems no doubt, as we will see in chapter three, that, whilst Dollan and the Scottish ILP flirted with affiliation to the Third International and gave support to the Bolsheviks in 1918 and the Soviets during the Second World War, Dollan was consistently anti CPGB.<sup>46</sup> He opposed its affiliation to the Labour Party when it was

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<sup>40</sup> Corr, 'Lady Agnes Dollan', p. 89.

<sup>41</sup> Knox, *Maxton*, p.10.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Fry, *Patronage and Principle, A Political History of Modern Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), p. 166.

<sup>43</sup> Ewan A. Cameron, *Impaled*, p. 181.

<sup>44</sup> Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 58.

<sup>45</sup> Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 200.

<sup>46</sup> Wood, *Wheatley*, p. 79; W. Knox and A. McKinlay, 'The Re-Making of Scottish Labour', p. 180 .



formed in 1920 and consistently thereafter, 'and was instrumental' according to Knox, 'in pulling the Scottish ILP and the GTC round to this view'.<sup>47</sup> This has not endeared him, perhaps, to those who consider that stance as anti-progressive or disunifying, particularly when we consider that James Maxton was seen at various times as sympathetic to Communist co-operation. Brown has said 'Maxton always favoured Communist affiliation to the Labour Party'.<sup>48</sup> However, despite Maxton's power of oratory and charisma, it was Dollan who won the argument at the Scottish ILP conference in 1925 when 'Dollan and Maxton were the principal adversaries, Dollan speaking for the majority when he called the Communists a disruptive influence'.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Knox recognises that 'under his influence the CPGB was held at arm's length by the Scottish ILP'.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps this explains onetime Communist Harry McShane's criticism when he bemoaned the fact that the ILP's 'socialist faith' had been subverted by the introduction of the Labour Party constitution in 1918 which allowed for 'Irish Catholics and other elements who were not socialists to join. The change also affected the more unscrupulous and ambitious ILP members. ... This was the case with Pat Dollan'.<sup>51</sup> McShane underlines his disdain when he says, 'Pat Dollan's wife Agnes was very active and, I always thought better than he was; I'm convinced he killed her activity'.<sup>52</sup> Willie Gallacher, the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC) chairman and later

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<sup>47</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 237.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, *Maxton*, p. 171.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>50</sup> Knox, 'Parliamentary Movement', p. 166.

<sup>51</sup> McShane and Smith, *Harry McShane*, p. 110. This referred to the rule change which gave the Labour party the right to recruit members directly without going through the medium of an affiliate such as the ILP. McShane suggested that this diluted the Labour Party's socialism. This view has been contested as far as Clydeside is concerned. See Terry Brotherstone, 'Does Red Clydeside Really Matter Any More?', in *Militant Worker, Labour and Class Conflict on the Clyde 1900-1950*, ed. by Robert Duncan and Arthur McIvor (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992), p. 61.

<sup>52</sup> No evidence is provided to support this statement, however. McShane and Smith, *Harry McShane*, p. 34.

Communist MP, was also very critical of Dollan. Gallacher's autobiography, *Revolt on the Clyde*, gives the impression that there was revolutionary potential on Clydeside during and just after the First World War which was thwarted by trade union leaders and Labour politicians like Dollan. Gallacher suggests, without providing any justification, that instead of supporting the Clyde workers during their wartime strike in 1915 when 'the press shrieked for action against the leaders ... Dollan poured his daily dose of "patriotism" into the *Daily Citizen*'.<sup>53</sup> In his later memoir Gallacher attacks Dollan still further, stating that Dollan's stance on Bolshevism in 1917 has to be viewed as progressive 'considering what he later degenerated into'.<sup>54</sup> Gallacher's comments like McShane's criticism lean more towards personal attacks than considered judgements. The possible causes of this personal antipathy (both were foundation members of the Communist Party) is a theme that will be explored further in chapter three. Their accounts, could be viewed as being in what McIvor called the 'magnificent journey' mould of working-class history.<sup>55</sup> As Joseph Melling has pointed out, 'heroic testaments ... partisan biographies and autobiographies' have influenced a later 'generation of literature from the New Left ... appearing to construct a radical interpretation of industrial politics in the years 1900-26'.<sup>56</sup> Such interpretations have cast Dollan in a negative light which has gained credence down the years and will be tested in this thesis.

That Dollan was a vigorous opponent of the CPGB will become clear from this study and sometimes one suspects that it may be this more than anything that gives rise

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<sup>53</sup> William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1936), p. 24.

<sup>54</sup> William Gallacher, *The Last Memoirs of William Gallacher*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1966), p. 102.

<sup>55</sup> Arthur J. McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain, 1880-1950* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p. 237.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Melling, quoted in Brotherstone, 'Red Clydeside', p. 62.

to the perception of the Irish-Catholic machine-politician who 'had become increasingly right wing'.<sup>57</sup> According to Carol Craig, Dollan 'was to defect to mainstream Labour and ran the city's political machine'. Writing in 2010, Craig based her judgement on secondary sources, many of which have been referred to in this introduction. But she states with apparent confidence that 'there was a well-oiled Labour machine' which replaced 'the myriad of socialist groups with their broad humanitarian ideals' and 'the man who helped ... ILPers get on what, for some of them, became a gravy train was Patrick Dollan'.<sup>58</sup> That someone like Craig, without left-wing or labour history credentials, takes this view demonstrates how the negative image of Dollan has found contemporary resonance. Knox, a historian with left-wing credentials takes the more scholarly view that Dollan, alongside William Elger of the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) and Arthur Woodburn the Labour Party secretary 'were able to transform Labour from a radical, almost messianic party of idealists into a social democratic organisation run on mechanistic lines; a process which ... led to disillusion among party activists'.<sup>59</sup> Sean Damer goes further by asserting, 'city councillors (with some exceptions) were [to become] singularly bereft of ... moral honesty, passion and vision'.<sup>60</sup> He argues that one of the reasons for this 'was the control of the party machine by the Murphiosi' which he alleges 'were not interested in politics but power and profit. The most famous example of this transformation, was Paddy Dollan ...'.<sup>61</sup> This view echoes that of Fry who argues:

local authorities ... had been learning to hold the support of their client electorates through housing policy, with its low rents, large deficits and gross inefficiency.

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<sup>57</sup> Mitchell, *This City Now*, p. 69.

<sup>58</sup> Carol Craig, *The Tears That Made The Clyde*, (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 2010), pp. 215- 20.

<sup>59</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 240.

<sup>60</sup> Damer, *Going for a Song*, p.196.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

Some Councils had able leadership, such as Glasgow under Dollan but they too could be riddled with corruption.<sup>62</sup>

Catriona Macdonald argues that it was not until the 1970s that Labour in Scotland was able to reform 'the corrupting influences of machine politics in some cities'.<sup>63</sup> As we will see, in chapter three there was some corruption in Glasgow but there is no evidence to show that this was common-place or endemic. Moreover, Dollan publicly called for it to be rooted out.<sup>64</sup>

Dollan's undoubted reputation, therefore, is that of 'machine politician', but as we will see in the following chapter, chronology is an important consideration, for Dollan only really became a dominant figure in Glasgow after 1922 (following the 'Red Clydeside' period), when prominent sitting councillors Wheatley, Kirkwood and Shinwell left the Council for Westminster, and as Wood has shown it was Wheatley who led the council group until then.<sup>65</sup> Until becoming an MP in 1922, James Maxton was a full-time paid organiser of the ILP. Moreover, the Marxist John Paton, an acolyte of Maxton, was also a paid organiser of the ILP in Scotland during the 1920s.<sup>66</sup> If there was such a 'machine' then it is more likely that these individuals, certainly before 1922, and perhaps even afterwards (given their enhanced status and reputations) would have had the time and resources to 'oil' the supposed 'machines wheels' rather than Dollan who was employed full-time outside the party as a journalist. Firstly, we know that

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<sup>62</sup> Michael Fry, *Patronage and Principle*, p.191.

<sup>63</sup> Catriona M. M. Macdonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet, Scotland's Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009), p. 231.

<sup>64</sup> GCM, 20 February 1936; *Scotsman*, 26 September 1941.

<sup>65</sup> Wood, *John Wheatley*, p. 86.

<sup>66</sup> I. G. C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland 1832-1924*, (Edinburgh: John Donald 1986), p. 293.

Dollan, Wheatley and Maxton worked as a team in heading up the ILP in Glasgow during that period.<sup>67</sup> Secondly, it is important to recognise that Labour did not win control of the Council until 1933 so Dollan was unlikely to be in a position to dispense patronage as a 'boss' prior to then, if at all. But from then on there is little written specifically on Labour in Glasgow, although Knox and McKinlay have covered Scotland in that period.<sup>68</sup> Thirdly, the impression that Catholicism was in some way an influencing factor in Dollan's supposed 'party machine' has taken on mythical dimensions as we will see in chapter three. Dollan was estranged from the church; additionally, as Hutchison demonstrates, 'the power of Catholics within the Labour Party between the wars was ... minimal' as there were 'no more than six Roman Catholic councillors when that party controlled Glasgow in the 1930s'.<sup>69</sup>

We will attempt to explain Dollan's attitude towards Communism and the CPGB in chapter three. We can say here, however, that the evidence seems to indicate that his view, which was one of non-co-operation, was more likely to be shared by the majority of ILP activists than that of Maxton who flirted from time to time with the Communists.<sup>70</sup> Brown agrees with this assessment and argues that Dollan reflected the views of the majority of ILP members when calling the communists 'a disruptive influence'.<sup>71</sup> Maxton's position on this was not consistent, as demonstrated separately by both Kenefick and Hutchison; earlier in August 1922, he had joined with Dollan and 'rejected outright the communist way to socialism'<sup>72</sup> when they 'published a statement of

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<sup>67</sup> McKinlay, 'Doubtful wisdom', pp. 135-137.

<sup>68</sup> Knox, 'Parliamentary movement', p. 178.

<sup>69</sup> Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 58; See also Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 203.

<sup>70</sup> J. Scanlon, *Decline and Fall of the Labour Party* (London: Peter Davies, 1932), p. 109; Knox, 'James Maxton' in Knox, ed., *Labour Leaders*, p. 209; Worley, *Inside the Gate*, p. 54.

<sup>71</sup> Brown, *Maxton*, p. 171.

<sup>72</sup> William Kenefick, *Red Scotland* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 196.

the goals of the ILP in Glasgow in which the communist approach was rejected'.<sup>73</sup> There were many rows with the Communists and instances of their infiltration of the ILP during the interwar years. They also stood in opposition to ILP candidates including Dollan at elections. Dollan's differences with the CPGB over strategy and tactics explain his apparent intransigence towards communists in the inter-war years not his mythical catholic convictions.<sup>74</sup> Not for the last time Maxton appeared to demonstrate his inconsistency in 1924, when following an ILP-CP disagreement in Greenock, he argued that the ILP required 'an extreme fighting policy as the only way to combat Communists'.<sup>75</sup> We will consider the Dollan and Maxton positions on collaboration with the CPGB further in chapter three.

### **Argument**

As we have seen, the historiography relating to Dollan point to him being a critical figure in the formulation and delivery of Labour policy within the Glasgow ILP. It further asserts that Dollan was a 'machine politician' who kept a tight grip on members and policies. Moreover, it is implied, that his anti-Communism, was less about concern for the integrity of Labour, and more about his opposition to James Maxton's attempts to build alliances with Communists, which, as well as ostensibly being anathema to Dollan's Catholic convictions, could also dilute and diminish Dollan's supposed grip on the political machine.

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<sup>73</sup> Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland*, p. 299.

<sup>74</sup> Robert E. Dowse, *Left In The Centre - The Independent Labour Party 1893-1940* (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 137; F. Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946), p. 310; Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 61.

<sup>75</sup> Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland*, p. 301.

As Wood has recognised, 'at Divisional Council meetings and conferences in Scotland, Dollan more often than not could use his influence to neutralise challenges to Labour's leadership launched by either Maxton or Wheatley'.<sup>76</sup> Whether Dollan required a 'machine' to do so, however, is open to question. Arguably, as we will see, there was no overwhelming demand from ILP members or from working people in general, for bold socialist policies like those contained in the 1928 Cook-Maxton Manifesto nor 'widespread enthusiasm for disaffiliation'.<sup>77</sup> Labour was decisively defeated in the general election of 1931 which was held against the backdrop of widespread working-class disillusionment following MacDonald's inability to deal with the financial crisis and his formation of the National government. Labour's crushing defeat hardly demonstrated that the working class were clamouring for socialism.<sup>78</sup> There was, however, a demand for practical solutions in alleviating unemployment and poverty as well as the all too visible housing problems, and Dollan was to the fore in campaigning on these issues whether in arguing for an expansion of the direct labour force, or in advocating that the poor receive supplementary assistance from the rates, or as a 'leader of rent strikes'.<sup>79</sup> As Labour leader on the council in the 1920s through to his role as Chairman of East Kilbride Development Corporation from 1947, Dollan also pursued strategies that led to a dramatic rise in the provision of public housing and a gradual but

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<sup>76</sup> Wood, *John Wheatley*, p. 164.

<sup>77</sup> McKinlay and Smyth, 'Agitator workman', p. 177.

<sup>78</sup> Worley, *Inside the Gate*, p. 142; A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1965), p. 326.

<sup>79</sup> Joseph Melling, *Rent Strikes*, (Edinburgh: Polygon Books, 1983) p. 23.

sustained elimination of slum housing conditions that had blighted Glasgow for decades.<sup>80</sup>

Not every historian paints a wholly negative picture of Dollan. Matthew Worley presents him in a relatively constructive light, as does Tom Gallagher, whilst Iain McLean has suggested that he was 'the most astute politician on Clydeside'.<sup>81</sup> The support of this latter historian who is viewed as a prime 'revisionist' of the 'Red Clydeside' drama, however, may not endear Dollan to more leftist commentators.<sup>82</sup> Some contemporaries like William Gallacher and Harry McShane, in trying to account for their inability to win over their homeland to the left in the 1920s, see Dollan as a sinister figure and a fetter to socialism. Others, as we have seen, like Craig and Damer, have demonised him. Some who concede that for a period, he was an important influence in the annals of socialist history, nevertheless, detract from his legacy by painting a different picture of him in a later period. Hutchison suggests that by 1932, Dollan was 'disengaged from any erstwhile radicalism',<sup>83</sup> whilst Corr and Knox position the supposed shift in behaviour and attitudes a few years later, arguing that 'from 1936 onwards Dollan also destroyed his reputation as a radical within the Scottish labour movement'.<sup>84</sup> These comments deserve to be tested if only to broaden our understanding of what 'radical' and 'radicalism' means and whether it remains a constant concept regardless of evolving political circumstances or societal change. What is clear at the

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<sup>80</sup> *HC Deb.*, vol. 578, col. 1330, 28 November 1957.

<sup>81</sup> Worley, *Inside the Gate*, p. 54; Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, pp. 200-06; McLean, *Legend*, p. 242.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xxviii; Joseph Melling, 'Work, culture and politics on 'Red Clydeside': the ILP during First World War', in *The ILP on Clydeside, 1893-1932*, ed. by Alan McKinlay and R. J. Morris, p. 85; John Foster, 'A Proletarian Nation? Occupation and Class since 1914', in *People and Society In Scotland III, 1914-1990*, ed. by A. Dickson and J. H. Treble (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992), p. 216; Brotherstone, 'Red Clydeside', p. 57.

<sup>83</sup> Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 69.

<sup>84</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 97.



outset is that Dollan lived through the development, growth and practical demise of the ILP on Clydeside. He fought with vigour to keep it within the Labour mainstream. He was involved in rent struggles and the growth of the co-operative movement; he went to prison as a conscientious objector; he was an election agent, a parliamentary candidate, a council leader and Lord Provost. He lived through the vagaries of the economic cycles associated with capitalism, four Labour governments and two World Wars. He deflected Protestant sectarian attempts to undermine Labour's working-class electoral support and witnessed the carnage and political division caused by the Spanish civil war.<sup>85</sup> He campaigned against what he considered to be the totalitarianism of the eastern bloc.<sup>86</sup> He witnessed Labour's creation of the welfare state and he served on numerous public and voluntary bodies, more often than not in an unpaid capacity. The reader would not be aware of this from reading the many autobiographies and biographies of 'Red Clydesiders'. Those works in understandably emphasising the role of their subjects perhaps downplayed and even neglected Dollan's achievements.

We will examine these issues in this thesis and consider whether Dollan was indeed the one-dimensional machine politician who crudely and clandestinely controlled the ILP and Glasgow by subverting democratic procedures. Or, was he a pragmatic socialist and democratically-elected leader, obliged to serve his electors and defend and advance working-class interests (which were often distorted by sectarian division), whilst operating in a politically pluralist city with a powerful middle class and business lobby which necessitated Dollan adopting a more gradualist and reformist perspective?

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<sup>85</sup> Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, pp. 78-81; Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia, Scotland and the Spanish Civil War* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2008), p. 141.

<sup>86</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 97.

Chapter one will consider what motivated Dollan into becoming a socialist in the first place, his role in the 'Red Clydeside' drama, his close relationship with Maxton and Wheatley and his attitude towards the First World War. Chapter two will examine Dollan's style and practice of leadership when leader of the council Labour group and Glasgow ILP and try and determine if 'Tammany Hall Boss' or 'machine politician' is an appropriate description of Dollan's leadership style. It will also consider Dollan's attitude towards the ILP's disaffiliation in an attempt to determine if the fracture with Maxton was more about strategy and tactics and less about ideological differences. In chapter three we explore Dollan's relationship with left forces after the break with the ILP, his complicated and evolving relationship with Catholicism, and consider if these issues affected his leadership style on becoming leader of the council after 1933 and thereafter Lord Provost. This chapter will also seek to explain if Dollan's changing attitude to war, following the rise of fascism in Europe, was a move away from his previous radicalism and idealism or a necessary response to aggressive anti-democratic forces. The epilogue will look at Dollan's activities after he stood down from the council in 1946. It will also examine his role as a government-appointed chairman of public bodies to see if he achieved anything in these roles or if these appointments were mere sinecures for a former stalwart who had long-since left the working class behind.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE DEVELOPING SOCIALIST

Dollan's early experiences of poverty and deprivation influenced his political outlook and socialist convictions. The experience of growing up in the insanitary slums of a Baillieston miners' row formed the basis of many of his later *Forward* articles often under the pen name of Myner Collier, focusing on the human cost of capitalism. For Dollan the cause of socialism and demise of capitalism was personal. He was to develop a passion for the reform of working-class housing conditions which remained with him throughout his life. During this early period of his life Dollan was, like other 'Red Clydesiders', dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism. Capitalism was viewed as exploitative, poverty-inducing, de-humanising and divisive.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the 'Red Clydesiders' advocated socialism with its collectivist perspective, moral dimension of social justice, and tenets of dignity at both work and in the home. However, as Eric Hobsbawm recognised, whilst also committed to 'a fundamental structural change in the economy', socialism was, nevertheless an 'extremely vague' concept in Britain.<sup>2</sup> This lack, in McKibbin's words, of 'ideological exactness', allowed divisions to emerge within the labour movement in the early years of the twentieth century over the nature of socialism, its pace of implementation and the tactics to be deployed in achieving it.<sup>3</sup> Thus, various competing socialist political groups emerged some like the ILP emphasising the parliamentary road to socialism, whilst others saw direct working-class

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<sup>1</sup> James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* (Suffolk: Pelican, 1972), p. 170; Richard J. Findlay, 'Continuity and Change: Scottish Politics, 1900-45' in *Scotland in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by T. M. Devine and R. J. Findlay (Cambridge: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910 - 1924* (Oxford University Press, 1974), p. xv; Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, pp. 21-25.

action as more worthwhile.<sup>4</sup> That revolution did not occur on Clydeside despite all the socialist activity and working-class unrest around the time of the First World War is axiomatic. What is to be considered here is whether Dollan, who allegedly 'put party before class', played a negative role in these events as suggested by 'Red Clydesiders' Willie Gallacher and Harry McShane, and some later historians who empathised with these accounts. Did Dollan impair the progress of the working-class movement on Clydeside? Or, will a re-assessment of Dollan's activities in these years down to 1922 when Glasgow saw a Labour breakthrough by winning ten of the city's fifteen parliamentary seats, establish that Dollan played a much more progressive role than previously afforded him. We will begin to address these issues in this chapter by adopting an ostensibly chronological perspective whilst also introducing key themes and case studies to illustrate how Dollan both attempted to shape and was shaped by circumstances and events.

### **Towards Secularism**

Despite being a devoted Catholic in his youth, Dollan was troubled by what he saw as the contradictions and the hypocrisy inherent in a faith that seemed to condone the worst excesses of capitalism, accept mass poverty and inequality, and oppose socialism, which to Dollan, was the obvious remedy for the suffering of Jesus' 'little children'.<sup>5</sup> He flirted with John Wheatley's small but influential Catholic Socialist Society, set up around 1906, which took the Catholic clergy head on the issue of whether socialism was

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<sup>4</sup> See the debate in *Forward*, 16 July - 24 September 1910 when John Maclean questioned whether the Labour Party stood for socialism; Kenefick and McIvor, *Roots of Red Clydeside*, pp. 1-15; Catriona M. M. Macdonald, *The Radical Thread: Political Change in Scotland. Paisley Politics, 1885-1924* (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 130, 178-83.

<sup>5</sup> *Forward*, 7 November 1908.

compatible with Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> But Dollan was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Church. He vigorously attacked 'the clerical influence in politics' and the 'glib-tongued persons, known as priests and parsons'.<sup>7</sup> He bemoaned the fact that 'in mining villages the priest and the parson are the rulers and dispensers of wisdom in general'.<sup>8</sup> He believed that Labour was making parliamentary inroads in mining areas in England and Wales in contrast to Scotland, 'due to the fact that in the industrial districts of these two countries the clergyman has lost his hold long ago'.<sup>9</sup> By now, Dollan held the firm view that:

the Church of the Poor was dominated today by brewers, landlords, financiers, monopolists; and exploiters of all sorts ... a fashionable assembly and a den of thieves ... real capitalists cannot be religious and if the Christians say they can, then Christianity is wrong. There is no other conclusion.<sup>10</sup>

Dollan attacked priests openly in the columns of *Forward* for undermining the ILP recruitment attempts which resulted in the 'one never to be forgotten Sunday evening all the Clergymen [in Baillieston] preached a sermon in denunciation of Socialism and its local exponent Pat Dollan'.<sup>11</sup> It is not entirely clear when Dollan broke from organised religion and Catholicism, but it was certainly by the time he was married 'outside the church' in 1912, to Agnes Moir, a fellow ILPer, who was from a fiercely anti-Catholic Orange family. Dollan attacked the United Irish League (UIL), which he described as 'alien' and 'dominated by liquor and petty landlord interests', for putting the Irish Home

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<sup>6</sup> *Forward*, 23 October 1909.

<sup>7</sup> *Forward*, 29 January, 12 August 1911.

<sup>8</sup> *Forward*, 16 July 1910.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Forward*, 6 August 1911; Middlemas said that: 'Patrick Dollan, argued himself into a position beyond the Church's reach'. Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, p. 40; See also Samuel Cooper, 'John Wheatley: A Study In Labour History' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1973), p. 52.

<sup>11</sup> *Forward*, 16 July 1910; Dollan, 'Autobiography', p. 178.

Rule issue before class interests.<sup>12</sup> Hobsbawm recognised that 'the decline in religious practice should not be confused with formal conversion to "unbelief"'.<sup>13</sup> But, even taking account of Dollan's reconciliation with the Church towards the end of his life in the 1950s, when Agnes also converted to Catholicism, his fierce antipathy expressed towards the Catholic church and the UIL during his political life would likely rule him out of any involvement or support in an Irish or Catholic 'political machine', if indeed such a machine existed within the Council.<sup>14</sup>

The columns of *Forward*, which were always open to socialists outside of the ILP, carried a febrile debate during 1909-10 on whether socialists should view Parliament as the appropriate vehicle for delivering socialism.<sup>15</sup> Tom Johnston the *Forward* editor, bemoaned the fact that:

we are drifting into a period of anti-Parliamentary agitations ... on every side there are enthusiasts who declare themselves sick of politics, sick of the Labour Party and ready to plunge into ventures which promise quicker economic returns ... [these are] Industrial Unionism, Fabian Superior Brains which shall bring us Socialism by pulling a few Cabinet strings, Victor Grayson's pure Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party which rejects palliatives, are each and all of them absorbing a quota of the burning energy which can evidently find no place in the rather inert and respectably cold Labour Party.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Forward*, 29 January 1910; Wood, *Wheatley*, p. 73; Ian S Wood, 'John Wheatley, The Irish, And The Labour Movement In Scotland', *The Innes Review*, Vol. 31 (1980), p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour, Further Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1984), p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> It was this antipathy and the fact that he insisted that his son be excluded from religious teaching at school that ensured that the Catholic *Glasgow Observer* was disinclined 'to endorse [ Dollan ] too loudly' if at all. Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 200.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, *Forward*, 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 May, 5 June 1909, 9, 16, 23 July, 1 October 1910.

<sup>16</sup> *Forward*, 9 July 1910; Johnston's article was written at a time when there was a wave of strikes across Britain including Clydeside. See Kenefick and McIvor, *Roots of Red Clydeside*, pp. 12-14.

This brought forth the wrath of John Maclean who denounced the Labour party as 'Liberalism of the most miserable kind', the only thing it 'wants to overthrow is the principles enunciated by the SDP'.<sup>17</sup> Johnston rejected the notion that reforms such as the introduction of old age pensions were mere 'palliatives'. He attacked those on the left of the ILP whom he derided as purveyors of 'the theory of increased misery' meaning 'the more the workers are oppressed the more rebellious they will become'.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Johnston argued, that by rejecting reforms the 'revolutionaries' would fail 'to take the average man with them'.<sup>19</sup> Despite expressing some initial sympathy with 'Industrial Unionism and the Revolutionary Socialism', Dollan rejected Marxism and criticised strategies being proffered by the 'revolutionary discontents from the Labour Party' as detracting from the efforts of the ILP mainstream.<sup>20</sup> He supported the retention of parliamentary democracy and embraced a socialism (which also found favour within most trade unions) which rejected Marxist notions of 'the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat' and 'class struggle', in favour of gradualism and reformism.<sup>21</sup> Dollan's socialist philosophy from then on, therefore, took account of not just the aspirational, but critically, what socialist advance was practical or achievable within a broad-based mass Labour Party and parliamentary democracy.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Forward*, 30 July 1910; Many ILPers were also frustrated at the absence of socialist convictions within the Labour Party which was a federation and contained many affiliates at this time who were not socialists. Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Forward*, 9 July 1910.

<sup>19</sup> *Forward*, 9 July 1910.

<sup>20</sup> *Forward*, 16 July 1910; Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 200; Dowse, *Left In The Centre*, p. 40.

<sup>21</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men. Studies In The History of Labour* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1976), pp. 231 - 38; Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx. His Life and Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 180.

<sup>22</sup> *Forward*, 16 July 1910; Worley, *Inside the Gate*, p. 7; David McLellan, *Karl Marx: The Legacy* (London: BBC, 1983), pp. 57 - 58.

After joining the ILP in 1908, it became the main focus of his life outside of his home and work and would remain so until its disaffiliation from Labour in 1932. What social life Dollan had was spent in the company of fellow socialists or 'propagandists' at *Forward* -where he became active as circulation secretary often travelling the country in a van in an attempt to boost sales - and ILP social events or through Clarion scouts activities where he met his wife Agnes in 1912.<sup>23</sup> Agnes gave birth to their only child James the following year. It would be a marriage that would endure over fifty years and Irene Maver suggested that 'their relationship was to serve for years as a model partnership founded on a mutual commitment to socialism and the Scottish labour movement'.<sup>24</sup> It was in this period also, that Dollan became close friends with James Maxton becoming, in Dollan's words, 'wandering missionaries' by attending meetings together 'four or five nights a week'.<sup>25</sup> Gilbert McAllister asserts that had Maxton 'retained the close alliance of Dollan, much that was regrettable in his later political alignments would have been avoided'.<sup>26</sup> Dollan had also become friendly with John Wheatley after he was invited to speak in Baillieston where they were both physically abused and literally 'turfed out' of the village for preaching Socialism.<sup>27</sup> Dollan was also becoming a regular contributor to *Forward* and an accomplished public speaker. One *Forward* correspondent described him as the 'inimitable and only P. J. Dollan'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Forward*, 13 February and 4 September 1909; Maver, DNB; Thomas Johnston, *Memories* (London: Collins, 1952), p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Evening News*, 19 November 1937. In Pat Woods 'A Miscellany '.

<sup>26</sup> Gilbert McAllister, *James Maxton*, (London: John Murray, 1935), p. 85.

<sup>27</sup> *Forward*, 18 July 1908; Dollan, 'Autobiography', p.175.

<sup>28</sup> *Forward*, 15 July 1911.



Another contributor complimented him by saying that he 'gave a remarkably good and earnest address' at a meeting he attended.<sup>29</sup>

Dollan's politicisation got him interested in trades unionism and he claims to have helped form and became secretary of a local branch of the Lanarkshire mining union.<sup>30</sup> Whilst the branch was not recognised by the employers for collective bargaining they did receive details of the Scottish-wide agreements arrived at with employers by socialist miner's leader Bob Smillie.<sup>31</sup> That did not prevent Dollan from writing a series of articles critical of the union's involvement in the Scottish Mines Conciliation Board.<sup>32</sup> This represented an open attack on the miners leader's actions. Dollan argued that there was a lack of transparency in the Board's workings as 'decisions were shrouded in mystery' and that it was a 'total failure'.<sup>33</sup> Here was the young working miner without any negotiating experience taking on the miner's leader Robert Smillie, an 'intellectual' leader according to the Webb's, and someone whom John Maclean dubbed, 'the mightiest fighter the workers of Scotland have ever had'.<sup>34</sup> Smillie hit back with a strong rebuttal in *Forward*, arguing that Dollan had distorted the facts by wrongly quoting a 'non-existent deleterious clause' in the agreement and argued that 'if no such rule exists then all his fireworks and righteous indignation on that point falls to ground'.<sup>35</sup> This episode demonstrates Dollan's growing confidence together with his argumentative nature which we will see further evidence of later. Nor would it be the only time that

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<sup>29</sup> *Forward*, 14 August 1914.

<sup>30</sup> Dollan, 'Autobiography', p. 162.

<sup>31</sup> Dollan, 'Autobiography', pp.151-79; Robert Smillie, *My Life For Labour*, (London: Mills and Boon, 1924), p. 217; *Forward*, 29 August 1908.

<sup>32</sup> *Forward*, 8, 15, 29 August, 12 September 1908.

<sup>33</sup> *Forward*, 8 August 1908.

<sup>34</sup> Sydney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., Revised edition, 1920), p. 513; John Maclean, 'The Call', in *Rapids of The Revolution*, ed. by Nan Milton (London: Alison and Busby, 1978).

<sup>35</sup> *Forward*, 29 August 1908.

Dollan was criticised by Labour colleagues for misrepresenting the facts.<sup>36</sup> Dollan was to leave the pits before he had an opportunity to make a name for himself in mining union circles and that was to be his brief and only formal involvement with industrial trade unionism.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Forward Years**

Dollan's working-class consciousness was stirred and coincided with his career move into journalism. This was a turning point as it provided him with an outlet and an audience with which to practice his new 'religion' of socialism and question why mining families were living in such deplorable conditions whilst landowners such as the Duke of Hamilton were reaping untold wealth gained from the toil of the miners 'who descend into the bowels of the earth to earn Royalties and dividends for their masters and robbers'.<sup>38</sup> It was as a *Forward* journalist specialising in mining affairs that we see his class consciousness and socialist fervour coming to the fore. Many of his early articles from 1910, under his pen name, Myner Collier, were often dripping with class hatred : 'miners only receive in wages four-pence out of each shilling they earn. The other eight-pence goes to the idle landlord and capitalist; to the useless middlemen and agents'.<sup>39</sup> He had honed his social enquiry skills earlier when writing a series of articles highlighting

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<sup>36</sup> This is borne out much later by one obituary which was to say, 'at all times his inconsistency troubled his compatriots'. *Glasgow Herald*, 31 January 1963.

<sup>37</sup> Tom Gallagher says, without providing any evidence, that Dollan 'worked hard to stitch up an alliance with fellow moderates from the trade unions' to keep Glasgow safe for 'reformist socialism'. Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 201. Yet the only evidence we can find of Dollan's trade union links following his brief mining career (outside of the Journalist's union which had no political links) is his informal links with the Glasgow Trades Council, the CWC, and the shop stewards for whom he wrote newsletters during the '40 hour strike' in 1919 - few of whom could be described as 'moderate'.

<sup>38</sup> *Forward*, 25 July 1908.

<sup>39</sup> *Forward*, 25 June 1910.

the poverty and appalling health and housing conditions endemic in the slums of Glasgow and demanded urgent housing reform.<sup>40</sup> These new articles surveyed the ills of the mining industry and advocated housing reform to put an end to miners 'insanitary' slums; called for the nationalisation of the industry; improved safety and conditions; and shorter working hours. Dollan toured the country addressing pit meetings and the ILP published a compilation of his articles in a pamphlet.<sup>41</sup> One aspect that distinguished him from many other *Forward* contributors at this stage, was his frequent references to, as he saw it, the link between poverty, insanitary housing conditions and vice. Inner-city slums and miner's rows led to 'monkey morality' and 'half-naked, barefooted and hungry-looking boys ... learning and assimilating all the vices that such an environment must breed'.<sup>42</sup> Housing reform was imperative 'to save the little ones from shame'. These deeply moralistic and socially-conservative views which he exhibited throughout his life were rarely challenged probably because they were shared by most of the working class at the time.<sup>43</sup> He also believed that women would experience 'a fall from virtue' if engaged in industrial employment particularly in the mining industry where he suggested women were 'physically and temperamentally' unsuited 'no matter what reforms are effected'.<sup>44</sup> He was, however, heavily criticised by

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<sup>40</sup> Myner Collier, 'Miners and Poverty (An Exposure of Scottish Coal Companies)', (1911) See *Forward*, 5 August 1911.

<sup>41</sup> *Forward*, 7 November 1908, 23 January 1909.

<sup>42</sup> *Forward*, 7 November 1908, 23 January 1909.

<sup>43</sup> The 'respectable' working class which formed the core of the ILP's support wished to keep their distance from the 'residuum' or 'rough' working class whose morality and sexual mores was suspect. Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p.31; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 65; Knox, *Industrial Nation*, pp. 168-73.

<sup>44</sup> *Forward*, 12 and 19 August, 2, 9, 16 September 1911; Although Dollan believed, in common with most of the ILP, that industry was no place for women, there is no evidence to suggest that he was not supportive of women realising their full and equal potential within the political sphere. This was demonstrated by the high proportion of women convenors when he was the leader of the Labour group on the Council. See Glasgow, Mitchell Library, Corporation of Glasgow Minutes, (hereafter GCM), 7 November 1934, pp.8-23; See also Arthur J. McIvor, 'Women and Work in Twentieth Century Scotland', in *People and Society in Scotland, Volume 111, 1914-1990*, ed. by

ILP feminist Agnes Hardie, later MP for Springburn, for propagating such views but again Dollan's views were likely to be shared by most miners.<sup>45</sup>

Whilst employed on *Forward*, Dollan exuded class hatred towards the monarchy and was scathing of socialist MPs who attended the King's funeral in 1910: 'Most of them I know personally and I had always understood them to be Socialists. But now - bah! They mourn for a man who did no social service.'<sup>46</sup> In contrasting the generosity granted to the widowed Queen Alexandra with that of the pittance given to miners' widows of the Whitehaven pit disaster he bemoaned that, 'one useless King is worth more per annum than one hundred and thirty-six miners are worth altogether'.<sup>47</sup>

Dollan, like his mentors, John Wheatley and Tom Johnston, rejected Marx and Engel's analyses of the way forward for socialism in Britain.<sup>48</sup> He was no scientific socialist and castigated Syndicalists, those 'revolutionary discontents from the Labour Party [who went into]the realms of the political wilderness'.<sup>49</sup> There was a lack of consistency in much of Dollan's writings at the time which is not surprising given both his need for meeting deadlines and the constantly evolving political dialogue between Glasgow's socialists in the period.<sup>50</sup> However, it is clear that a strong strand of pragmatism was at the core of Dollan's political outlook and this can be seen as early as

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A. Dickson and J. H. Treble (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992), pp.144-56; Also Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, pp. 41, 109.

<sup>45</sup> *Forward*, 16 September 1910; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, pp. 40, 62.

<sup>46</sup> *Forward*, 4 June 1910.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* The Whitehaven Wellington pit disaster occurred on 11 May 1910 with the loss of 136 lives; As we will see later Dollan's views on the monarchy were to moderate somewhat.

<sup>48</sup> *Forward*, 9 July 1910; Wood, *Wheatley*, p. 193; Johnston, *Memories*, p. 32.

<sup>49</sup> *Forward*, 16 July 1910; Syndicalists rejected 'political action' in favour of 'industrial action' as advocated by American Marxist Daniel de Leon. Whilst they were actively involved in the strike at the Singer factory in 1911 they had only 'marginal influence' within the labour movement. Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, p. 57; Kenefick, *Roots*, pp. 7 - 10.

<sup>50</sup> Knox, *Maxton*, p. 18; Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, pp. 74-78.

1908 when he suggested that given 'that desired state [of socialism ] is still a long way off, it well behoves us to do all in our power to bring the present miserable conditions of our people prominent before the powers that be'.<sup>51</sup> One area where there was a demonstrable need to tackle 'miserable conditions' was in the area of slum housing in Glasgow.

### **Glasgow's Housing Problem**

Housing was a key issue that was to transform Labour's electoral fortunes which had been in the doldrums on the eve of the First World War.<sup>52</sup> In the following years the ILP made housing *their* issue and in doing so were able to connect with the working class by demonstrating in a practical, as opposed to a philosophical or ideological way, how they could deliver for the workers where it mattered. By this time Glasgow had a population of around one million and was proud to be called the 'Second City of the Empire' and the 'shipbuilding capital of the world'. Under its ostensibly enlightened political leadership, many of them Liberals, Glasgow Corporation boasted an unsurpassed reputation for municipal enterprise with its fine parks, clean water and efficient electricity, gas and telephone utilities, libraries and tramways.<sup>53</sup> Behind this facade, however, lay a teeming mass of squalid and over-congested slums which had a deleterious effect on the population's health. Glasgow was to gain an unenviable reputation for high child mortality rates and being the slum capital of Britain. Almost 63 per cent of its population were crammed into one or two room houses compared to

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<sup>51</sup> *Forward*, 26 September 1908.

<sup>52</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 6 November 1912; Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 22.

<sup>53</sup> *The Baillie*, 1 September 1915; Irene Maver, *Glasgow*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 135. Glasgow Corporation was the formal and legal title of the municipal authority. It is often referred to as Glasgow Town Council (GTC) or simply 'Council'. These terms are treated as interchangeable in this thesis.

around 7 per cent in similar houses in England and Wales.<sup>54</sup> In Dollan's *Forward* social investigations into the slums of Glasgow, he catalogued the 'dirt, squalor, and misery[which]were supremely evident ... as if I had spent an afternoon in hell'.<sup>55</sup> Dollan believed that housing reform was being obstructed by a council committee of which three-fourths were 'businessmen and friends of landlords, if not property owners themselves'.<sup>56</sup>

The ILP mounted a feverish campaign in Glasgow on housing reform and caught the public's imagination in calling for cottage-type houses to be built rather than traditional tenements.<sup>57</sup> The issue was to dominate the council elections that took place in 1913 at which Dollan found himself unexpectedly as a late replacement candidate in Govan. He went on to win with a majority of 362.<sup>58</sup> According to the *Govan Press*, 'Councillor Dollan's triumphant return was the most talked of event ' in the town.'<sup>59</sup> Housing reform dominated the campaign in Govan. The *Govan Press* commented that 'most of the [election] literature dealt with the housing questions' including 'cottage homes at a reasonable rental [which]was the note struck by all the Labour men'. It went further:

Both Councillor Dollan and Wardley [the successful Labour candidate in the neighbouring Fairfield ward] have made many promises as to what they will do in regard to fair rent courts, rate reductions etc., and if we are not living rent free before long

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<sup>54</sup> *Forward*, 23 October 1920 ; MacDonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet*, p. 124; John Butt, 'Working-Class Housing In Glasgow, 1900-1939', in *Essays In Scottish Labour History*, ed. by Ian McDougall, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1978?), p. 144.

<sup>55</sup> *Forward*, 29 March 1913.

<sup>56</sup> *Govan Press*, 7 November 1913.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Harvie, 'Before The Breakthrough, 1888 - 1922', in *Forward!*, ed. by Donachie, Harvie and Wood; *Forward*, 12 July 1913;

<sup>58</sup> *Govan Press*, 7 November 1913.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

it will not be their fault.<sup>60</sup>

The ILP had a net gain of three councillors across Glasgow taking their total number on the Council up to 17 out of 113 councillors in total.<sup>61</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* reported 'Housing reform was the subject most prominently discussed ... and while there was no difference in opinion as to the necessity in the interests of public health of clearing away slum properties' the solutions 'gave rise to widely divergent policies'.<sup>62</sup> The *Scotsman* likewise reported something similar, 'the only topic that attracted any notice was the proposal put forward by the Socialist camp, whereby cottages at £8 were promised for the working classes, the cost of which would be met by an interest free loan from the Corporation tramway surplus'.<sup>63</sup>

The Govan Tenants Defence Association (one of a number of tenants' groups that sprang up in Glasgow actively engaged in pursuing improvements for tenement dwellers) had campaigned hard for Dollan.<sup>64</sup> He thanked Mrs Barbour, a key player in this organisation and in the later rent strikes, and who joined Dollan on the Council in 1920, whom he argued 'had been worth twenty ladies on the other side'.<sup>65</sup> The *Govan Press* despite its clear support for his opponent, acknowledged that Dollan 'was a formidable candidate ... and was a very fluent speaker and an agitator from his youth up'. Dollan seemed to confirm their 'agitator' assessment by declaring that 'he was going

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> *Scotsman*, 5 November 1913; *Forward*, 15 November 1913 and 14 November 1914; *Glasgow Herald*, 4 and 5 November 1914; Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 5 November 1913.

<sup>63</sup> *Scotsman*, 5 November 1913.

<sup>64</sup> Melling, *Rent Strikes*, p. 31.

<sup>65</sup> *Govan Press*, 7 November 1913; Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 187.

into the Council to represent one class only - the workers. The workers every time and all the time!<sup>66</sup>

Dollan was to represent Govan Central ward on the Glasgow Corporation for the next thirty-three years. Hutchison has said that Govan, was a 'Protestant heartland'.<sup>67</sup> It has also been suggested that because of his 'Catholic background' it is likely that Dollan required the Reverend James Barr, a local ILP member and minister to use his influence to ensure he was elected in the ward.<sup>68</sup> We also know that the dominant Govan shipyard employers practised sectarian employment policies against Catholics and that Govan hosted the largest Orange lodge in Scotland.<sup>69</sup> Despite Govan being a Protestant stronghold it had, nevertheless, as Annmarie Hughes has shown, substantial pockets of Catholic residents.<sup>70</sup> In 1913 at the time of Dollan's election it hosted an Irish club and two Catholic churches to cater for its substantial and expanding Irish population which necessitated the opening of a third Catholic church 1921.<sup>71</sup> The Irish community had also formed St Anthony's, a thriving junior football club.<sup>72</sup> The *Govan Press* reported that following his successful election, 'Mr Dollan and his Irish supporters had a great demonstration up Hamilton Street way'. Its correspondent added that Dollan's election victory was influenced by, 'the change of opinion of Roman Catholic voters [and] for the first time in my experience the Catholic vote has gone to the Socialist candidate'.<sup>73</sup> It seems clear then, that there was a substantial and vibrant Irish Catholic community in

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<sup>66</sup> *Govan Press*, 7 November 1913.

<sup>67</sup> Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 57.

<sup>68</sup> Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 142.

<sup>69</sup> Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 79; Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 134.

<sup>70</sup> Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 70.

<sup>71</sup> Patrick Donnelly, *Govan on the Clyde*, (Glasgow: Glasgow City Libraries, 1994), pp. 25-26; Melling, *Rent Strikes*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>72</sup> Donnelly, *Govan on the Clyde*, p. 65.

<sup>73</sup> *Govan Press*, 7 November 1913.



Govan, which Dollan (despite his estrangement from the Church) with his Irish name was able to tap into.<sup>74</sup>

### **Councillor Dollan**

The new Labour Group on Glasgow Corporation elected Dollan as its secretary which was testimony to his growing reputation for hard work and organisational ability.<sup>75</sup> The Chairman was James Stewart, the Townhead councillor who was actively promoting the 'cottage scheme'. But John Wheatley who had joined the Council the previous year was soon to make the cottage issue his own.

The council did not formally recognise political groupings until long after the Second World War and there was a culture that viewed civic duty above formal party politics and political affiliations. Labour upset this tradition by standing on a clear political platform. Their steady political progress after 1913 was seen as a threat by Liberals, Unionists and rate-payer groups and led to the formation of anti-socialist umbrella groupings to contest council elections in opposition to the ILP. Thus we see the Good Governance League and Moderates emerge in the 1920s, and the Progressives in the 1930s.<sup>76</sup> There was little tradition of disciplined block-voting or whipping in council meetings. When Dollan, for example, opposed foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey being granted the Freedom of the City, as he disagreed with the contention that Sir

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<sup>74</sup> Some historians argue that the notion of a unified 'Catholic vote' was exaggerated as many Catholics simply ignored the advice of the priest when it came to voting. Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 78; Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 152; Gerald Warner, *The Scottish Tory Party*, (London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 1988), p. 186.

<sup>75</sup> 'Labour' was a generic term which encompassed the ILP and others who supported and affiliated to the Labour Party. Contemporary newspapers often simply labelled them 'the Socialists', *Forward*, 15 November 1913.

<sup>76</sup> McLean, *Legend of Red Clydeside*, p. 192; Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 102; *Forward*, 15 November 1913.

Edward 'had rendered great service to the nation', he received just four votes despite the Labour group being much larger than this.<sup>77</sup> Again, when Wheatley moved against Lloyd George's nomination for the same award in 1917, he got only five votes.<sup>78</sup>

Labour's association with campaigns on rents and housing reform was undoubtedly a major factor in the parliamentary election victories in Glasgow in 1922 and their eventual takeover of the council in 1933. But not all Labour supporters, and that included Dollan, believed that the £8 cottage scheme was the panacea for resolving Glasgow's formidable housing problem. At one ILP meeting it was suggested that cottages 'would require seven times the present area of Glasgow to house all the people'.<sup>79</sup> We now see for the first time Dollan publicly exercising his independence from Wheatley and demonstrating his growing tendency towards pragmatic solutions, when he suggested that 'the cottage principle' with its interest free loan concept, 'should be extended to tenement housing as there were many people [who] preferred tenement housing'.<sup>80</sup> Wheatley rounded on Dollan, calling him, 'pretentious', and arguing that this would only serve to confuse the whole issue.<sup>81</sup> This also indicates the apparent lack of rigid control in the Labour group, especially when Wheatley called on colleagues to 'cease their futile theoretical disputations'.<sup>82</sup> Dollan proved to be right, for it was many more decades before Glasgow's housing problems were solved and it required more radical solutions than that offered by the building of cottages. John Wheatley was probably aware that the cottage scheme in itself, could never solve Glasgow's housing

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<sup>77</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 26 June 1914.

<sup>78</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 27 April 1917.

<sup>79</sup> *Forward*, 3 January 1914.

<sup>80</sup> *Forward*, 10 January and 4 July 1914.

<sup>81</sup> *Forward*, 11 July 1914.

<sup>82</sup> *Forward*, 10 January, 27 June, 4, 11, 23 July, 1 August 1914.

problem, but he nevertheless recognised, the electoral advantages of presenting this popular concept as a practical remedy. That Dollan stood up to his leader was an early demonstration that he was no mere *apparatchik*. His penchant for contesting authority was also in evidence on the council where he established a reputation for standing up to officers.<sup>83</sup> This was particularly so in his dealings with the 'tyrannical' and legendary Tramways General Manager, James Dalrymple, whom Dollan crossed swords with on many occasions and eventually persuaded to resign in 1926 following his refusal to reinstate dismissed Corporation workers who participated in the General Strike.<sup>84</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, Dalrymple's resignation was welcomed by the Labour group and helped establish Dollan's reputation for being able to get things done. We can see from these episodes that Dollan not only possessed an independent streak but was moving from mere presentational and gesture politics towards seeking practical remedies, reforms and gains for Glasgow's working class. As we have seen, housing was a key area in need of drastic reform and it was also an area of activity where the ILP could prove to be effective. Nor were they concerned with just the state of the housing stock itself, they were also keen to ensure that the working class were not exploited when it came to the issue of the rents they were charged.

### **Rent Strikes**

The ILP's opposition to rent increases caused by the shortage of accommodation as munitions workers flooded into Glasgow at the outbreak of the First World War

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<sup>83</sup> *Forward*, 3 and 17 January 1914; *The Baillie*, 1 September 1915; Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 235; Iain McLean, *Legend of Red Clydeside*, p. 219.

<sup>84</sup> GCM, 17 November 1926, p. 171.

cemented their connection with Glasgow's working class. It again brought to the fore the centrality of housing reform in the fortunes of Dollan and the ILP. Patrick and Agnes were at the heart of the campaign. Presentation was important if the campaign was to succeed in winning the hearts and minds of the citizens as well as opinion formers in government. As Maver suggests the issue was 'exploited to the full by able propagandists such as Patrick Dollan'.<sup>85</sup> Women both volunteered and were pushed forward to lead the campaign. As the ILP recognised 'housing is above all, a women's question they were the ones left at home struggling on a meagre dependent's allowance with the price increases brought upon them by the restrictions in supply brought on by the war whilst their men were at front'.<sup>86</sup> The campaign was turned into a 'patriotic war' against the landlords who were seen to be increasing their profits by taking advantage of a shortage of housing directly as a consequence of war production.<sup>87</sup> In that sense according to Dollan they were the 'huns at home'.<sup>88</sup> Thus, Mary Barbour, Agnes Dollan and Helen Crawford, all of whom were immersed in ILP politics, were at the forefront of the campaign of rent strikes.<sup>89</sup> They organised the tenement committees and raised awareness and class consciousness. In this they were assisted by the Glasgow Labour Party Housing Association which had 1,300 members in Govan alone.<sup>90</sup> Patrick Dollan estimated that 15,000 tenants joined the strike across Glasgow: 'everywhere in the windows of strikers is to be seen the notice: "Rent Strike Against Increases" '. He then

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<sup>85</sup> Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 193.

<sup>86</sup> *Forward*, 16 January 1915.

<sup>87</sup> *Forward*, 20 February 1915.

<sup>88</sup> Melling, *Rent Strikes* p. 62.

<sup>89</sup> Helen Corr, 'Introduction' in Joseph Melling, *Rent Strikes*, p. 9; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 111.

<sup>90</sup> *Forward*, 4 March 1916.

outlined the tenants' demands which fused the immediate with the aspirational ILP policy :

That the Government make illegal all rent increases of rent imposed since the war started; that the Town Council, in view of the scarcity of houses, proceed to erect houses at the very earliest date, using the Tramway Surplus (interest free) for this purpose.<sup>91</sup>

The ILP and Dollan were to use their network of political, co-operative, trade union and councillor contacts to bolster the campaign, and when the government saw the possibility of the women's actions being supported by sympathetic walk-outs by shipbuilding, engineering and munitions workers in Govan and Parkhead they were forced to concede to the campaign's primary demand of restoring rents to pre-war levels and pegging them there until at least the cessation of war.<sup>92</sup> This was seen as a major victory for the ILP who went from strength to strength in membership terms so that they went on to dominate the Glasgow and Scottish Labour Party scene for many years even after the Labour Party constitution was introduced which set up Divisional Labour Parties in 1918.<sup>93</sup>

Dollan's involvement in rent campaigns was to extend beyond the war and out-with Glasgow when he was recognised as a tenant's champion and appointed to the three man Commission of Inquiry in January 1925 to look into the rent strike in Clydebank. By this time Dollan was the leader of the Glasgow Labour group. He represented the

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<sup>91</sup> *Forward*, 30 October 1915.

<sup>92</sup> <<http://www.gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly196.htm>> [accessed on 20 April, 2012]; *Glasgow Herald*, 15th October 1915; Melling, *Rent Strikes* pp. 22-26.

<sup>93</sup> McKinlay, 'Doubtful wisdom', p. 129.

tenants in the Inquiry and James Steel represented the house-owners and factors. It was chaired by Lord Constable. But this was a different situation from that which occurred in Govan and other parts of Glasgow ten years earlier.<sup>94</sup> There was no shortage of houses on this occasion, the problem was an inability to pay rent increases caused by a lack of income through unemployment. The popular demand of the tenants was for a return to pre-war rent levels. The Inquiry which reported in June acknowledged the tenants difficulty, but stated that the local Sherriff had discretion on evictions 'during periods of economic distress' and that this had been 'sympathetically exercised'. It found, therefore, for the factors, but recommended, *inter alia*, the establishment of a consultation committee of tenants and owners be established in Clydebank to improve communications and tenant-factor relations. The Committee failed to reach consensus mainly because Dollan, by this time was more politically shrewd, saw the political advantage in issuing a 'Minority Report'. This more or less supported the tenants and argued for rent reductions and government subsidies, and 'that a serious attempt should be made to lower rents to the pre-war level'.<sup>95</sup> Dollan's 'Minority Report' served the purpose of highlighting the division of attitudes on tenants' interests between Lords, property owners and socialists which again served to bolster ILP support in the West of Scotland in the 1920s. The ILP kept up their relentless campaign on the housing front by continually exposing at every opportunity the need for slum clearance and their replacement with new and roomier houses preferably cottages with gardens at affordable cost. Eventually government was forced to act by introducing legislation. For Dollan and the ILP, the subsequent Housing Acts, particularly, building on the 1924 Wheatley Act, were the eventual outcome of many ILP campaigns, struggles and

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<sup>94</sup> Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, Broady Collection, Patrick Dollan, 'The Clyde Rent War!', ILP Pamphlet 1925; *Scotsman*, 29 January 1925; *The Times*, 24 February 1924.

<sup>95</sup> Dollan, 'Clyde Rent War'; *The Times*, 3 June 1925.

agitation, conducted over the previous decade on the fertile landscape of housing conditions in which Dollan played a prominent part alongside other 'Red Clydesiders'.

### **'Red Clydeside'**

The story of 'Red Clydeside' has been well documented and limitations of space precludes us from re-telling the full story here.<sup>96</sup> What we are interested in here, is whether Dollan's part in this period which ran broadly from 1915 to 1922, was progressive? Or, was it the period, as suggested by some key players like Willie Gallacher, John Maclean and Harry McShane, whose narratives influenced later historians, when we begin to see Dollan moving away from, his socialist roots towards an acceptance of and compromise with Capitalism.<sup>97</sup>

With trade union membership, political organisations and consciousness increasing rapidly, the year 1912 was a record year for strikes in Britain.<sup>98</sup> The war brought full-employment but also dramatic increases in food prices. At the same time the increasing need for military personnel and munitions workers was putting a great strain on the labour and housing market in Glasgow and the west of Scotland which became a centre for munitions manufacture. It is against this backdrop, that the issue of 'Red Clydeside' when the rent strikes and industrial disputes took place during and after the First World War, and when Clydeside shop stewards challenged not only their trade union leaders but also the elected government, can be viewed. Much has been written on these

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<sup>96</sup> For historiography of 'Red Clydeside', see: Terry Brotherstone, 'Does Red Clydeside Really Matter Any More? ', in *Militant Worker*, ed. by Duncan and McIvor, pp. 52-80; Gregor Gall, *The Political Economy of Scotland*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 122-27.

<sup>97</sup> Gallacher, *Revolt*, p. 24; *Last Memoirs*, p. 102; McShane and Smith, *Harry McShane*, pp. 34, 110 ; Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 98.

<sup>98</sup> Kenefick and McIvor, *Roots of Red Clydeside*, p. 14.

episodes from both a 'heroic struggle' and revisionist 'myth' of 'Red Clydeside' perspectives.<sup>99</sup> Indeed some including John Foster and Billy Kenefick have suggested that the frame of reference should be extended to include other examples of militant action in Scotland beyond Clydeside.<sup>100</sup>

Although Dollan was now no longer an industrial worker he was, nevertheless, at the heart of the events which occurred during the 'Red Clydeside' period. He was immersed in the rent strikes and was a prominent member of the significant network of activists and campaigners active at that time in Glasgow which overlapped across housing issues, trades unions, co-ops, the anti-war movement and the left-wing political parties.<sup>101</sup> In recognition that its readers were split on the war, *Forward* wanted to avoid any suggestion that it would undermine the war effort by declaring in March 1915, 'that we would not touch the subject of strikes during the war'.<sup>102</sup> One long-time contributor, however, questioned the role, purpose, authority, and legitimacy of the Clyde Workers Committee (CWC), and criticised the undermining of union - company agreements. He considered that the official movement had delivered agreements which 'a trade unionist of a generation ago would be proud of'.<sup>103</sup> Conversely, however, Dollan's sympathies

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<sup>99</sup> Gallacher, *Revolt*; Gallacher, *Last Memoirs*; David Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt* (London: Harrap, 1935); Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards Movement*; McShane and Smith, *Harry McShane*; McLean, *The Legend of Red Clydeside*.

<sup>100</sup> John Foster, 'A Proletarian Nation? Occupation and Class Since 1914' in *People and Society in Scotland, Volume III, 1914 -1990*, ed. by A. Dickson and J.H. Treble (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992), pp. 216 - 22; Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, pp. 163 - 80.

<sup>101</sup> Joan Smith, 'Taking the Leadership of the labour movement: the ILP in Glasgow, 1906-1914', in McKinlay and Morris eds, *The ILP on Clydeside*, pp.5, 76.

<sup>102</sup> *Forward*, 20 March 1915, 5 February 1916.

<sup>103</sup> *Forward*, 8 April 1916; Trade union officials in the first World War have often been 'denigrated' for 'betraying the interests of the more radical "rank and file" '. But this view fails to take account of the agreements reached and gains made for organised workers during the war. McIvor, *A History of Work In Britain*, p. 22.



throughout the Red Clydeside period appeared to unambiguously rest with the shop stewards. Following the arrest of a number of shop stewards for breaching the 1914 Defence of The Realm Act (DORA). Dollan became a member of the appeal fund committee.<sup>104</sup> In a 1915 article supportive of the shop stewards he railed against 'profiteering' Clyde employers saying: 'it is undeniable that employers have been exploiting the war, and no class knows that better than the working class'.<sup>105</sup> During the 1919 'forty-hour' dispute which culminated in the George Square 'riot', he was a member of the strike committee and edited its daily *Strike Bulletin*, which dramatically departed from the anti-shop steward tone of his *Forward* colleague, by stating:

The trade union officials ... are altogether out of touch with trade union emotions, and the problem is, that in no great length of time trade organisation will be re organised from top to bottom, and the nominal power, as well as the real power, will pass into the hands of the shop stewards.<sup>106</sup>

The attitude towards war was changing and the Russian revolution in 1917 was to bring hope not only of an end to the war itself, but also proof of the apparent inevitability of the forward march of socialism. It was welcomed by most labour and trade union leaders some of whom celebrated at a conference in May 1917 in Leeds and Glasgow.<sup>107</sup> Dollan fervently supported the Bolshevik revolution and criticised those who were doing little to defend them:

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<sup>104</sup> *Forward*, 1 April 1916.

<sup>105</sup> *Forward*, 26 June 1915.

<sup>106</sup> Glasgow, Mitchell Library, *Carmichael Collection*, Box TD1617/4, *Strike Bulletin* No. 5, 3 February 1919; Peter Slowe, *Manny Shinwell*, (London: Pluto Press, 1993), p. 7; Brown, *Maxton*, p. 100; Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, pp. 93-95.

<sup>107</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 14 May 1917.

There is a general discontent in Socialist and Labour circles at what seems to be the apathy ... in this country towards our Bolshevik comrades. Their methods may not be genteel, but they get there and their aim is our aim. They are out to smash capitalism and imperialism, so are we, and we should not stand still while they are being attacked.<sup>108</sup>

His display of solidarity towards the Bolsheviks was to change over time, however, as he began to question their totalitarian methods; but at this stage it sat comfortably with his distaste for Capitalism and his opposition to imperialistic aggression.

### **Conscientious Objector**

Dollan, like most ILP members became a ferocious opponent of the First World War. He saw it as an imperialist war and a distraction from the class war.<sup>109</sup> His views were not shared, however, by many of his fellow citizens. In Glasgow, 'over two hundred thousand men' out of a total population of around one million were to serve in the armed forces, twenty-thousand of whom were to fall in battle.<sup>110</sup> One example of the fervour of the local population in support of the war was seen when the council's Tramways department raised eleven hundred volunteers overnight thus establishing a record for raising 'a battalion in a single night'.<sup>111</sup> George Barnes, a Glasgow ILP MP was to write in *Forward* a few days after the hostilities began saying, 'papers are selling like hotcakes and the man in the street is gloating over a reported slaughter of twenty

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<sup>108</sup> Quoted in Gallacher, *Revolt*, p.176; Gallacher, *Last Memoirs* p.102.

<sup>109</sup> *Forward*, 15 August 1914; Evidence of the ILP's opposition to the war can be seen in, William Kenefick, 'War Resisters and Anti-Conscription in Scotland: an ILP Perspective', in *Scotland and The Great War* ed. by Catriona M. M. Macdonald and E. W. McFarland (Edinburgh, John Donald, 2014), pp. 59-80; Trevor Royle, *Flowers of the Forest* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007), p. 26.

<sup>110</sup> E. W. McFarland, 'A Coronach in Stone', in Macdonald and McFarland eds, *Scotland and the Great War*, p. 6; Kenefick, 'War Resisters', p. 61; *The Times*, 2 June 1924.

<sup>111</sup> *The Baillie*, 1 September 1915.

thousand Germans in Alsace- Lorraine'.<sup>112</sup> Against this background, whilst the ILP adopted an anti-war stance, the trade unions and the Labour Party expressed the view that whilst the war was not of Britain's making once we were in it we were duty bound to support the troops.<sup>113</sup>

Some historians have confused Dollan's position on the war. Wood says that only two ILP councillors out of nineteen opposed the declaration of war and they were 'John Wheatley and John S. Taylor'. Hutchison supports this view when he says: only two of the 17 ILP Councillors' opposed the war.<sup>114</sup> When added to Gallacher's assertions, we are thus left with the erroneous impression that Dollan did not oppose the war from its beginning. This requires some deliberation. The Wood and Hutchison view may have been based on a letter to Wheatley and Taylor from Govan ILP, 'expressing the opinion that they were the only two Councillors who have acted in accordance with the principles of the ILP and Socialism'.<sup>115</sup> Or it could be based on Samuel Cooper's 1973 thesis which said 'only Wheatley and John S. Taylor opposed the war from the start'.<sup>116</sup> Cooper tells us that this opinion was based on an interview with Harry Mc Shane, who was, as we saw in the introduction, perhaps not exactly an objective witness.

Alternatively, it could be based on Willie Gallacher's version of events which says that from the outbreak of hostilities Dollan 'was at first a 'patriot' who 'did his bit' in the columns of the *Daily Citizen* until conscription was introduced'.<sup>117</sup> Gallacher's version of

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<sup>112</sup> *Forward*, 15 November 1914.

<sup>113</sup> *Forward*, 5 September 1914.

<sup>114</sup> Wood, *Wheatley*, p. 49; Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 57.

<sup>115</sup> *Forward*, 26 September 1914.

<sup>116</sup> Samuel Cooper, 'John Wheatley: A Study In Labour History' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1973), p. 71.

<sup>117</sup> Gallacher, *Revolt*, p. 24; *The Citizen* was a Labour-supporting newspaper. It went out of business in 1917 because, like the *Daily Herald*, it could not keep up with rivals' coverage of war events. See Ray-

events are difficult to justify, however, when we consider that Dollan was arrested alongside Gallacher and Arthur McManus for speaking at an anti-conscription rally in December 1915.<sup>118</sup>

In turning to the evidence, it seems clear that Dollan was both in principle and in practice, decidedly against the war from the start. He joined his wife Agnes who became an active peace campaigner and with whom he formed 'part of a small nucleus of anti-war protestors in Glasgow'.<sup>119</sup> Dollan spoke at the hurriedly organised peace demonstration at Glasgow Green a few days after the declaration of war together with Wheatley, and according to *Forward* 'condemned the war as being the outcome of Capitalism, Militarism, and Secret Diplomacy'. Dollan argued that 'Germany had the most advanced people in the world, from a Socialist point of view; they were a hundred years ahead of this country in Municipal administration'. He also questioned if 'the autocracy of the Kaiser [was] any worse than that of that of Sir E. Grey who had pledged this country to France in the event of war, without the knowledge of the electors'.<sup>120</sup> Kirkwood's memoirs also support the contention that Dollan was consistently against the war.<sup>121</sup> That the Labour group members were split on the war is clear and is evidenced by the fact that a number of them including ILP councillor Turner enlisted for war service very early on.<sup>122</sup> *Forward* commented in 1915:

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mond Postgate, *The Life of George Lansbury* (London: Longmans, 1951), p. 152; *Forward*, 1 September 1917.

<sup>118</sup> Nan Milton, *John Maclean*, (London: Pluto Press, 1973), p. 106, see James Maxton's arrest warrant which also names Dollan, <<http://www.gdl.cdjr.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly222.htm>> [accessed 20 October 2010].

<sup>119</sup> Corr, 'Agnes Dollan', p. 89; Maver, DNB.

<sup>120</sup> *Forward*, 15 August 1914.

<sup>121</sup> Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt*, p. 169.

<sup>122</sup> Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 166.

Although opposed to war in any form, the Labour Councillors realised for the time being that it was futile to protest against war, and that they could best serve the interests of the workers by directing their attention towards a national food supply to be controlled locally.<sup>123</sup>

Put simply, whilst most ILP leading figures including Dollan, were probably opposed to the war in principle, tactically they were keen for electoral reasons, to keep their heads down, unlike John Maclean and Willie Gallacher who criticised this stance as opportunistic.<sup>124</sup>

We begin then to see a gap emerging here between Dollan, who as secretary of the Labour group endorsed these tactics and the more ideological and perhaps more intransigent Maclean and Gallacher. The public mood was changing, however, and when conscription was introduced in March 1916 Dollan was suspended from a council meeting for protesting alongside a number of others including Wheatley.<sup>125</sup> An indication of how the authorities viewed the effectiveness of Dollan's anti-war activity came the following year when, like some of the militant CWC leaders earlier, and despite being officially recorded as a 'conscientious objector' he was expelled from the city by a Military Tribunal and ordered 'to take up work of national importance within seven days and this was to be done outside a radius of 50 miles of Glasgow'.<sup>126</sup> Dollan challenged this order which simply made matters worse for him as the courts and Military believed 'he [had] caused a great deal of trouble' and eventually sentenced him to serve hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs.<sup>127</sup> The Glasgow Labour movement was up in arms. Thousands of postcards were sent to the Prime Minister from the Govan area in

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<sup>123</sup> *Forward*, 15 August 1915.

<sup>124</sup> Gallacher, *Revolt*, p. 24; John Broom, *John Maclean* (Midlothian: MacDonald, 1973), p. 52.

<sup>125</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 1 January 1916.

<sup>126</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 16, 17 May 1917.

<sup>127</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 May, 4, 6 June 1917; *Forward*, 3 November 1917.

protest, and the Glasgow Trades Council hurriedly organised a protest rally on his behalf at which an impressive array of supporters including Shinwell, Gallacher, Helen Crawford and Willie Regan, were billed to speak even though as a consequence some of them thereafter would be charged with breaching by-laws.<sup>128</sup> Speaking at an earlier event in celebration of the Russian Revolution, Agnes Dollan was to say that it was a disgrace that Lloyd George was to receive the freedom of the city, 'when they would not grant freedom to her husband'.<sup>129</sup> Dollan eventually found himself as part of the Home Office Scheme for conscientious objectors at Wakefield Prison. As *Forward* reported, 'until the war is over...the local Capitalists are relieved of his presence'.<sup>130</sup>

The treatment handed out to Dollan was harsh, particularly when we consider that by 1917 the government appeared, perhaps for fear of creating 'martyrs' to be softening their stance on anti-war trade union activists. The Clyde deportees had been allowed to return to an 'enthusiastic reception' in Glasgow the previous June.<sup>131</sup> In May 1917, a group of militants, including former CWC member Arthur McManus, arrested in connection with an engineering strike, had their charges withdrawn by the Attorney General provided they gave an undertaking to abide by union agreements in future.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, Winston Churchill, the Minister of Munitions not only met a deputation representing the Clyde deportees in August 1917 but also guaranteed them employment and an end to victimisation.<sup>133</sup> Despite this backdrop of a softening government stance, the Secretary for Scotland stated that he thought the Tribunal ruling and conditions on

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<sup>128</sup> *Forward*, 1, 8, 14 and 21 September 1917; *Govan Press*, 7 September 1917.

<sup>129</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 2 June 1917.

<sup>130</sup> *Forward*, 8 September 1917.

<sup>131</sup> *Forward*, 30 June 1917.

<sup>132</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 24 May 1917; Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards Movement*, p. 206.

<sup>133</sup> *Forward*, 18 August 1917.

Dollan 'were of an eminently reasonable nature'.<sup>134</sup> Thus, Dollan was to play little part within the labour movement until the end of the war. If his exile from Glasgow and separation from his wife and son was a concern to him it was compounded when he learned that Agnes had also been imprisoned in Glasgow for obstructing the war effort.<sup>135</sup> One can see, therefore, that contrary to Gallacher's retrospective assessment, Dollan *was* at the forefront of the anti-war movement in Glasgow from the outset, fighting for peace and socialism alongside Gallacher, Maxton, Shinwell and Maclean. The unity of the wider labour movement was beginning to fracture, however, as tactical differences emerged and these were to become more apparent following the formation of the CPGB in 1920.

### **Peace and Democratic Socialism**

The ILP and Labour Group in Glasgow succeeded in avoiding alienating their supporters during the war and paradoxically they even enhanced their position by targeting issues that were popular.<sup>136</sup> It was clear that Dollan used his journalistic skills to ensure that many items raised in the Council Chamber would find resonance with the public. They argued against not just increases in rents but also in food prices in a campaign against the 'exploitation of the people's food supply'. Dollan also received unanimous Council support when he called for a minimum pension of £1 per week for widows and dependent mothers of those killed in service and a similar pension for those

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<sup>134</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 18 July 1917.

<sup>135</sup> Maver, DNB; Corr, 'Agnes Dollan', p. 90.

<sup>136</sup> Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, pp. 145- 46.

maimed.<sup>137</sup> He argued that the coal supply be municipalised and for eviction cases to be dealt with in a fairer manner and raised concerns on coal and rent increases.<sup>138</sup>

Armistice brought hope and expectation to the socialist movement in Britain. There appeared a changed mood in the country that indicated an appetite for social reform and in particular the need to provide 'homes fit for heroes'. Thus, the ILP in Glasgow had a 'good war' for it tripled its membership and increased its profile.<sup>139</sup> In the 1918 general election, Labour won in Edinburgh Central and Govan where Dollan had lost out 'in the final vote' to Neil Maclean for the ILP parliamentary nomination.<sup>140</sup> But the hoped for breakthrough did not materialise, Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden both lost their seats and Wheatley lost out narrowly in Shettleston by 74 votes; this according to Dollan was the 'one disappointment in Scotland'.<sup>141</sup> Nationally the Labour Party had polled two million more votes than in 1910, albeit with an increased number of candidates, and a much expanded electorate due to electoral reform. That said, the outcome of the election was unexpectedly poor for Labour, particularly in Glasgow where, despite the labour movement's radical challenges to the coalition, the Unionists won ten out of fifteen seats causing one Tory to wryly comment 'Clydeside had never looked less Red.'<sup>142</sup>

Many socialist friends of Patrick and Agnes Dollan such as Helen Crawford, Willie Gallacher, Harry McShane and Arthur McManus decided to join the Communist Party

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<sup>137</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 23 October 1914.

<sup>138</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 27 November, 25 December 1914, 22 January, 12 February 1915

<sup>139</sup> Harvie, 'Before the Breakthrough', p. 25; Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, p. 154.

<sup>140</sup> *Forward*, 1 September 1917.

<sup>141</sup> *Labour Leader*, 2 January 1919, quoted in Cooper, Thesis, p. 117.

<sup>142</sup> Warner, *The Scottish Tory Party*, p. 183.



of Great Britain (CP) following its formation in 1920. Despite their support for the Russian Revolution, the Dollans were never attracted to the CPGB. Patrick Dollan was to become an inveterate opponent of CPGB tactics, policy and strategy throughout his life, which created friction with erstwhile colleagues and led him to be viewed as a negative, almost hate figure in the eyes of some communists. This antipathy expressed by Gallacher and McShane both founding members of the Communist Party towards Dollan, for example, would appear to have unfairly influenced his legacy.<sup>143</sup>

The problem for British Communism which made it unattractive to democratic socialists like Dollan, was that it rejected the notion of parliamentary democracy whilst appearing subservient to dictates from the Moscow-led Third International. This body firmly believed that socialism in Britain could only come about through bloodshed, the dictatorship of the proletariat and following 'a heavy civil war'.<sup>144</sup> The ILP, after much contemplation, eventually came out against affiliating to the Third International, 'in view of the fact that the ILP has always repudiated the use of armed force as a means of capturing political power'.<sup>145</sup> The repeated applications for CPGB affiliation to the Labour Party between 1920 and 1925 although decisively rejected, had the capacity, nevertheless, (as many CP members ignored such declarations and continued their Labour activities) to create internal tensions within the ILP and the Labour Party. Several Labour organisations in Scotland were warned about their links with communists, whilst Greenock Labour Party was shut down in 1924 because it persisted in selecting a Communist as their Labour candidate.<sup>146</sup> There were also lively scenes at the ILP Scottish conference in 1924, when Dollan had to explain on behalf of the

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<sup>143</sup> Gallacher, *Last Memoirs*, p. 102; McShane and Smith, *Harry McShane*, p. 110.

<sup>144</sup> *The Times*, 30 July 1920, 21 January, 30 March 1921, 19 April, 29 June 1922.

<sup>145</sup> *The Times*, 29 June 1922.

<sup>146</sup> Wood, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 41.

Executive why a boisterous critic of the ILP's anti-Communist position was ejected from the hall.<sup>147</sup> Whilst Dollan was supportive of the leadership and thus a consistent opponent of CP involvement and interference in Labour affairs, the same could not be said of James Maxton. Maxton, despite an earlier stance of implacable opposition to Communist tactics dramatically altered his position at the 1925 Scottish ILP conference by supporting Communist affiliation to Labour 'on the same terms as other affiliated bodies'.<sup>148</sup> As Gordon Brown has suggested, it was left to Dollan to speak for the majority when he pointed out to Maxton that, 'the principles of the two parties could not be reconciled. The effect of Communism had been to disrupt the working class movement'.<sup>149</sup> From this it appears that Dollan was in tune with the mood of the bulk of ILP members who rejected the communists as opponents in the battle for working-class support. But this was not the only area of disagreement that Dollan was to have with Maxton as clear dividing lines were emerging in their political outlooks.

### **Beginnings of Division**

Maxton and Dollan had started to move apart politically as the implications of Labour forming a government became clear. Government, and particularly minority government necessitated compromise and whilst this was something Dollan was happy to embrace, Maxton and his group were less willing to do so. It was clear that Dollan, like most of the Scottish ILP members at the time, was a firm supporter of Ramsay MacDonald. 'He did not see a man in the ranks of the Labour Party who was more competent to lead the movement than Ramsay MacDonald.'<sup>150</sup> Dollan's default position

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<sup>147</sup> *The Times*, 7 January 1924.

<sup>148</sup> Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, p. 196; See Introduction pp.10,15-16.

<sup>149</sup> Brown, *Maxton*, p.171; *The Times*, 12 January 1925.

<sup>150</sup> *The Times*, 2 March 1925.

was as a consistent and loyal supporter of the Labour party leadership. This put him at odds with Maxton who was a constant questioner and critic of the leader. It was even said that he was reluctant to support MacDonald as leader in 1922, despite the Clydeside MP's' caucus agreeing to do so.<sup>151</sup> In one riposte to Dollan he was to argue, 'it is a very bad thing if the Labour movement got into the frame of mind that there was only one person who could lead them at any time and he should not be the subject of criticism'. He also considered that, 'it was not a good thing to attempt to prevent friction inside the Labour Movement'.<sup>152</sup> So the styles and outlooks of the two appeared different, a loyal supporter on the one hand, and a persistent critic on the other. Dollan was no sycophant, however, for as we shall see, he was not opposed to a little Maxton-like 'theatre and drama' and the odd rumpus in the chamber to make a point and gain publicity. Nor was Dollan was adverse to firing a shot across the bows of parliamentarians when required as he demonstrated at the ILP conference in 1922, when he warned them not to take part in any coalition.<sup>153</sup> However, his fundamental support for the leader was never in question. By the mid-1920s the previous friendly relationship that existed between Dollan and Maxton was seriously strained.

Before then, however, there was to be a substantive and transformational breakthrough for Labour in Glasgow. Firstly, they added many more councillors to their number in the 'general election for Glasgow Town Council' in 1920, when as a result of boundary changes all the ward seats were up for election.<sup>154</sup> Contrary to some historians accounts, Dollan was not the key organiser of the municipal campaign, this fell to the trio of Willie Regan ( ILP Organiser), councillor Willie Shaw (secretary of the Trades

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<sup>151</sup> Wood, *Wheatley*, p. 92.

<sup>152</sup> *The Times*, 2 March 1925.

<sup>153</sup> *The Times*, 19 April 1922.

<sup>154</sup> *Scotsman*, 27 October 1920.

Council) and councillor Denny.<sup>155</sup> Dollan was at the heart of the campaigns as a propagandist, however, and he set out Labour's programme in a series of articles and leaflets, a task he also conducted at the 1922 municipal and parliamentary elections.<sup>156</sup> Once again Dollan placed housing at the centre of the campaign. He hit out at the ruling clique whom he said had neglected Glaswegians by building 'only thirty-three houses per year on average over the past few years' and by their 'wilful neglect' had 'caused much ill health and disease'.<sup>157</sup> What was needed now according to Dollan was 'one-hundred thousand houses in the west of Scotland'.<sup>158</sup> He also highlighted the effects that unemployment was having in the city and called for the government to take on relief as 'this was a burden the ratepayers could not undertake'.<sup>159</sup> Labour was to win a record 44 out of 113 seats at the 1920 municipal elections but fell somewhat short of overall control. They were not to win outright control of Glasgow Council until 1933 and nor was it not a consistent upwards trajectory.<sup>160</sup> In 1922, for example, the year when for most people Glasgow turned 'red' with Labour winning ten out of fifteen of the city's parliamentary seats, it held four less seats on the council than in 1920, having suffered losses in 1921.<sup>161</sup> These electoral figures tend to undermine the notion that Glasgow was a consistent hotbed of socialism throughout the inter-war years and that Dollan, through the manipulative use of a political 'machine' in some way was to blame for holding back

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<sup>155</sup> McLean, *Legend of Red Clydeside*, p. 161; Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, p. 111; *Forward*, 2 November 1920.

<sup>156</sup> Glasgow, Mitchell Library, ILP Collection, 'Glasgow Federation Election Committee Minute Book 1918-1933'; *Forward*, 23, 30 October, 6, 13 November 1920; Wood, *Wheatley* p. 90.

<sup>157</sup> *Forward*, 30 October 1920.

<sup>158</sup> *Forward*, 23 October 1920.

<sup>159</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 26 September 1921.

<sup>160</sup> It has been suggested that even when they gained control of the council in 1933 this was only made possible through the intervention of Scottish Protestant League candidates taking votes from the Moderates. Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, pp. 194-98.

<sup>161</sup> *Forward*, 18, November 1922.

the tide of solid working-class demands for bold socialist policies. The fact is that municipal Glasgow was still in the control of Liberals and Unionists through their Moderate proxy until 1933, and the solid Labour parliamentary gains of 1922 were to be eroded at future inter-war elections showing that Labour was far from a hegemony in Glasgow. Dollan, rather than holding back the working class, was clearly well-ahead of his class in consciousness and political development. Unlike Gallacher, McShane and increasingly Maxton, Dollan's great political attribute was in recognising this fact and developing a political strategy that took account of it.

To win electoral support Labour believed that it needed to establish a firm dividing line between itself and unpopular revolutionary socialism. The 1922 General Election manifesto was reformist, and made it clear that Labour 'was for neither Bolshevism or Communism but for common sense'. It also argued that its programme represented the 'best bulwark against violent upheaval and class wars'. It wanted to bring about 'a more equitable distribution of the nation's wealth by constitutional means'.<sup>162</sup> Whilst it has been said that Wheatley drew up a separate and parochial ILP manifesto for Glasgow in 1922, the national campaign still had a critical influence: it seems clear that the Glasgow population in voting for Labour were *not* voting for revolution.<sup>163</sup> This is borne out when looking at the council election in the same year for whilst Dollan was again re-elected in his Govan ward which he had turned into a safe Labour seat with a majority of 2,514, John Maclean standing as a communist in neighbouring Kinning Park, was defeated in a two-way fight with the Moderates.<sup>164</sup> Unlike Maclean, who was calling for the overthrow of capitalism, Dollan during these elections in 1922, was

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<sup>162</sup> F.W.S. Craig, *British General Election Manifestos, 1900- 1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 38.

<sup>163</sup> Wood, *Wheatley*, p. 90; Cooper, 'Thesis', pp. 159 - 61.

<sup>164</sup> GCM, 13 November 1922, pp. 3 - 15.

demanding ten thousand new houses a year together with rent reforms. The ILP's popularity was further boosted by a court case on rents pursued by ILP activists on the eve of the 1922 general election which bolstered the notion within Glasgow's working class that the ILP stood with them for solid reform rather than simply espousing revolutionary slogans. By this time, Glasgow's Irish population of around fifteen to twenty per cent mostly living in the slums, (but who were unlikely to vote in large numbers for 'Godless communism') were firmly in the Labour camp following the partition of Ireland.<sup>165</sup> We can see therefore, that although the ILP was gaining ground slowly on the municipal front, the idea that Glasgow had turned 'red' in 1922 seemed an exaggeration.

It was from 1922 on, with Wheatley, Maxton, Buchanan, Kirkwood and Shinwell elected to Parliament, that Dollan was to play a seminal role in Glasgow's council group for the next twenty-four years whether as leader or back-bencher. He initiated no dramatic switch in Labour style or policy, preferring to continue with Wheatley-style policies on housing, and campaigns against unemployment, poverty and deprivation, combined with the occasional anti-establishment gesture to underline the class-based nature of society. An early example of the latter, can be seen in December 1922, when he opposed the granting of the Freedom of the City to the Duke of York as unemployment was high 'it would be rendered undesirable to have such a function at the present time'.<sup>166</sup> He displayed his energy and awareness of the value of propaganda by supplying the MP's with fifteen or so draft questions a week he wished raised in the House of Commons.<sup>167</sup> Dollan always saw the need for the ILP to be inter-connected at

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<sup>165</sup> Knox, *Maxton*, p. 36.

<sup>166</sup> *The Times*, 6 December 1922.

<sup>167</sup> Brown, *Maxton*, p. 126.

all levels of activity, thus ensuring one consistent stream of propaganda. He was now a member of the ILP's executive National Advisory Committee (NAC), which now provided him with a national as well as a local standing. His actions were never totally pragmatic and it was no surprise that he spoke out in support of the Clydeside parliamentarians at an ILP meeting in Glasgow in July 1923, over their suspension from the House of Commons for criticising the "murderous" policy of the Government in the field of child welfare and social reform.<sup>168</sup> Such demonstrations had been seen a legitimate political tactic and a regular occurrence in the City Chambers. In 1921 for example in a protest over unemployment, the Labour group caused 'pandemonium' in Glasgow City Chambers when the mace was damaged as it was 'deliberately flung to the floor'.<sup>169</sup> Such demonstrations continued in Glasgow under Dollan's leadership and in March 1925 the proceedings of the Council were suspended due to 'Labour disorder' over the issue of 'free speech' when the Council refused permission for a political meeting to be held in Govan on a Sunday.<sup>170</sup> In September of the same year the Council's meeting was disrupted for 'the third time within a month' over the Council's refusal to allow the use of public halls for a 'left-wing' political meeting.<sup>171</sup> So the 'wild men of the Clyde' at Westminster, were to a large extent, simply replicating tactics learned in the City Chambers and endorsed and mimicked by Dollan and the ILP back in Glasgow. But Dollan was to change his position on this later when such tactics were used against a minority Labour government.<sup>172</sup> According to Dollan, gesture politics were fine in opposition but had no place once Labour were in office as then they had to

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<sup>168</sup> *The Times*, 9 July 1923; Knox, *Maxton*, p. 43; McAllister, *Maxton*, p. 183; John Scanlon, *Decline and Fall Of The Labour Party*, (London: Peter Davies, 1932?), p. 52.

<sup>169</sup> *The Times*, 22 February 1922.

<sup>170</sup> *The Times*, 20 March 1925.

<sup>171</sup> *The Times*, 11 September 1925.

<sup>172</sup> *Forward*, 3 May 1930.

demonstrate their ability, maturity, and earnestness in leading and representing the people.

Paradoxically, it was their success in forming the first Labour government in 1923 that indirectly brought about the rupture in the ILP that would eventually lead to its disaffiliation and split from the mainstream Labour Party and the stalling of the ILP momentum in Scotland. During this split Dollan would emerge as the most prominent player on the side of the Labour leadership. The outcome of the election brought into play divisions between those ILP members who felt that minority government was an opportunity to demonstrate that Labour was fit to govern and others, like Maxton and Kirkwood, who were against taking the reins of minority government as it would 'mean being in office but not in power'.<sup>173</sup> Dollan believed that a minority Labour government would 'be able to do more for the workers and the nation than Labour in opposition'.<sup>174</sup> At the 1924 ILP conference following the formation of the government it was Dollan who was to move a resolution at York congratulating MacDonald and 'assuring the government of loyalty and goodwill'.<sup>175</sup>

With the defeat of the Labour Government in 1924, the splits in the ILP were pushed into the background, but this was not to last long. Whilst Maxton and Wheatley, together with their small rump of parliamentary friends, were learning to play the parliamentary game and engaged in a struggle to wrest control of the ILP from MacDonald, Snowden and their friends, so also was Dollan evolving into a formidable foe. Maxton and his group moved increasingly to the left whilst Dollan, given that the

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<sup>173</sup> *The Times*, 1 January 1924; Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 237; R. E. Dowse, *Left In The Centre, The Independent Labour Party 1893-1940*, (London: Longmans, 1966), pp. 101-06.

<sup>174</sup> *The Times*, 29 December 1923.

<sup>175</sup> *The Times*, 22 April 1924.



political centre of gravity was shifting, seemed to move to the right. This was shaping up to be a battle for control not just of the ILP but of the PLP itself. Dollan by this time was working as a correspondent for the *Daily Herald*, and in 1923 he had been elected to the ILP's executive, the NAC. His wife Agnes, who had been elected to the council in 1921, was now on the National Executive Committee (NEC), of the Labour Party. They were to work as a team over the coming years sharing information, contacts, and tactics across these respective bodies in an attempt to keep the Maxton group and communists at bay. One symbol of their teamwork was their appointment as delegates to attend the second congress of the Labour and Socialist International at Marseilles in August 1925.<sup>176</sup> An indication of Patrick Dollan's growing reputation, and indicative of his increasing ability to comment on issues outside of local government, was seen when he was called upon to speak on behalf of the British delegation in opposition to the terms of the Versailles Treaty and the Dawes plan which he argued set the working class of one country against the working class in another.<sup>177</sup>

### **Local or National Stage ?**

Given that Dollan reached prominence within the ILP nationally and even internationally, it seems logical to question why he himself was not in Parliament at this time. He suggested in various personal recollections that he had no inclination to seek a parliamentary career: 'I made up my mind I would devote myself to civic government ... Parliament has never attracted me.'<sup>178</sup> He further stated: 'Many attempts were made to persuade me to enter Parliament but I declined all the invitations except one for Ayr

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<sup>176</sup> *The Times*, 18 August 1925.

<sup>177</sup> *The Times*, 27 August 1925.

<sup>178</sup> *Evening News*, 19 November 1937, in Pat Woods, 'A Miscellany'.

Burghs...well knowing that I would not be successful.<sup>179</sup> Historians have accepted Dollan's version of events at face value. They present him as the master local politician, sacrificing the national stage of Westminster to unselfishly serve the residents of Glasgow. On many levels this outlook seems untenable for such a prominent and clearly ambitious political activist. Yet, Maver, states that, apart from Ayr Burghs, he 'refused entreaties to embark on a parliamentary career'.<sup>180</sup> Corr and Knox say something similar: 'except for one unsuccessful attempt to enter the Commons in 1925, he never strove to follow a parliamentary career'.<sup>181</sup> Smyth says Dollan's 'decision to remain in local politics ... appears to have been a deliberate one'.<sup>182</sup> The premise on which these judgements are based is predicated on the assumption that he could walk into a safe parliamentary seat. That, however, was never going to be the case, as there was always going to be competition from ambitious rivals as indeed there was in Govan when he was defeated for the nomination by Neil Maclean.<sup>183</sup> Nor, as a journalist, was he able to seek the support of an accommodating trade union ( the National Union of Journalists were not affiliated to Labour), the miners, like other unions, preferred to support and select those like George Buchanan and David Kirkwood who were working at the trade. Despite these considerations, it is clear that Dollan did show a keen interest in finding a seat, at least up until 1925, as indeed did Agnes who fought Dumfriesshire in 1924.<sup>184</sup> He unsuccessfully sought the Labour nomination for Govan and considered standing in Glasgow Central in 1922 but moved aside when Rosslyn Mitchell - a highly respected

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<sup>179</sup> Dollan, 'Autobiography', p. 3.

<sup>180</sup> Maver, DNB.

<sup>181</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 94.

<sup>182</sup> Smyth, *Labour In Glasgow*, p 114; Dowse, *Left In The Centre*, p. 40.

<sup>183</sup> *Forward*, 1 September 1917.

<sup>184</sup> *Scotsman*, 31 October 1924.

Labour councillor and lawyer - also sought selection.<sup>185</sup> Dollan appeared extremely keen to fight the Kelvingrove by-election in 1924 but apparently withdrew when it became obvious that the Boilermakers nominee was the clear Labour rank-and-file choice.<sup>186</sup> He did stand in Ayr at a by-election in 1925 and the portents in Ayr appeared reasonably good. This was a Unionist seat when a Tory government was presiding over high unemployment and imposing taxes on food. At the general election eight months earlier Labour's vote had increased to a credible 38 per cent.<sup>187</sup> The by-election outcome, however, was disappointing for Dollan as he presided over a decline in the Labour vote. This must have been a chastening experience for Dollan, who was used to winning his electoral contests. The fear of further failure, together with the apparent rejection of his overtures in Govan, Glasgow Central and Kelvingrove may have been enough to convince Dollan that his future lay in his secure political berth in Govan and at Glasgow Corporation.

### **Towards Political Maturity**

By 1922, the thirty-seven year old Dollan had effectively become a full-time politician. His post at the *Daily Herald* was almost an extension of his political activities. He had experienced rent strikes, housing campaigns and industrial strikes. He had eschewed his religion because the Church seemed oblivious to the desperate plight of the poor and he railed against mine-owners and landowners in his *Forward* articles for exploiting the miners who were forced to live in atrocious housing conditions. He was appalled at the housing conditions and poverty he witnessed in Glasgow and sought to remedy these by becoming actively involved in the ILP as a councillor and organiser

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<sup>185</sup> *The Times*, 24 October 1922.

<sup>186</sup> *The Times*, 3 May 1924.

<sup>187</sup> *Scotsman*, 31 October 1924.

in trying to win power in the City Chambers to bring about meaningful reforms that would help Glasgow's working class.

Dollan's upbringing in a strong working-class community combined with his working-class consciousness provided him with a passionate belief that capitalism had failed and required to be replaced with socialism which would usher in a fairer and more equitable society. But he was to find that political life was more complicated than this because whilst he firmly believed that the ILP was the most suitable vehicle for delivering socialism, other socialists had different ideas and formed other parties including the CPGB. Dollan was never a Marxist, nor simply a theoretical socialist - if there was an opportunity to ameliorate the plight of the workers by enacting reforms, no matter how marginal, he would grasp at it. This practical outlook, combined with his natural inclination to support Labour leaders and parliamentary democracy, naturally set him apart from his erstwhile friends who believed that such notions were fanciful. But Dollan was to discover that it was not just communists who were to adopt such a stance. As we will see, he was soon to be engaged in a battle for the heart and soul of the ILP with the Maxton group of Clydesiders who rejected piecemeal reformism and were increasingly frustrated by the cautious path adopted by their parliamentary colleagues and leadership.

## CHAPTER 2

### 1922-1933 CONSOLIDATION AND DIVISION!

The years between 1922 and 1933 were dominated by a bleak backdrop of recession, depression, and morale-sapping, poverty-inducing, unemployment. Clydeside with its staple industries of coal, cotton, and shipbuilding and the metalworking industries were severely affected. During the 1920s unemployment in Scotland never fell below ten per cent and in the 1930s, world recession brought on by the Wall Street Crash saw it rise to around thirty per cent.<sup>1</sup> Unemployment brought sustained biting poverty, whilst the various parsimonious relief and insurance schemes were never able to cope with the sheer volume of those in need. This backdrop of devastation and despair, which often brought forth feelings of hopelessness led to mass emigration from Scotland when around 400,000 people left the country in the hope of gaining work overseas.<sup>2</sup>

This depressing backdrop provided ideal conditions for the socialist movement in Glasgow, and yet there was little indication that the Scottish working class were demanding radical change resulting in the wholesale overthrow of capitalism. Throughout the period the ILP and the Labour movement did not improve on their parliamentary haul of 10 seats in Glasgow, and despite the valiant efforts of Dollan and others, they could not prise control of the council from the Moderates. It was during this period also that the Communist Party and other groups to the left of the ILP became marginalised without ever

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<sup>1</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 190; Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet*, p. 28.

securing a presence on the council in Glasgow.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the communists like Harry McShane and Peter Kerrigan, who led the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) in Glasgow were unable to involve an army of supporters in mass protests, and so increasingly turned their energies towards lobbying the council.<sup>4</sup> It would seem that the Clydeside voters preferred reformism and gradualism to Russian-style revolution. It is true, that they consistently voted for the left-wing Maxton, Wheatley, and Buchanan, but they also voted for the less rebellious and more moderate ILPers like Captain Hay in Cathcart, Adam McKinlay in Partick, and George Hardie in Springburn.

Dollan was a man of the left. He believed in collectivism, nationalisation, and a redistribution of income and wealth towards the working classes. He recognised the class nature of society:

The class war is the expression of Capitalism, and must continue while Capitalism endures. The aim of the Socialist is to end class war and this aim can only be attained by the abolition of economic inequalities. . . Cooperation of all classes is impossible under Capitalism . . . [capitalists] need to exploit labour for private gain.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The enigmatic communist J. Walton Newbold did win the parliamentary seat in Motherwell in 1922, but he stood as Labour candidate. Kenefick, *Red Scotland* p. 191; Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 59; William Gallacher was elected in West Fife in 1935, and a smattering of Communist councillors were elected after 1935, but they never looked like achieving a breakthrough in electoral terms despite their impact in the trade union movement. Moreover, John Maclean's Scottish Socialist Republicans 'fared badly' in 1923. *Evening Times*, 7 November 1923; The Communist Party made a 'sorry pitiable show' in Scotland, and did not even contest any municipal elections in Glasgow in 1925. *Evening Times*, 3 November 1925, *Forward*, 7 November 1925.

<sup>4</sup>Glasgow, Mitchell Library, Minutes of Glasgow Corporation (hereafter, GCM), 28 April 1927, p. 1314; 27 October 1932, p. 2935; 28 September 1933, p.2570.

<sup>5</sup>*Forward*, 3 January 1925.

Despite his own left-wing proclivities which saw him support all major ILP policy initiatives, including *Socialism in Our Time* (SIOT), Dollan consistently argued that you could not impose leftist policies on to an unwilling audience whether in parliament, the labour movement, or the electorate. His ongoing disagreements with Maxton, particularly following the Cook-Maxton fiasco, when he became his primary opponent within the ILP, were tactical and strategic rather than ideological.<sup>6</sup> He fought to keep the ILP within the Labour Party. He saw the Labour Party as the legitimate body for unifying working-class organisations including the unions, the co-ops, and the ILP. To him, and an increasing number of ILP members, the Labour Party was the ultimate sovereign body for filtering and delivering socialist policies in which the ILP was a constituent but ultimately subservient part.<sup>7</sup> Dollan consistently fought against campaigns to undermine and divide the Labour Party.<sup>8</sup> That is why he was against 'communist disrupters', and the left 'entryists' within the ILP. That is also why he began to see that the ILP could not sustain the ILP's parliamentary *modus vivendi* of being a 'a Party within a Party'. Dollan passionately believed that the ILP had a special place within the Labour Party, not just as its founding body but also because it had a unique responsibility to propagate socialism through education and propaganda. He was critical of Snowden in 1927, and MacDonald in 1930,

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<sup>6</sup>As we will see, the 1928 Cook-Maxton Manifesto could not be viewed in that light as it did not emanate from the formal policy making bodies.

<sup>7</sup> Following the introduction of the new Labour Party constitution in 1918, the ILP considered, but decided against disaffiliation thus acknowledging their subservience to the Labour Party.

McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 60.

when they allowed their membership of the ILP to lapse.<sup>9</sup> Dollan was the prime mover, in the formation of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) following the ILP's decision to disaffiliate from Labour in 1932. This was not simply to create a personal power base or to fill the organisational void left in Scotland, but in order that socialists could encourage and cajole the trade unions and the Labour Party towards adopting socialist policies. Dollan's socialism, like that of many others on the British left at this time, derived from an ethical and spiritual credo rather than a Marxist world view. Despite his agnosticism, he was fond of using Biblical references to influence his audience. In a 1925 *Forward* piece on high child mortality in Scotland, he recounted how Jesus had said: 'Suffer little children to come unto me.'<sup>10</sup> He believed in unity, fraternity and respect for majority rule, although, as we shall see, he did not always abide by that maxim in the council Labour group, (then again, nor did many in that group). He adopted a general pragmatic approach to politics and was prepared to accept compromise in order to make progress. The alternative was to be, in the words of Aneurin Bevan, (another on the left who eschewed Maxton's intransigence) 'pure, but impotent'.<sup>11</sup> Dollan was against public displays of Labour disunity and was appalled at the virulent public attacks, bordering on theatrics, on the Party leadership whom he felt still retained the confidence of the members. For Dollan, this was visibly demonstrated by the success of the Glasgow ILP Federation's Ramsay MacDonald rally in 1927, held sometime after the ignominious defeat of the first Labour government and the defeat of the miners and the general strike, which attracted a crowd of some 2000 who paid a minimum of 1s.

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<sup>9</sup> Brown, *Maxton*, p. 206; David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, (London: Richard Cohen, 1977), p. 457.

<sup>10</sup> *Forward*, 24 January 1924.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan 1897-1945*, (St Albans : Granada, 1962), p. 146.



for the privilege of listening to the Labour leader.<sup>12</sup> Throughout these years Dollan was an enthusiastic member of the minority Labour group in Glasgow Corporation pursuing traditional socialist policies. During this time the impression is gained, as we saw in the introduction, from many accounts that he was a 'Tammany Hall boss' or 'fixer'. To take one example from historians writing about the ILP between 1926 and 1932, when it is suggested that 'Dollan's control of the City Party machine . . . stifled opposition', and further:

in Glasgow the managerial logic of Dollan's leadership was seldom frustrated as he wielded ever-greater disciplinary powers including expelling individual militants and closing recalcitrant branches. For Dollan of course this was a virtuous circle as each expulsion strengthened his hand on the Glasgow executive.<sup>13</sup>

On closer examination it seems that the evidence does not support such a view. For one thing, Dollan stood down after 13 years from the ILP Glasgow Federation chairmanship and 'Glasgow executive' in April 1925, a year before the beginning of the period studied by Alan McKinlay and James Smyth.<sup>14</sup> Dollan did, however, become the chairman of the Scottish Divisional Council (SDC) of the ILP during the period. But this did not give him control of the Glasgow ILP which is clearly evidenced by the fact that he and William Stewart, the Scottish organiser were pulled in front of its management committee in 1926, due to 'encroachment by the SDC on the work and area of the Glasgow Federation'. The management committee jealously guarded their fiefdom and thus Dollan and Stewart had

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<sup>12</sup> Glasgow, Mitchell Library, ILP Glasgow Federation Management Committee Minutes , 4 March 1927.

<sup>13</sup> Alan McKinlay and J. J. Smyth, 'The end of 'the agitator workman ' pp.172, 197 ; Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> *Forward*, 11 April 1925.

to give an assurance that they would 'not enter into competition with the Glasgow Federation' in order to avoid, as the minute book states, 'drastic action' being taken.<sup>15</sup> Nor did the Glasgow Federation control appear to weaken over time, for as late as 1932, when Dollan was setting up the SSP, he could only win over ten out of 36 ILP branches and *Forward* further reported that Glasgow was Dollan's 'weakest area'.<sup>16</sup>

A similar tale can be told when turning to an examination of Dollan's supposed domination of the Labour group on the council. For if Dollan attempted to 'stifle opposition' he was certainly not successful nor indeed, as we are about to see, was there evidence of a rigid discipline being enforced on the Labour group. Although united on core values, that is issues like poor relief, welfare, housing provision, rents and support for direct labour and trade union rights, the attendance and voting patterns of the Labour group was chaotic throughout the period. There was little indication of whipping, arm twisting or 'fixing', as can be seen from the regular occurrence of split Labour votes catalogued throughout the council minutes prior to 1932.<sup>17</sup> The Glasgow Federation had cause to write to all Labour councillors because twenty failed to vote, resulting in a 'poor showing in the

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<sup>15</sup> ILP Management Committee Minutes, 15 October 1926, 26 November 1926.

<sup>16</sup> *Forward*, 10 September 1933.

<sup>17</sup> Between 1922 and 1933 there were at least 17 occasions when Council meetings were disrupted or adjourned through unruly behaviour on the part of the Labour Group many of which seemed to be spontaneous. See as example, GCM, 9 October 1924, p. 2482. Split Labour votes were a regular feature, see GCM, 2 July 1923, p. 1725, on a proposed Council delegation to the USA; 7 January 1927, p. 562, over a managerial appointment; 15 May 1924, p. 1467, on the award of Freedom of City to Ramsay MacDonald; 3 November 1927, p. 15, on a Baillie nomination; 12 April 1928, p. 1269, on councillors free travel; 21 June 1928, p. 1809, on a manager's pension entitlements; 19 February 1931, p. 948, on teachers' salaries; 4 February 1932, p. 774 on wages reductions.

vote to increase Children's Allowances'.<sup>18</sup> They also upbraided Dollan for missing a vote on the Means Test in 1932, but one suspects, coming as it did after the ILP special national conference on relations with the Labour Party, this had more to do with his stance in opposing the national ILP line on disaffiliation, than his tardiness at the vote.<sup>19</sup> A newly-elected Labour councillor wrote to *Forward* in 1931 complaining that the Labour members were given a 'free hand' on what he considered to be a core issue of unemployment and the future.<sup>20</sup> At least 17 council meetings were aborted, adjourned and interrupted throughout the period by many rebellions on the part of Labour councillors, many of whom were suspended as a consequence. Some of these incidents were by the design and decision of the Labour group, but it would appear that many arose through individual pique, or by dint of personality or temper.<sup>21</sup> From viewing the Corporation minutes, one can easily conclude that the Labour councillors of the period looked a fairly unruly and rebellious group who were difficult to control. How else can we explain the regular occurrence of leading Labour councillors failing to receive the support of a majority of their colleagues when it came to votes in the council chamber? Examples of this are littered throughout the council minutes. When Dollan moved reference back of a proposed council donation he received only eight votes out of a Labour group in excess of 40.<sup>22</sup> Even on the 'Labour issue' of rates being based on land values, rather than house values, the group could only muster a

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<sup>18</sup> ILP Management Committee Minutes, 17 June 1932.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 August 1932.

<sup>20</sup> *Forward*, 11 April 1931.

<sup>21</sup> See for example, GCM, 28 April 1924, p.1252; GCM, 21 August 1930, p. 2215.

<sup>22</sup> GCM, 11 November 1926, p. 122.

minority 16 votes.<sup>23</sup> How can we explain the vote that saw prominent councillors George Kerr and George Smith, (both of whom later becoming group leaders) being defeated 75 votes to 13 when they moved a motion against advertising on council vehicles when the attendance of Labour councillors was well in excess of that?<sup>24</sup> We can only conclude that many Labour councillors acted like 'free spirits' when it came to voting in the council.

An even more telling argument against the established impression of Dollan's iron-fist chairmanship in Glasgow is suggested by the fact that he was not even the chairman at all for most of the period. His chairmanship began following Wheatley's election to parliament at the end of 1922 and ended sometime in 1926. It is difficult to be precise, because no group minutes have survived and the council at that time did not recognise political groupings. However, we do know from the *Glasgow Herald* that Tom Kerr was the group chairman in April 1926, which is supported by his press statements at the time of the municipal elections in November 1926.<sup>25</sup> Thereafter, William Leonard became leader, and on his successful parliamentary by-election victory in 1931, he was followed by George Smith and subsequently John Stewart in 1933.<sup>26</sup>

Clearly then, Dollan was not in a position to dominate the ILP in Glasgow. He certainly played a prominent role as the chairman of the Scottish Party and consequentially as a member of the ILP's NAC, both of which would have given him an elevated standing

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<sup>23</sup> GCM, 3 March 1927, pp. 899-900.

<sup>24</sup> GCM, 2 February 1928, p. 711.

<sup>25</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 19 April 1926; *Evening Times*, 3 November 1926.

<sup>26</sup> See *Forward*, 15 August 1931 and Dollan's *Forward* article 16 November 1935.

within the ILP. Moreover, his day job as a Labour journalist, and his NAC position, together with Agnes' role on the Labour Party NEC, gave him entry to the higher British national stage. He also wrote regularly in the columns of *Forward* on a whole range of issues, including the Glasgow scene. This level of involvement, at times, may well have given the impression that he had more influence in Glasgow than he possessed. In surveying the evidence throughout the years 1922-1933 it would appear that Dollan was much less effective in Glasgow and certainly less in control of the Labour 'machine' than some historians would have us believe. The ultimate irony is that it was Dollan who fell foul of the ILP national 'machine' when he was expelled from the ILP for opposing its conference decision on disaffiliation.<sup>27</sup>

### **'Municipal Socialism'?**

The Moderate group running Glasgow at this time could not be described in any political sense as reactionary. They were clearly in favour of benevolent civic rule and Glasgow's parks and transport system were envied by many other municipalities. The council also provided decent employment for many of its citizens. *Forward* was triumphant in 1925 - and also somewhat opportunistic, given that the socialists were never in power until 1933 - noting: 'Municipal Socialism in Glasgow is the largest employer in Scotland. There are 26,150 employees' and 'a minimum wage for a 47 hour week' of 55s.<sup>28</sup> The *Evening Times* believed there was little difference between the competing groups on the council:

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<sup>27</sup>*The Times*, 16 August 1932.

<sup>28</sup>*Forward*, 17 October 1925.

On problems of municipal administration there is not a marked cleavage. Both Moderates and Socialists have been advocating reform in city transport. In many cases they agree on the line of development, their only differentiating feature at all in the consideration of local problems being that the Moderates emphasise more for economy in administration.<sup>29</sup>

The Moderates, who held a majority of the council's 113 seats until 1933, with Labour never able to get above fifty, sought to avoid practising adversarial politics and tried to reach consensus on many issues in the council. They were happy, for example, to accept a proposal from Dollan when he moved that the council should organise a conference on unemployment, 'to put in hand schemes of local importance at national expense'.<sup>30</sup> They were tolerant in allowing deputations from labour movement organisations like the Trades council, NUWM, as well as individual unions, who were all able to present their demands and grievances to the council on a frequent basis. They were inclusive in awarding convener posts to the leading Labour members including for example at varying times, John Wheatley, John Stewart, George Kerr, Tom Kerr, John Higgins, George Smith, William Reid and Dollan. They were magnanimous in formally congratulating those former Labour councillors, John Wheatley, James Stewart and Manny Shinwell, who became government ministers in 1924.<sup>31</sup> It was the Moderate group who began the major council house building programme that included the well-designed and substantial houses within the then garden suburb housing estates like Knightswood, Scotstoun and Mosspark. This impression of camaraderie and consensus can be taken too far, however, for the

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<sup>29</sup> *Evening Times*, 1 November 1926.

<sup>30</sup> GCM, 24 January 1924, p. 584.

<sup>31</sup> GCM, 6 November 1925, p. 210.

Moderates were politicians, (despite their cheerleaders in the local newspapers frequently trying to convey a different impression) and often acted in a partisan fashion.<sup>32</sup> They were, for instance, careful to ensure that they secured the majority of seats on committees, whilst also retaining the convener post on strategic committees including Finance, Public Assistance and Housing for themselves. They retained the chair of the special committee on Unemployment for fear that this could be used as a political propaganda tool for Labour. They also adopted an ideological stance in opposing the purchase of the Labour-supporting *Daily Herald* and *New Leader*, *The Communist* and the *Daily Worker* for public libraries.<sup>33</sup>

Given Labour's minority status, the council battle for Dollan, was about using the platform to make an impression on the wider political stage. Council activities, therefore, were part of the wider ILP campaign to expose the inadequacies of capitalism and demonstrate the unwillingness of Conservatives and Liberals to meet the needs of the working class. It was for this reason that Dollan, at what was probably his first meeting in taking over as chairman of the Labour group from Wheatley in 1922, brought about the termination of the council meeting through disorder caused by his passionate demands that more be done for the relief of the poor.<sup>34</sup> This was not the first such 'scene' created by Labour at the council. Indeed, it was a common occurrence. Dollan had been suspended in 1915 and again in 1917 over complaints regarding food shortages during the war.<sup>35</sup> He was keen to use the council chamber for 'for converting the public to socialism' and during the

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<sup>32</sup> *Daily Record*, 7 November 1933.

<sup>33</sup> GCM, 3 April 1924, p. 1166; GCM, 31 March 1927, p. 1108; GCM, 2 March 1922, p. 963; GCM, 20 February 1930, p. 804.

<sup>34</sup> GCM, 14 December 1922, p. 318.

<sup>35</sup> GCM, 23 December 1915, pp. 499-503; GCM 15 March 1917, p. 772.

miner's strike in 1926, he argued that council funds should be used to alleviate their distress.<sup>36</sup> He then pursued his propaganda offensive by tabling a motion for the nationalisation of mines.<sup>37</sup> He was also keen to raise popular issues at strategic times, on the eve of elections for example, in order to maximise Labour's support. In October 1923, two weeks or so before the council elections, he moved a motion calling on the government to halt evictions of the growing number of unemployed.<sup>38</sup> Again, Dollan caused a rumpus just prior to the 1925 council election, resulting in Moderates moving his suspension over his protest at a magistrate's ban on Sunday meetings.<sup>39</sup> Then, on the eve of the November election in 1933, he demanded that the council restore the five per cent cut in employees' wages imposed earlier.<sup>40</sup> It was also unlikely to have been a coincidence that he was suspended from a council meeting in 1933, immediately prior to the municipal elections, for 'disregarding the authority of the Chairman' over the issue of the introduction of new standing orders.<sup>41</sup>

The difference between the two political groups was highlighted in their attitudes towards class. One area where this was apparent was in the issue of civil functions. The Moderates saw these as a way to showcase the city and recognise outstanding public service. Labour, on the other hand, regarded them as junkets, and when they were unable to prevent them taking place, they tried to minimise the allocated budget to a token

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<sup>36</sup> GCM, 10 September 1926, p. 2344; *Forward*, 13 June 1925.

<sup>37</sup> GCM, 29 September 1927, p. 2298.

<sup>38</sup> GCM, 18 October 1923, p. 2518.

<sup>39</sup> GCM, 10 September 1925, p. 2208.

<sup>40</sup> GCM, 14 September 1933, p. 2575.

<sup>41</sup> GCM, 26 October 1933, p. 2782.



amount. They boycotted attendance at 'Freedom of the City' award ceremonies, particularly when royalty was involved, as with the separate instances of Princess Mary, Prince Henry, and the Duchess of York.<sup>42</sup> Having lost the vote in opposition to a function for Princess Mary, they suggested in an act of defiance, that one hundred of the city's unemployed should be invited. This strategy was extended to politicians like Lloyd George and Bonar Law and when the latter ceremony was agreed despite Labour's opposition, Dollan moved that no alcohol be served.<sup>43</sup> Labour was not all about gestures, although Ramsay MacDonald seemed to take that view: 'Glasgow is a fearful bogey to the outside world, and I am not sure sometimes but that our Movement there is more concerned to keep up that hair-raising reputation than is good for it.'<sup>44</sup> On most occasions, however, the majority of Labour councillors took their civic responsibilities seriously. Dollan was active in his support for the unemployed, by not only arguing for enhanced financial assistance, but also by advocating work schemes as a way of alleviating unemployment. One such project was the building of a road encircling the city from east to west.<sup>45</sup> Dollan as a member of the housing committee also sought to reduce the density of housing at Knightswood from 16 per acre to 12.3 per acre, and whilst he won the vote five to four at the sub-committee, he was to lose the argument when it went to the full council meeting.<sup>46</sup> Dollan constantly pushed for the use of direct labour to be used in the building of council houses which he argued would not only be more efficient and 'save on rates', but would also create decent jobs for Glasgow builders.<sup>47</sup> But Labour was less willing to support subsidies to private

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<sup>42</sup> GCM, 12 April 1923, p. 1199, 2 May 1925, p.1309, 21 September 1927, p. 2286.

<sup>43</sup> GCM, 5 January 1922, p. 562.

<sup>44</sup> *Forward*, 14 November 1925.

<sup>45</sup> GCM, 1 February 1923, p. 684; *Glasgow Herald*, 3 August 1929.

<sup>46</sup> GCM, 5 April 1929, p. 1166 and 18 April 1929, pp. 1178-1181.

<sup>47</sup> GCM, 11 September 1924, p. 2306; GCM, 2 April 1925, p. 1095; GCM, 7 September 1933,

house builders, arguing that this would drain land and resources away from the public sector<sup>48</sup> Dollan actively opposed a large-scale scheme of 2,000 steel houses being foisted on the council by the Baldwin government, half of which were to be built by Lord Weir. This caused a minor spat with Rosslyn Mitchell his erstwhile fellow councillor but at this time MP for Paisley, who supported the scheme in the columns of *Forward*.<sup>49</sup> As a senior member of the Finance committee, even when not leading the group, Dollan became the *de-facto* public spokesman for Labour on these matters and wrote regularly in *Forward* and elsewhere on rates, rents and other municipal issues.<sup>50</sup> He had no compunction in pushing for protection and improvements for wage earners whilst arguing for salary restrictions and even cuts for senior salary earners.<sup>51</sup> It is quite clear that despite him no longer being the leader after 1926, Dollan constantly led and initiated calls for improvements to council workers' terms and conditions of employment and was frequently joined in this by councillor William Shaw, who was the secretary of the Trades Council.<sup>52</sup> It was in a move against the pay freezes and reductions imposed upon teachers and other

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p. 2404; *Forward*, 11 April 1925, 17 October 1925.

<sup>48</sup> GCM, 14 April 1927, p. 1226; GCM, 18 April 1929, p. 1178; GCM, 12 March 1931, p. 1099.

<sup>49</sup> Dollan was in favour of a pilot scheme but was insistent on the inclusion on a fair wages clause to protect building workers whereas Rosslyn Mitchell favoured the government's large scale plans. *Forward*, 2, 9, 16 January 1926.

<sup>50</sup> He regularly challenged the Moderates' assumptions on the rates issue and was prepared to enter into debate over comparisons with Birmingham. See *Evening Times*, 5, 9, November, 1928; *Glasgow Herald*, 19 September 1930; *Forward*, 27 September 1930.

<sup>51</sup> GCM, 30 April 1925, p. 1302.

<sup>52</sup> GCM, 23 August 1928, p. 2346; GCM, 20 May 1930, p. 1601; GCM, 3 September 1931, p. 2622; GCM, 4 February 1932, p. 774.

employees that again saw Dollan and other Labour councillors suspended from the council in 1931.<sup>53</sup>

If there was anything that appeared to unite the Moderate group it was Presbyterianism. They supported the strict observance of the Sabbath. This was an issue that Dollan took up and opposed in a relentless fashion. He argued for parks to be opened, bands to play, sport and boating to be enjoyed, and political meetings to be held on Sundays. He believed that 'Sabbath observance' was 'rather antiquated' and 'Sunday in Glasgow and other Scottish cities is as miserable as civic representatives can make it.'<sup>54</sup> He continuously fought for 'the restrictions which attempt to shackle working folk on the one day they have in seven,' to be removed.<sup>55</sup> But Dollan's position was not shared by everyone in the Labour group. His chairman, Tom Kerr, responded to a letter from the United Free Church complaining about church services being disturbed by 'flights over the City on Sundays' which was in 'violation of the Lords Day' by moving a 'motion to approve of the Presbytery's view'. He was seconded by a Moderate but gained only nine votes despite there being a complement of around fifty Labour councillors, and lost heavily. This is a further indication of the *laissez-faire* approach to voting in the Labour group.<sup>56</sup> Dollan also vigorously opposed the Moderate-dominated Magistrates committee's decision to ban Sunday political meetings. Many suspected, including Dollan, that the Moderates' decision, in this instance, was more coloured by politics than religion. He suggested that 'Magistrates . . . made it almost

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<sup>53</sup> GCM, 19 February 1931, p. 948.

<sup>54</sup> GCM, 11 November 1926, p. 123; GCM, 25 November 1926, p. 202 ; GCM, 10 November 1927, p. 121; GCM, 22 March 1928, p. 1034; GCM, 6 February 1930, p. 687.

<sup>55</sup> *Forward*, 20 September 1930.

<sup>56</sup> GCM, 23 August 1928, p. 2177.

impossible for recognised Labour bodies to hold meetings in public halls on Sundays in the same way as they had been held without police interference or complaint for 30 years.<sup>57</sup> Opposition to the ban became a *cause celebre* for the left in Glasgow in the 1920s, and the Labour group led by Dollan at the time 'succeeded in holding up the business of the city as a protest' at several meetings in 1925.<sup>58</sup> Dollan by this time, was adding calculation to his passion, and it was unlikely that he would support issues that in his view would risk his own or Labour's electoral prospects. When the issue of birth control came up within the council in 1927, following an offer to provide free advisory publications throughout the city's libraries, Dollan decided to completely detach himself from what was seen to be a highly controversial issue. This was despite support for the initiative from twenty-three other Labour members including Mary Barbour, his Govan ally. Unlike his colleagues, he did not vote to accept the offer, nor did he officially abstain like the group chairman, Tom Kerr. He simply absented himself from the vote, despite being present in the chamber both before and after this vote. The issue united both staunch Catholic and Protestant church-goers alike. The Moderates, like Dollan, saw support for this issue as a vote loser and thus not one Moderate supported the proposal at the full council meeting (despite it having received majority support in the Libraries committee) which suggests they invoked a whip, defeating the proposal 62 votes to 23.<sup>59</sup> It has been suggested that Labour support for this

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<sup>57</sup> *Forward*, 28 March 1925; *Daily Record*, 6 November 1925.

<sup>58</sup> GCM, 8 October 1925, p. 2374; *Forward*, 28 March, 17 October, 1925; *The Times*, 11 September 1925; *Evening Times*, 4 November 1925; *Daily Record*, 6 November 1925.

<sup>59</sup> GCM, 7 February 1927, p. 745; GCM 3 March 1927, pp. 899-900; See Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, pp.118-27; Maggie Craig, *When The Clyde Ran Red*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2011), p. 204.

controversial proposal accounted for their relatively poor showing in the council election in 1927. Their momentum was stalled from the previous year when they gained eight seats taking them to 49, and within touching distance of majority rule which Tom Kerr believed indicated 'a sweeping victory on behalf of socialism'.<sup>60</sup> Of course Dollan would not be the only Glasgow Labour leader to avoid taking a stance on such issues that encroached on religious sensibilities. Maxton, as we saw in the introduction, did likewise, and Jennie Lee, the North Lanarkshire ILP MP, hinted also at his lack of principle on the issue of his support for Catholic schools.<sup>61</sup> This was not to be the first vote that Dollan avoided due to the apparent political sensitivities. He did likewise on the issue of free travel for councillors which a majority of his Labour colleagues supported, but which proved to be controversial with ratepayers groups.<sup>62</sup>

An issue that crystallised the difference in values between the two groups on the council was Labour's campaign to reinstate 316 workers in the Tramways department who had been dismissed following their participation in the General Strike. Labour was determined to overcome the intransigence of James Dalrymple, the Tramways General Manager who refused to yield to pleas from trade unions and councillors to reverse his decision.<sup>63</sup> The issue became a war of attrition over many months and touched on Labour's

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<sup>60</sup> *Evening Times*, 3 November 1926; The following year the *Evening Times*, suggested that 'there was a divergence of opinion on birth control' between the parties. Labour required just 8 further gains to take power but instead they lost 5 seats taking them back to 44 and giving the Moderates a majority of twenty-five. *Evening Times*, 1 November 1927; Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 109 ; McLean, *Legend*, pp. 223-24.

<sup>61</sup> *Forward*, 26 April 1930, 11 April 1931; Foot, *Aneurin Bevan*, p. 149.

<sup>62</sup> GCM, 12 April 1928, p. 1269 ; GCM, 21 June 1928, p. 1807.

<sup>63</sup> GCM, 26 May 1926, p. 1664.

core values of trade union recognition, collectivism and solidarity, and caused disruption to various council meetings.<sup>64</sup> Dollan as a leading member of the Tramways Committee and chairman of its finance sub-committee worked alongside Tom Kerr to resolve this dispute.<sup>65</sup> But this episode also serves to illustrate the obduracy of Dollan. When the Labour group seemed to be getting nowhere in their campaign to reinstate the sacked strikers they called for the dismissal of Dalrymple. Councillor William Reid who offered to stand down and fight a by-election over the issue led the move 'to terminate after due notice the appointment of Mr James Dalrymple as General Manager of the Corporation Tramways Department'.<sup>66</sup> But Dollan refused to go along with this. The *Glasgow Herald's* account gives the flavour of the debate:

Mr P. Dollan (Govan) in the course of a speech which was frequently interrupted from the Socialist benches, said that if this had been a motion to censure the general manager because of his treatment of the employees after the general strike he would have voted for it . . . but the motion on the ground of incompetence he, (Mr Dollan) "could not take that view, and it would be cowardly of him to support it." He conceded that the manager "had behaved abominably towards the employees" but that was nothing to do with the competent running of the tramways.<sup>67</sup>

In the event the Moderates motion of 'complete confidence' in Dalrymple was carried by 44 votes to 24 with Dollan recording his abstention.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> GCM, 26 May 1926 p. 1664; GCM, 27 May 1926, p. 1602; *Scotsman*, 19 August 1926.

<sup>65</sup> GCM, 17 November 1926, p. 171.

<sup>66</sup> GCM, 2 June 1926, p. 1666.

<sup>67</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 9 July 1926.

<sup>68</sup> GCM, 8 July 1926, p. 1930.

Such actions were unlikely to endear him to the majority of the Labour group and it may have been incidents such as this - when he demonstrated his single-mindedness - that caused a rift between him and other senior members of the Labour group.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps it was to improve his standing with his colleagues that Dollan, just a few weeks afterwards - once more signifying inconsistency - vigorously demonstrated his socialist convictions on the reinstatement issue by disrupting council proceedings causing the Moderates to call for his suspension and the Lord Provost to adjourn the meeting.<sup>70</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* on this occasion, stated that 'Mr Dollan assumed the leadership of the Socialist group' over their protest which seemed to be 'apparently spontaneous'.<sup>71</sup> The issue continued to bubble away in the background much to the consternation of Dalrymple until Dollan, it appears, persuaded Dalrymple to retire and moved a successful motion to facilitate that in the Transport Committee.<sup>72</sup>

Dollan's actions during this period demonstrated a degree of independence together with an ability to deliver a solution to an apparently intractable problem. It was that, together with an eye for detail and an understanding of accounts gained from his *Forward* exposes, combined with a willingness to do what he termed the 'drudgery' of committee work, that won him the grudging respect, if not love, of his colleagues across the political

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<sup>69</sup> Iain McLean said that Tom Kerr 'was often on poor terms with Dollan' as was [ councillor and sometime ILP MP ] Adam McKinlay. McLean, *Legend*, p. 221; His curmudgeon-like attitude can also be seen in his dismissive response to the ILP Glasgow Federation when questioned about interference in Glasgow affairs. See ILP Management Committee Minutes, 26 November 1926.

<sup>70</sup> GCM, 29 July 1926, p. 2001.

<sup>71</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 30 July 1926.

<sup>72</sup> GCM, 17 November 1926, p. 171; GCM, 25 November 1926, p. 202; GCM, 29 November 1926, p. 287; GCM, 9 December 1926, p. 334; GCM, 23 December 1926, p. 435.

divide on the council.<sup>73</sup> They recognised his talents in 1929 by appointing him the Chairman of the joint Magistrates and Tramways committee with a remit to 'report and draft answers to questions' posed by the Royal Commission on transport.<sup>74</sup> Shortly afterwards he was elected as convener of the Municipal Transport Committee which was arguably the most senior committee to be chaired by a member of the minority Labour group. But even then he upset his Labour colleagues in 1932, by putting his department before his colleagues and voting against a group decision. That incensed the group secretary so much that he wrote to *Forward* complaining:

For reasons yet to be explained, the Labour convener of the Municipal Transport Committee [Dollan] . . . not only endeavoured to ridicule the arguments his colleagues had used in support of the Group's attitude, but voted with the majority against the Group decision.<sup>75</sup>

This was done at a time when Dollan was taking the Maxton group to task for its rebellious indiscipline at Parliament and the contradiction was not lost on the group secretary: 'The temptation to comment at some length on the attitude of certain Group members is almost irresistible but I shall content myself by remarking that difficulties of discipline are not confined to the Labour Party in Parliament.'<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Forward*, 26 April 1930.

<sup>74</sup> GCM, 15 March 1929, p. 996; GCM, 8 November 1929, p. 26; Dollan became very knowledgeable on transport matters and at one stage spent a whole day in the 'witness chair' being 'examined, cross-examined, and re-examined' before the Select Committee of the House of Lords considering the Glasgow Corporation Bill. *Scotsman*, 17 July 1930.

<sup>75</sup> *Forward*, 30 January 1932.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*



From the foregoing, then, it seems a number of things are clear. Dollan was not a 'Tammany Hall boss-type' figure as he is often portrayed. He did have influence in Scotland through his role as chairman of the Scottish Party, but he did not control the ILP's Glasgow fiefdom nor the Labour group where he was often in a minority and frequently opposed and criticised by colleagues. His position in the council was arrived at through sheer hard work for which he was a willing volunteer, strong personality and apparent single-mindedness. The latter trait may have been something which he shared with Jimmy Maxton the ILP leader whom Dollan was to take on in a battle for the future of the ILP.

### **Labour In Government**

The period saw the appointment of two short-lived Labour governments. Firstly in 1924, lasting around nine months and then in 1929, which lasted two and a half years. Arguments raged within the Labour movement on the policies and tactics that these minority Labour governments should adopt. Some were against Labour taking power in such circumstances as they would be compromised and unable to deliver a socialist programme. Others suggested that once in office the Party should present a 'fundamental Socialist programme, invite defeat in the Commons but rallying the whole of the working-class to a supreme electoral battle for a majority'.<sup>77</sup> Dollan and the majority of the ILP supported MacDonald's view that they should take office and welcomed the opportunities for reform that a Labour government brought. Maxton was unhappy with the record of the first Labour government and when it left office pronounced himself 'very glad' to be out of government.<sup>78</sup> Although, he does seem to contradict himself when we consider that his

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<sup>77</sup> See Fenner Brockway's article in *Forward*, 15 November 1930; also his Chairman's address at the ILP conference in 1932, ILP Annual Conference Report, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> *The Times*, 3 November 1924; Wheatley is said to have been against Labour taking office in 1929. See

1924 election address heaped praise on the outgoing Labour government's record on 'unemployment', 'old age pensions', 'housing and rents' which:

... proved to this country and the world that Labour is fit to govern, and while the result of the eight months are small compared to what must be done . . . they are very great compared with the five years previously when first the Coalition and then the Tory Government held sway.<sup>79</sup>

The second government took office in 1929, against the backdrop of raging unemployment, which was accentuated by the world-wide economic depression brought on by the Wall Street crash. By this time Dollan was operating on a national as well as a municipal political stage. He had been elected to the ILP's NAC in 1923 and became the chairman of the Scottish Divisional Council in 1926, thus enhancing his profile within the ILP. He was to become a prominent national conference performer and debater as well as an increasingly confident and assertive member of the NAC at which he was a regular attendee.<sup>80</sup> Following his election in 1926 as ILP national chairman, Maxton with support from his small Clydeside group increasingly indulged in attacks on the Labour leadership in their attempt to shift the ILP further to the left. Dollan's name was to become synonymous with opposition to Maxton. The *Times* described Dollan as 'the principal antagonist of the rebel group'.<sup>81</sup> He constantly questioned Maxton's leadership and

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Fenner Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946 ), p. 259.

<sup>79</sup> 'Election Address of James Maxton, Labour candidate for Bridgeton', <<http://www.gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/redcly006>> [accessed 20 September 2010]. Dollan tried to highlight the contradiction inherent in Maxton demanding obedience to Party policy whilst Maxton himself for personal political ends, ignored, and his ally George Buchanan MP, argued against, the declared ILP policy of support for birth control. ILP Annual Conference Report 1926, p. 94; They were also sheepish on the subject of Catholic schools. See ILP Annual Conference Report 1932, pp. 55-57.

<sup>80</sup> In 1926/1927 he attended 24 out of 24 NAC meetings which was not unusual. ILP Annual Conference Report 1927.

<sup>81</sup> *The Times*, 13 January 1930; *Forward* described him as Maxton's 'strongest opponent during the last few years', *Forward*, 11 April 1931.

believed, as with the divisive Cook-Maxton Manifesto in 1928, which alienated many trade union leaders by accusing them of class-collaboration, that many of Maxton's political judgements were suspect.<sup>82</sup> He emphasised that this was a private venture and not an ILP document and that Maxton's actions were 'likely to meet with some serious opposition in Scotland'.<sup>83</sup> In a later article written by Dollan in 1930, titled 'Maxtonism or Socialism', he nevertheless accepted Maxton's popularity within the ILP and his hold over the conference which was:

[a] triumph for James Maxton, whose personality rather than any new policy, was endorsed by the delegates . . . [personal] dominance is rather dangerous in an organisation which claims to have more regard for principles than for personalities . . . Maxtonism has temporarily displaced Socialism.<sup>84</sup>

It did seem to Dollan, however, that Maxton was often prone to opposition for its own sake. He insisted, for example, on nominating George Lansbury who received a humiliating five votes against MacDonald for the chair of the parliamentary Party

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<sup>82</sup> This was a document and campaign sponsored by Maxton and Arthur Cook the miners leader who was out of favour with the TUC hierarchy. It fiercely criticised the Labour and trade union leadership who, following the failure of the General Strike, supported the joint union-employer Mond-Turner talks. It called for a return to the principles of Keir Hardie, ILP National Conference Report 1929, pp.13-36; Some have suggested that this Manifesto was the work of John Wheatley but it did, nonetheless, have the Maxton imprimatur, and he was the front man at the rallies and press conferences. Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 112; Maxton pressed home his view at the 1930 conference, that the trade unions were selling their members short when he said, 'it is not the function of a Labour and Socialist Movement to develop and improve capitalist industry'. *Forward*, 26 April 1930.

<sup>83</sup> *The Times*, 22 June 1928

<sup>84</sup> *Forward*, 26 April 1930.

following the election in 1924.<sup>85</sup> He also continuously rejected offers to go on the front bench which helped inspire his reputation for laziness.<sup>86</sup> In 1932, he spurned one such offer from George Lansbury, the by now veteran left-wing chairman of the PLP. Had Maxton accepted this offer it could have presented the ILP with a face-saving resolution to its quarrel with the Labour Party and possibly avoided the disaffiliation of the ILP, particularly since MacDonald, Snowden, Thomas, and other steadfast opponents of Maxton had deserted Labour on joining the National Government.<sup>87</sup> Maxton was a Socialist visionary and an orator par excellence. He was impatient and saw the leadership as 'reactionary' and holding the working class back.<sup>88</sup> He believed, as he outlined in the Cook-Maxton Manifesto, that Labour was losing its way and departing 'from the principles and policy which animated the founders'. For Maxton, there could be no 'peace or compromises with capitalism'.<sup>89</sup> His inflexibility was shared by his ally, Fenner Brockway, who argued in 1932, that the ILP needed a 'revolutionary policy' and a cadre group 'who are prepared to give their all for Socialism: I would rather have an ILP with only ten such men and women in every town and city than a mass movement of thousands.'<sup>90</sup> But Maxton shunned detail, compromise, and the day-to-day stuff of political representation and intrigue at which

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<sup>85</sup> Scanlon, *Decline and Fall*, p. 86.

<sup>86</sup> Brown, *Maxton*, pp. 257, 308; Knox, *Maxton*, p. 100.

<sup>87</sup> Dowse, *Left In the Centre*, pp. 174-80.

<sup>88</sup> *Forward*, 19 September 1931.

<sup>89</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report 1929, p. 36.

<sup>90</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report 1932, p. 15.

Wheatley became a practised operator.<sup>91</sup> Wheatley did the murky political deals which made him enemies whilst Maxton remained universally popular.<sup>92</sup>

Dollan, having cut his political teeth alongside Maxton in ILP 'missionary' work in Glasgow, was well aware of Maxton's foibles and political shortcomings. The reverse was also true, of course. Dollan could come over somewhat arrogantly. He did not suffer fools gladly. Nor did he always appear to put a premium on building personal political alliances. His journalistic contacts gave him ready access to the newspapers who were more than happy to quote him. He was also on first name terms with the Party leaders in London.<sup>93</sup> These factors could have created envy and resentment on the part of many colleagues who did not always agree with him particularly if he strayed into areas for which they were responsible.<sup>94</sup> He was something of a curmudgeon. Witness his fall-outs at the council and his insistence on standing against Maxton for the chairmanship in 1929, thus splitting the opposition vote as Shinwell had agreed to stand against Maxton and as an MP was arguably better placed to do so.<sup>95</sup> Ironically, it was Dollan's switch of vote on the NAC in

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<sup>91</sup> Gallacher, *Revolt*, p. 14; Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt*, p. 212.

<sup>92</sup> David Marquand suggests that Wheatley 'was probably the ablest leader the left wing of the parliamentary Labour Party has ever had.' Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 284; Wheatley was not averse to using his Glasgow newspaper *Eastern Standard* for having sideswipes at Dollan, to which Dollan took exception. *Forward*, 12 April 1930.

<sup>93</sup> Ramsay MacDonald wrote to him inviting Agnes to stay in Downing Street. NLS, MS 25274, J. Ramsay MacDonald Archive.

<sup>94</sup> The private deals Dollan had reached with the Moderates on council appointments were reneged on the following day causing a 'strained relationship', *Evening Times*, 6 November 1925.

<sup>95</sup> Middlemas asserts that Ramsay MacDonald encouraged Shinwell to run against Maxton. In the event it did not matter as Maxton won easily by 284 to 39 for Shinwell and 38 for Dollan. Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, p. 232; Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 457; ILP National Conference Report, 1929, p. 67.

1925 that was critical in Clifford Allen's resignation that opened the door for Maxton to become the Chairman of the ILP in the first place.<sup>96</sup>

Despite his reputation as the *bête noir* of the Maxton group there is little doubt that Dollan was a conviction-socialist. He had no quarrel with the ILP's core policies including *Socialism In Our Time* (SIOT) with its concepts of a 'Living Income' and immediacy, which 'stood in contrast to gradualism'.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, Dollan served on the ILP sub-committee that had devised SIOT.<sup>98</sup> He also shared the Clyde group's passionate concern with the effects of unemployment and the urgent need to pursue job creation and improved unemployment benefits. Additionally, he was a champion for family allowances and a legal minimum wage, despite the hostility from the major trade unions who saw these issues as undermining their collective bargaining activities. Dollan also believed that the ILP had an evangelical mission to win the working class for socialism. In 1930, he wrote in *Forward*:

A Labour government should not be immune from criticism . . . Many proposals advocated by the ILP are now ripe for legislative development - the legal minimum wage, family allowances, the maximum working week, the State control of imports and prices, municipal enabling powers, the state control of insurance and banking, apart from the ILP general policy of public ownership and nationalisation. These will only be carried into effect when public opinion demands them, and the chief agency in the making of that

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<sup>96</sup> Brown, *Maxton*, p. 184.

<sup>97</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report 1923, p. 36; Despite Dollan's differences over parliamentary discipline and parliamentary group rules, composition and procedures, he regularly supported, and spoke on behalf of the NAC, on economic matters. See ILP Annual Conference Report 1930, pp. 94-103. His economic motion covered the need to increase the purchasing power of the working class, 'drastically increase direct taxation of the wealthy' and introduce family allowances. This motion was seconded by Jennie Lee and carried unanimously. It is unlikely, however, that she would have agreed with him when later at the same conference he commended Philip Snowden's budget.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

opinion should be the ILP.<sup>99</sup>

As the last sentence implies, Dollan supported MacDonald's gradualist and pragmatic view. But whilst MacDonald and Snowden became frustrated at the actions of the ILP and resigned their memberships, Dollan claimed that he would have to 'be carried out of the ILP'.<sup>100</sup> He was so defensive of the ILP's pre-eminent position in Scotland that he vigorously and successfully opposed a Labour Party recruitment drive to build on its poor membership base there.<sup>101</sup> Dollan was convinced of the need for a broad movement and a mass Labour Party, with the ILP at its core. The working class could not be coerced into embracing socialism by a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', or other revolutionary notions as advocated by those on the left of the ILP, with whom Maxton was increasingly prepared to work. To activists like Dollan, who believed in parliamentary democracy, the ILP had to win a majority of the electorate over to its policies through logic, force of argument and fraternal debate. He 'agreed with ILP policy [on the need to tackle unemployment] but how was it to be carried out without the support of the Labour Party in Parliament and in the country'? He was of the firm view that if the ILP did not take account of this then it would end up as a 'new kind of Plymouth Brethren'.<sup>102</sup>

Where Dollan and Maxton fundamentally disagreed therefore, was not so much on policy, but on process and tactics. Dollan was increasingly unhappy with the Clyde group's parliamentary performance. Dollan was prepared to support 'scenes' as MacDonald

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<sup>99</sup> *Forward*, 3 May 1930.

<sup>100</sup> *The Times*, 6 April 1930; Dollan also rejected the notion proposed by MacDonald and others that the ILP should concentrate solely on propaganda activities. See Dowse, *Left In the Centre*, p. 148.

<sup>101</sup> *Forward*, 12 April 1930.

<sup>102</sup> *The Times*, 22 April 1930.

described them in the House of Commons, in the first full flush of 'Red Clydeside' in 1923, and rally to Maxton, Wheatley, Campbell Stephen, and Buchanan's defence when they were suspended from the House of Commons for denouncing a Tory as a 'murderer'. As we have seen Dollan was also not averse to a little 'theatre' in the council chamber himself.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, he hinted in his report of the 1925 ILP conference, held shortly after the fall of the first Labour government, that this trait was becoming unwelcome: 'There was an occasional indulgence in the luxury of recriminations, but on the whole we are more concerned about the future than the past.'<sup>104</sup>

So he and most other prominent ILPers, were becoming somewhat weary of gesture politics by the time of the second minority Labour government in 1929. This was a government which was trying to negotiate a way through apparently intractable problems of rapidly increasing unemployment with a fast declining unemployment insurance fund. In doing so they were attempting to take the TUC and PLP with them. They most certainly did not welcome the small but vociferous Maxton group continuously snapping at their ankles, bucking the majority decisions of the PLP, and acting as free spirits in parliament and in the country attacking and undermining the government, the Labour Party and the trade unions. Of course the government can be criticised in hindsight for practising fiscal rectitude and orthodoxy and for yielding to many of the demands of the bankers by retreating from election promises on unemployment benefits. However, there was no realistic demand from the broad labour movement for an alternative economic strategy. It is true that Wheatley and others in the ILP supported the theory of under-consumption and called for a living wage, nationalisation, credit expansion and exchange controls, much of

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<sup>103</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 8 December 1923.

<sup>104</sup> *Forward*, 18 April 1925.



which was encompassed within *Socialism in Our Time* and the *Living Income* policies of the ILP.<sup>105</sup> But given the parliamentary arithmetic, there was no prospect of such policies winning support in parliament, even if they gained the support of Snowden and MacDonald, the TUC, or the Labour Party, which they failed to do.<sup>106</sup> Maxton and the ILP rebels had made their intentions clear from day one of the government's reign when they placed amendments to the Kings Speech which advocated policies consistent with SIOT. These amendments were submitted in defiance of the ILP parliamentary group. By contravening parliamentary Party decisions, the rebels signalled their intentions to operate as 'an organised conscience' at best, or, 'a Party within a Party' at worst.<sup>107</sup> The Labour Party and the PLP were to make it clear that they were not prepared to countenance either option. The ILP conference report rather understates the impact of these rebellions when it says that these actions 'became subject of intense controversy throughout the Party'.<sup>108</sup> The rebels next main attack was against the government's Unemployment Insurance Act with its 'not genuinely seeking work' clause, which created much consternation within the ranks of the PLP, as indeed did the proposed benefit scales which were less than those that most Labour candidates in the general election had campaigned for. The majority of those

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<sup>105</sup> The Living Wage policy previously supported by Dollan, was changed to the more complicated and bureaucratic Living Income, a policy on which he disagreed with Wheatley, and opposed at conference. See ILP Annual Conference Report 1929, p. 76.

<sup>106</sup> Dowse has suggested the Living Wage policy was never 'coherent' and that ILP members 'frequently misunderstood' it. Dowse, *Left In the Centre*, pp. 138-139; Dollan argued, however, that the Labour Party document, 'Labour and The Nation' agreed in 1928, contained 80 per cent of the proposals outlined in SIOT. ILP Annual Conference Report 1929, p. 73. Nor was there much support for Mosley's 'Manifesto' containing radical economic proposals which 'were not too dissimilar' from Maxton's views. It only received 17 signatories and prompted Mosley to leave the Labour Party. See Knox, *Maxton*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>107</sup> Worley, *Labour Inside The Gate*, p. 103.

<sup>108</sup> ILP National Conference Report 1930, p. 22; Dollan and Shinwell were appalled at the 'rebels' failure to consult with the ILP prior to them publicly displaying their opposition to the Labour government. *Forward*, 4 January 1930.

unhappy or disgruntled MP's, were prepared to seek changes or improvements in the traditional way behind the scenes in the PLP, or through the trade unions, or directly with the Minister.<sup>109</sup> However, that was not the preferred route of the Maxton group. Again they opted to put down amendments with the full glare of publicity which became known as the 'ILP's Minimum Demands'.<sup>110</sup> This action not only led to Ramsay MacDonald eventually resigning from the ILP, but also infuriated the majority of the ILP members in the House of Commons so much so that various heated group meetings were held against the wishes of the rebels in an attempt to pull them into line with 'strong conflicting views stated'.<sup>111</sup> The 1930 ILP Conference report states that the amendment to the controversial 'not genuinely seeking work' clause was 'largely as a result of the initiative and pressure of members of the [ILP Parliamentary] Group'. Others, however, suggest that it was 'behind-the-scenes pressure from the trade-union sponsored MP's that forced a redraft of the clause. That certainly seems likely, as the government did not budge on the other 'ILP Minimum Demands' amendments which received between 21-39 votes and were all heavily defeated.<sup>112</sup> These tactics were to be ramped up and deployed by the Maxton group when they forced an all-night sitting against the 'Unemployment Anomalies Bill' later in 1931 which was ostensibly designed to end growing abuses in the benefit system.<sup>113</sup>

Such tactics appeared gratuitous and self-serving to Dollan and many Labour MP's who dutifully followed the Party line and whip and yet witnessed the rebels again publicly

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<sup>109</sup> Fenner Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years*, p. 263.

<sup>110</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report, 1930, pp. 5, 22-23.

<sup>111</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report, 1930, pp. 5, 64.

<sup>112</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report 1930, p. 64; Knox, *Maxton*, p. 85; Hugh Armstrong Clegg, *A History Of British Trade Unions Since 1889, Volume 2, 1911-1933* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 503.

<sup>113</sup> Knox, *Maxton*, p. 85.

opposing the leadership as they did in 1924 and being feted and celebrated as 'heroes' at various Labour movement events. As John Scanlon observed : 'The Clyde group, [was] hated by their colleagues inside, [but] were the heroes of the rank and file outside, and every local Party was asking them to come and address meetings.'<sup>114</sup> Fred Jowett, the veteran ILPer from Bradford, confided in Fenner Brockway that 'there was savage bitterness against members of our group'.<sup>115</sup> However, Maxton, Wheatley and their close allies in the Clydeside 'rebel' group of five cared little for their colleagues' sensibilities and had little respect for parliamentary constitutionalism, unity and discipline. For the 'Clydesiders', as Marquand has recognised:

... the purpose of parliamentary activity was not power, but propaganda: and the propaganda was aimed, not at the uncommitted voter whose support Labour would need if it was to increase its 142 seats to 300, but the militant, class-conscious minority who voted Labour already.<sup>116</sup>

Towards the end of 1929, many MP's were no longer prepared to countenance regular rebellions of this nature, particularly as the rebels refused to accept PLP and even ILP group majority decisions. A concerted campaign was established to pull them into line. Dollan, as a member of the NAC, the *de-facto* leader in Scotland (but not Glasgow), and well-known conference platform performer, was to be prominent in this campaign as was Manny Shinwell within the arena of the PLP. The camaraderie previously enjoyed by Wheatley, Dollan, Maxton and other Clydeside socialists such as Shinwell and Johnston,

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<sup>114</sup> Scanlon, *Decline and Fall*, p. 54.

<sup>115</sup> Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years*, p. 269.

<sup>116</sup> Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 288

which had emanated from their shared experiences and desire for socialism, disintegrated into back-biting, distrust and bitterness, once office and *real politic* entered the equation.

The NAC endorsed the rebels' actions in voting against the government (despite Dollan's opposition) by ten votes to three. Dollan, however, was later successful in having the rebels 'censured' in their 'home patch' at the ILP Scottish conference in January 1930, which no doubt bolstered Dollan's reputation with those in the ILP mainstream outwith Scotland.<sup>117</sup> According to the *Scotsman's* report, the conference agreed with Dollan by 103 to 94, despite 'several of the "rebels" including Mr Maxton and Mr Wheatley [speaking] in defence of their actions'.<sup>118</sup> The 'heated debates' were held over two days and Glasgow MP Adam McKinlay expressed the frustration of fellow MP's by stating 'the "rebels" have formed a Party of their own, with whips and a full organisation determining their own line of action'.<sup>119</sup> This view was even supported by a normally devoted ally of Maxton who was critical of the five Clydeside rebels 'travelling circus' which was 'making the ILP undignified'. In his defence, Maxton argued that he had a mandate for his actions by virtue of his successive elections to the chairmanship. According to the *Scotsman's* report, he then turned his attack on to Dollan:

It was perfectly humorous to see the chairman posing as the supreme democrat of super-Constitutionalism. In the past three months on definite issues Patrick Dollan had refused to carry out the mandates of the Glasgow Labour group in the Town Council. (Cries of dissent and "Play

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<sup>117</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report 1930 p. 23.

<sup>118</sup> *Scotsman*, 13 January 1930 Following this shock defeat in Scotland, the NAC decided to send 'missionaries' around the country in an attempt to win over the rank and file members. McAllister, *James Maxton*, p. 230.

<sup>119</sup> *Scotsman*, 13 January 1930.

the game.") . . . It was amusing to be called a rebel for carrying out the decision of one's own Party.<sup>120</sup>

He then asked for the Conference's 'vote to show just to what extent the Scottish branches stood by Dollan in his attitude of disapproving of their conduct, or stood by the NAC in the line they took'.<sup>121</sup> Dollan swiped this aside by saying that he had the permission of the Labour group to vote in the way he did, and returning to the main subject, said that it 'was an easy and nice sentimental way of avoiding an awkward issue to suggest, as had been done, that the "rebels" were fighting for the unemployed. Let them keep the welfare of the Party in mind.'<sup>122</sup> Having been defeated by Dollan in their heartland, and outflanked and outvoted at Parliamentary meetings, Maxton and his supporters decided to embark on a process that was to be the eventual main catalyst for the disaffiliation of the ILP from the Labour Party. They changed their rules to restrict the ILP Parliamentary group to those MP's who gave an undertaking that they would abide by 'ILP conference policies as interpreted by the NAC' thus signalling their intention to remain detached from mainstream PLP policies.<sup>123</sup> Dollan unsuccessfully campaigned against this 'purification' which resulted in the ILP group being reduced from 140 to 14.<sup>124</sup> His pleas, that they would adopt the 'wrong tactics' if they supported Maxton and the small minority in the Parliamentary ILP who 'had been acting unconstitutionally in regard to the Unemployment Bill and other matters', were resoundingly rejected by 357 votes to 53 at the 1930 national ILP

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report, 1930, pp. 76-90.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

conference.<sup>125</sup> The conference clearly preferred the idealism of the evangelical Maxton to the now pragmatic Dollan. The Labour Party were never going to tolerate this threat of a 'Party within a Party', however, and in retaliation took action by ensuring that ILP members could only become Labour candidates if they gave an undertaking that they would abide by PLP decisions.<sup>126</sup>

Dollan fought vigorously against ILP disaffiliation from the Labour Party which by 1931 seemed inevitable. He had written some years before about a previous breakaway led by the socialist 'tub-thumper' Victor Grayson MP, who had been 'unhappy with the alliance with Labour' and who eventually drifted into oblivion.<sup>127</sup> Dollan feared that the ILP would go the same way. This could be avoided if members accepted that they were being swayed by 'bad tactics', 'personalities', 'hero worship' and 'intransigence'. He unsuccessfully moved against disaffiliation at the 1932 conference, which he considered to be unrepresentative as many of the delegates were by this time revolutionary 'entryists'.<sup>128</sup> He stated that he stood 'unashamedly for unconditional affiliation' and in the process, sarcastically derided the middle-class supporters of disaffiliation 'from the revolutionary centres like Winchester, Truro, Marylebone, Westminster, Newton Abbot . . . [who] had never been in touch with the working-class movement'.<sup>129</sup> Whilst he continued to win the argument in Scotland, he

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, The same outcome was recorded the following year following a similar debate. ILP Annual Conference Report, 1931, pp. 82-120.

<sup>126</sup> ILP Annual Conference Report 1931, pp. 4-6.

<sup>127</sup> *Forward*, 7 October 1911; McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, pp. 49-51.

<sup>128</sup> Dowse, *Left In the Centre*, p. 137; Brown, *Maxton*, p. 245

<sup>129</sup> ILP National Conference Report 1932, pp. 23-51.

nevertheless, became increasingly isolated on the NAC where he was in a minority of one by 1932. Maxton could now afford to patronise him in his conference chairman's address:

I can even imagine [when looking into the future] Pat Dollan and myself strenuously supporting a resolution to have laughter completely voluntary as against the demand of Comrades Stephen and Kirkwood to make one laugh a day compulsory by law, as I can see the possibility of Dollan and myself disagreeing violently as to the implications of friendship in a Scottish community.<sup>130</sup>

Dollan was also vilified as 'an official apologist for Labour' by one delegate which showed how far the ILP - Labour relationship had declined.<sup>131</sup> By this time his stock was so low at conference that he was powerless to stop the special conference decision to disaffiliate from the Labour Party in July 1932. Dollan at first refused to accept the ILP's decision declaring without any real grounds that the vote was, 'reached by artificial and unfair means and carried by a minority vote'.<sup>132</sup> He argued unsuccessfully that a referendum be held before the split was formalised.<sup>133</sup> The ILP leadership was not prepared to brook any further opposition, however, so they expelled Dollan and 14 others in Scotland, for attempting to undermine the conference decision.<sup>134</sup> Dollan then set about forming the

<sup>130</sup> ILP National Conference Report 1931, p. 82.

<sup>131</sup> *The Times*, 22 April 1930.

<sup>132</sup> *Forward*, 13 August 1932; *The Times*, 22 August 1932.

<sup>133</sup> *The Times*, 3 August 1932; *Forward*, 6 August 1932. In this article Dollan said, 'He looked forward to the red flag being hoisted over the town halls of Bournemouth, Eastbourne, Exeter and Chelsea'.

<sup>134</sup> *The Times*, 15, 16 August 1932; ILP National Conference Report 1933, p. 4.

Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), which he announced would be supportive of and affiliated to the Labour Party.<sup>135</sup> Why, we have to ask, did Dollan and his group not simply decide to concentrate all their future political energies within the mainstream Labour Party rather than in the SSP? That was probably the question asked by Tom Johnston also who was a lukewarm supporter of the project.<sup>136</sup> But the loss of membership of the ILP had the potential to leave a vacuum in the lives of people like Dollan who was totally immersed, as was his wife Agnes. Its activities, together with its vibrancy and passion, was unlikely to be replicated within local Labour Party branches. Of course, it could be suggested that by setting up the SSP Dollan was attempting to ensure that his power base and influence would be maintained. Indeed, he became its Chairman, and Agnes the SSP's women's section President. It could, of course, simply be seen as an exemplar of Dollan's obduracy - his determination not to lose to Maxton. However, the more likely explanation, is that the Labour Party in Scotland was practically moribund.<sup>137</sup> The SSP, therefore, was a useful vehicle for ensuring that like-minded colleagues would not disappear from activism, or as Maxton hoped, continue their membership of the ILP, despite their disagreements, through either inertia or the absence of a suitable alternative. The SSP played a useful role as a channel for Scottish socialists who wanted to be active in left-wing politics. But it was never likely to last.<sup>138</sup> For one thing, within months of it being set up, Dollan, the 'driving

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<sup>135</sup> *The Times*, 2 September 1932; *Forward*, 27 August, 10, 24 September 1932; William Knox and Alan McKinlay, 'The Re-Making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1995, pp. 174-93.

<sup>136</sup> Graham Walker, *Thomas Johnston*, p. 120; NLS, Document 7656/4/1, Arthur Woodburn, 'Unpublished Autobiography', p. 68.

<sup>137</sup> Woodburn, 'Unpublished Autobiography', p. 68; Worley, *Labour Inside The Gate*, p. 96.

<sup>138</sup> Gidon Cohen, ' " Happy Hunting Ground For The Crank" ? The Independent Labour Party and



force' had become City Treasurer in the new Labour administration, and a major player within Glasgow Corporation. For another, it was not in the Labour Party's interest to repeat the mistakes made previously by having a competing power base and potential quarrelsome affiliate.<sup>139</sup> Inevitably, perhaps, they set about the task of rendering the SSP redundant through a vigorous organisation and membership drive overseen by Arthur Woodburn who said that 'in the end, SSP members appreciated the wasted effort of duplicating meetings, and branches one after another dissolved and became Labour Parties'.<sup>140</sup>

Woodburn was so successful in pursuit of his strategy that 'by 1939 the SSP had all but collapsed'.<sup>141</sup> There is a sense, however, that Dollan had lost control of the SSP much earlier, (a further indication of his lack of skill at, or desire for, 'machine politics', perhaps) when the SSP agreed to support Communist affiliation to Labour at the 1936 Party conference.<sup>142</sup> Dollan's resignation became inevitable, since the SSP retained a firm pacifist stance, whilst he, following much public soul searching in the columns of *Forward*, increasingly accepted the need for Britain to rearm in the face of the fascist threat from Europe.<sup>143</sup>

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Local Politics in Glasgow and Norwich 1932-45', in Matthew Worley ed., *Labour's Grass Roots*, (Hants: Ashgate, 2005), p. 58.

<sup>139</sup> Woodburn, 'Unpublished Autobiography', p. 70.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 71; Knox and McKinlay, 'The Re-Making of Labour', p. 189; Glasgow, Mitchell library, Carmichael Collection, Document 118, Arthur Marwick, *Labour In Scotland - A Short History of the Scottish Working Class Movement*, p. 23; Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 65.

<sup>142</sup> Ben Pimlott, *Labour And The Left In The 1930s* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 87.

<sup>143</sup> *Forward*, 19 September 1936; Ben Pimlott, 'The Labour Left', in Chris Cook and Ian Taylor

The ILP breakaway had little impact in Scotland. As the *Times* commented, 'Scotland appears to be as much opposed to secession as London is of the contrary opinion.'<sup>144</sup> There were a few skirmishes in Glasgow, where most of the branches at least initially remained loyal to Maxton.<sup>145</sup> Only around seven of the forty councillors in Glasgow resigned the Labour whip to follow the ILP, but a more immediate impact came in the November 1932 municipal election when the ILP put candidates up in a number of seats against Labour resulting in split votes and some Labour defeats. One such casualty was Agnes Dollan who was running in the triennial contest for the Govan Central ward which Patrick also represented. The victor on this occasion was the Moderate who benefitted from Labour's divisions.<sup>146</sup> Lessons were learned from this defeat and an informal understanding was reached in a number of areas in Scotland, particularly after Labour lost their deposit against John McGovern in Shettleston, which would avoid such occurrences in the future. At any rate, as we will explore in the following chapter, it did not stop Labour from winning a historic victory at the Glasgow council elections in November 1933 just 15 months or so after the momentous Bradford conference decision. The ILP hold on Glasgow was to all intents over. Their General Secretary's prediction that they risked 'complete disintegration' if they disaffiliated from Labour was to prove correct as they descended 'into ultra-leftism and factionalism' and increasingly lost influence and

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eds, *The Labour Party* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 171; Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 245; Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 213.

<sup>144</sup> *The Times*, 29 August 1932.

<sup>145</sup> *The Times*, 3 August 1932.

<sup>146</sup> GCM, 4 November 1932, pp. 3-10.

members.<sup>147</sup> As we will see, that did not deter them from trying to impede Dollan's inexorable rise within the council.

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<sup>147</sup>*Forward*, 6 February 1932; Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years*, p. 309.

## CHAPTER 3

### 1933-1946 CONTROL AND POWER

Despite the searing divisions in the Glasgow labour movement caused by the severing of the ties of the ILP from the Labour Party, the combined Labour (which now included the affiliated SSP) and ILP parties were to achieve an historic result in the Council elections in November 1933. These elections gave Labour, minority, but effective control of the council for the first time which they retained until 1949.

It is in this period that Dollan has been inextricably linked with machine politics and corruption as well as generally being accused of stamping on the socialist idealism of the Glasgow Labour movement.<sup>1</sup> Some historians to emphasise this point, contrast his wife's assumed idealism and other qualities with Dollan's 'unscrupulous and ambitious' characteristics.<sup>2</sup> Helen Corr says, 'In sharp contrast to her husband Agnes was an idealist,<sup>3</sup> ... and who, 'unlike the more pragmatic Patrick was an idealistic socialist ... [she] remained an outstanding advocate of socialism and feminism'.<sup>4</sup> Knox, in contrast to his shared assessment of Dollan, whom he argued moved towards 'patriotism and the status quo' also expressed the view that Agnes was politically an 'outstanding individual'.<sup>5</sup> This perception that Dollan was not 'idealistic' nor 'an outstanding advocate of socialism' will be tested in this chapter by examining Dollan's alleged involvement with machine politics together with the supposed corrupting influence of the Irish connection. We will also consider his move away from First World War conscientious objection to vigorous support for British

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction, pp. 6-12.

<sup>2</sup> McShane and Smith, *Harry McShane*, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Corr, 'Agnes Dollan', p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> Corr, DNB entry for Agnes Dollan.

<sup>5</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 97; Knox, 'Introduction', *Labour Leaders*, p. 40.

Second World War efforts and his consistently forceful hostility towards communism to see if this led to an erosion of his socialist faith. In considering Corr and Knox's assertions, it has to be said that there is no evidence to show that Agnes and Patrick ever publicly diverged on policy or political philosophy. Agnes supported Patrick's line on the ILP and vice-versa, followed him into the SSP and out again, and supported the Labour leadership when a member of the Labour Party's national executive. During her numerous election campaigns she never departed from Labour's agreed policy.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, she served on several government-appointed bodies throughout the period and was awarded an M.B.E. If Agnes is deemed an idealist therefore, and an 'outstanding' individual then it is reasonable to ask, given that Agnes and Patrick shared the same values, beliefs and activities, why these historians take a less favourable view of Patrick. For example, Corr and Knox say that Patrick Dollan: 'had no scruples in making use of the political system towards achieving his own ends'.<sup>7</sup> They then cite an ILP contemporary's description to attest to Dollan's supposed negative characteristics :

A hustler...(who) cared neither for the adverse criticism of his own comrades nor his opponents so long as he felt he was on the right lines. No man risked more experiments of which many proved successful.<sup>8</sup>

However when we examine their source, W. M. Haddow's autobiography, we can see that they do less than justice to Dollan, as Haddow's assessment when viewed in context, can actually be viewed as complimentary:

Our second socialist Lord Provost, Patrick J. Dollan, was

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<sup>6</sup> See her comments on the ILP following her defeat in Govan in 1932.  
*Govan Press*, 4 November 1932.

<sup>7</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

quite a different type of man [from John Stewart] but equally clever. He was a hustler. He used every device to put Glasgow on the map and to-day few people are unaware of this "dark seaborne city". He had a difficult job because war had started during his reign and he had to organise the protection of the city and its inhabitants. He cared neither for the adverse criticism of his own comrades nor his opponents, so long as he felt he was on the right lines ... Never did a Lord Provost put in a more strenuous three years' work than Dollan, and the fact that he received the £1000 award to the citizen who proved by his labours to have made Glasgow a better place to live in, surely proves that he was held worthy by his fellow citizens.<sup>9</sup>

Corr and Knox tend to view Dollan's influence on the Labour movement in a largely negative light. According to Knox, he helped to sow 'disillusion among party activists' in the 1930s.<sup>10</sup> Dollan is further attributed with being one of those who assisted in the transformation of Labour 'from a radical, almost messianic party of idealists into a social democratic organisation run on mechanistic lines'.<sup>11</sup> Such views have been widely adopted by historians, and deserve, like the Corr and Knox quote above, much closer scrutiny if we are to objectively assess Dollan's contribution to the Labour movement.

It is important to recognise that contrary to perception, it was councillor George Smith, not Dollan, who led the Labour group towards their first taste of power within the City Chambers at George Square.<sup>12</sup> Over the next thirteen years, before standing down in 1946, Dollan held a number of important council posts, including Treasurer, Labour group leader and Lord Provost, but it is critical to acknowledge when re-evaluating his reputation and legacy, that he was leader of the Labour group for only four of the sixteen years between 1933 and 1949 when Labour were in power. That is, from 1934 until becoming Lord Pro-

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<sup>9</sup> Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, Farmer Collection. W. M. Haddow, *My Seventy Years* (Glasgow: Robert Gibson and Sons, 1943), p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 241.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>12</sup> *Evening Times*, 10 November 1933.

vost in 1938. In total then, taking account of his earlier period of leadership from 1922-1925, Dollan was the leader of the Labour group, for only seven years of the 33 years he served on the council, and was leader for only four years when Labour held power. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Labour members could not be guaranteed to follow a party line. Even Dollan himself, for whom it was suggested, 'Party came before class', voted frequently against the majority of the party group.<sup>13</sup> Again, despite the image often portrayed of a socialist-dominated Glasgow, it is instructive to recall that throughout Dollan's 33 years as a councillor, Labour formed a majority administration in only one of those years, from 1945 to 1946, his final year on the council when he played little part in its proceedings.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, due to the continuation of 'their bitter family feud' Labour were never able to totally rely on the ILP for support within the council chamber, despite overtures made to them by Dollan.<sup>15</sup>

Put simply, Dollan was never the archetypal Tammany Hall 'Boss Tweed-type' machine politician as often presented.<sup>16</sup> Maver suggests that Dollan 'demonstrated a shrewd understanding of realpolitik, which gave rise to the pervasive notion that a formidable Labour "machine" had been constructed in inter-war Glasgow'.<sup>17</sup> Yet, this was still a time when the council was described by a local magazine as 'the biggest collection of individualists in Scotland'.<sup>18</sup> Dollan was single-minded, stubborn, contrary, interfering, and often

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<sup>13</sup> Knox, 'Parliamentary movement', p. 174.

<sup>14</sup> *Scotsman*, 8 November 1945.

<sup>15</sup> Dollan said he had 'no wish to attack the ILP and detected a spirit of comradeship in the movement that had been absent for the last five or six years'. *Govan Press*, 14 October 1932; *Evening Times*, 7 November 1934.

<sup>16</sup> Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 114; Knox, *Maxton*, p. 105; Damer, *Going For a Song*, p. 133.

<sup>17</sup> Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 229.

<sup>18</sup> *The Baillie*, 2 March 1935.

petulant, which led to him regularly falling out with colleagues on the council.<sup>19</sup> Yet there seems little doubt that he held high office in the council due to hard work and ability rather than by wielding patronage or practising political chicanery or corruption.

### **In Power 1933-38**

In 1933 on the eve of the Glasgow municipal elections, the *Evening Times* pointed to Labour's main election attacks on the Moderates as being, 'the scales of public assistance (which are considered inadequate), the present rating system and slum clearance'.<sup>20</sup> With the backdrop of mass unemployment, Labour and the ILP (who now formed two separate groups on the council) campaigned for increases in the scales of public assistance.<sup>21</sup> These campaigns were generally led by Dollan who was Labour's finance spokesman. It did not help the Moderate's re-election cause that just weeks prior to the election, local authorities' were asked, in a memorandum from the Secretary for Scotland, to enact further expenditure cuts.<sup>22</sup> Dollan's plea that this memorandum be ignored and that 'no further action be taken' on the issue, was rejected out of hand in favour of seeking further cuts.<sup>23</sup>

At the council election in November 1933, Labour, aided by the intervention of Protestant candidates who took votes from the Moderates, gained eleven new seats taking their total to 47, but still twelve short of an overall majority.<sup>24</sup> Although still largest group in the council, the Moderates had lost seventeen seats and stood aside to allow the minority Labour group to take over the reins of power. The *Glasgow Herald* announced that this came

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<sup>19</sup> See Labour group leader Hector McNeill's, reference to 'some sharp differences of opinion with the Lord Provost during his long period of service'. *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941.

<sup>20</sup> *Evening Times*, 2 November 1933.

<sup>21</sup> GCM, 22 June 1933, p. 1988.

<sup>22</sup> GCM, 14 September 1933, p. 2481.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Evening Times*, 9 November 1933; Mclean, *Legend*, pp. 220-25; Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, pp. 194-98.



as no surprise, given Labour's 'favourable tactical position' and the 'general feeling of dissatisfaction' with the Moderates. *Forward* declared triumphantly, that by gaining Glasgow, they had 'captured the largest burgh council in the British Isles'.<sup>25</sup>

Labour was prevented by council standing orders from taking up the Lord Provost and Treasurer's positions which were filled by Moderates who still had two years to run in these appointments.<sup>26</sup> It was not until after the 1935 municipal election, therefore, that every council post was in Labour's hands, and even then, they did not have an overall majority and still relied on others, mainly the ILP.<sup>27</sup> Following the municipal election, Dollan advised *Forward* readers that the Labour group had, 'appointed three candidates to formulate and coordinate policy, and whilst it is not my business to anticipate the decisions of these committees in advance'. Nevertheless, in his typical interfering style, he went on to outline what Labour's objectives should be:

to build new hospitals, houses, and schools; to develop road schemes; to ensure the "humanisation of Public Assistance"; to introduce a direct labour department which would not only build houses but venture into other areas of activity such as the building of coach bodies; the introduction of a system for the bulk purchase of departmental supplies; and to establish a municipal bank.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the bleak economic backdrop, Labour pursued a range of initiatives that would assist their working-class constituents including policies to reduce council house rents and the rates of those in working-class tenements together with plans to increase the level of

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<sup>25</sup> *Forward*, 11 November 1933.

<sup>26</sup> *Forward*, 18 November 1933.

<sup>27</sup> *Scotsman*, 6 November 1935. Following the municipal election of 1935 they held 58 seats which represented 50 per cent of the total and should have been able to rely on the casting vote of the Lord Provost. That this was never necessary had more to do with the various political groups' indiscipline rather than political arithmetic.

<sup>28</sup> *Forward*, 18 November 1933.

poor relief.<sup>29</sup> They also established a direct labour department to deliver their ambitious council house building programme.<sup>30</sup>

Labour was led initially in the council chamber by George Smith but Dollan took over as leader shortly afterwards and led them into the 1934 elections.<sup>31</sup> Despite the City Treasurer's post being formally held by a Moderate, Dollan as chairman of the accounts sub-committee was largely able to determine the council's financial strategy. He moved, the restoration of cuts, increases to wages, poor relief and public assistance allowances, together with a review of ex-servicemen's entitlement to benefit.<sup>32</sup> It was Dollan, not Treasurer Laing, who moved the successful motion passed by 55 votes to 50 to establish a municipal savings bank.<sup>33</sup> Dollan also moved that the special sub-committee previously established by the Moderates to secure cuts in council expenditure be wound up.<sup>34</sup> He also called for a special committee to be set up to 'consider and report on proposals to reduce the burden of interest' falling on the council.<sup>35</sup> In short, he dominated the strategic direction of the council.

His authority was recognised, when shortly after Labour strengthened its position on the council, by winning a further five seats under Dollan's leadership in 1934 - taking their total to 54 but still five short of an overall majority - the Moderate City Treasurer with a further year of his term still to run, decided to move aside for Dollan.<sup>36</sup> In doing so, as the *Evening Times* reported, he heaped 'fulsome praise' on Dollan, by commenting on his 'long

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<sup>29</sup> GCM, 14 December 1933, p. 412; GCM, 1 February 1934, p. 861; GCM, 11 January 1934, p. 577.

<sup>30</sup> GCM, 30 November 1933, p. 294.

<sup>31</sup> *Govan Press*, 21 September 1934.

<sup>32</sup> GCM, 1933-34 passim; 30 November 1933, p. 290.

<sup>33</sup> GCM, 26 April 1934, p. 1563.

<sup>34</sup> GCM, 30 November 1933, p. 294.

<sup>35</sup> GCM, 24 November 1933, p. 280.

<sup>36</sup> GCM, 15 November 1934, p. 139; *Evening Times*, 7 November 1934.

experience ... and his expert knowledge of finance'. His nomination was seconded by Labour's John Stewart who added that, 'there was no individual in the Corporation who had given more good work and more assiduous service to the city's financial affairs'.<sup>37</sup>

The *Glasgow Herald* had clearly misjudged the situation when following Labour taking office in the city chambers in 1933, it predicted that Labour would indulge in 'an orgy of extravagance' which would bring about a 'revulsion of feeling which is certain to follow a year of Socialist rule'.<sup>38</sup> That the Moderates failed to recover until after the war had much to do with Dollan's astute financial and political influence on the council, firstly, as Treasurer, and then as the leader of the Labour group, which he combined with the Treasurer's role for two years. From 1933 to 1938 then, when Dollan effectively held the council's purse strings, he was astute enough to recognise the importance of ensuring that the rates did not escalate out of control. The *Evening Times* commented that despite Labour bringing forward improvements during their first year, 'they had not increased the rates'.<sup>39</sup> A *Glasgow Herald* leader page bemoaned:

the effect of Socialist propaganda in the working-class districts of the city has been such as to create the impression in the minds of the majority of the voters that they can secure substantial benefits at little or no costs to themselves if only a Socialist Council is given a free hand to carry out its policy.<sup>40</sup>

Dollan's cautious but populist approach, combined with his public relations skills, ensured that the Glasgow electorate, who despite rejecting them for decades, became comfortable with the prospect of a Labour council in power. This success was gained more by delivering popular policies and setting a mood, rather than as some would have it, the for-

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<sup>37</sup> *Evening Times*, 13 December 1934.

<sup>38</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 8 November 1933.

<sup>39</sup> *Evening Times*, 7 November 1934.

<sup>40</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 7 November 1934.

mation of a formidable electoral organisation or 'machine'. Such an effective political 'machine' was simply unsustainable at this stage, given the split between Labour and the ILP and the moribund state of Labour Party organisation in Glasgow.<sup>41</sup> Quite simply, the Labour Party, in large measure through Dollan's astute political skills, was able to connect with the Glasgow working class, which became their 'client electorate', in a way that ensured mutual benefit through votes for Labour and the provision of council housing, cheap rents, municipal jobs and welfare provision for Glasgow's working class.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the Catholic population of the city, which became supportive of Labour, was not only ensured equal opportunity when it came to council houses and jobs, but was also given assurances that its schools would not be 'taken off the rates' as advocated by militant Protestants and supported by many Moderates.<sup>43</sup> The Moderate leader recognised the immensity of the task of overthrowing Labour now with many on increased poor relief and as '... the city budget for 1934-1935 was skilfully manipulated ... founded on promises which it will be impossible to fulfil'.<sup>44</sup>

Dollan did endeavour to 'fulfil' Labour's mandate 'to carry through a bold programme of planned social reconstruction for Glasgow'.<sup>45</sup> This was facilitated largely through borrowing 'the huge sum of £660,000 to be repaid over a period of ten years, plus £230,000 interest on the borrowed money' according to the Moderates.<sup>46</sup> Dollan responded robustly to this attack by arguing that in the period 1931-1933, 'the rates were increased by 2s.11/2d. under Moderate rule, while the social services were brought to the verge of cri-

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<sup>41</sup> *Forward*, 10 September 1933; NLS, Woodburn, 'Unpublished Autobiography', p. 68.

<sup>42</sup> Fry, *Patronage and Principle*, p.191; Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People*, p. 274.

<sup>43</sup> Maver, *Glasgow*, pp. 207-10.

<sup>44</sup> *Evening Times*, 7 November 1934.

<sup>45</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 8 November 1934.

<sup>46</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 4 November 1935

sis'. In contrast, under Labour, he argued, there was '20,000 [less] unemployed, social services had been extended, wage cuts restored and although unemployed relief is costing £1,000,000 more than in 1931 the rates are reduced by £45,000 this year'.<sup>47</sup> The Moderate opposition, however, continued to complain about the impact of high rates on industry, burgeoning bureaucracy, and compared Glasgow unfavourably with other cities with lower rates such as Birmingham.<sup>48</sup>

The Labour group contained many strong characters who were not prepared to be manipulated or controlled by a 'machine'. Competition was fierce for council posts. An example of this can be seen in the case of Hector McNeill who eventually became group leader in 1945. He was defeated twice before this when seeking nomination for the Lord Provost's post within the Labour group: on one occasion by the casting vote of the chairman.<sup>49</sup> When Dollan, as Labour leader, moved John S. Radcliffe as convenor of the Markets committee at a council meeting in 1935, the nomination was defeated when numerous Labour members supported a rival candidate.<sup>50</sup> The view that Dollan determined everything that happened within the Labour group, therefore, is inaccurate and unsustainable.

But if it did not always follow his lead, the Labour group, did acknowledge his leadership qualities. The *Glasgow Herald* recorded that at their meeting following the council election in 1934, Dollan 'was received with musical honours'.<sup>51</sup> It also reported the following year, that Dollan was being pressed by a number of Labour councillors to put himself forward for the Lord Provost's position in 1935.<sup>52</sup> It is likely that this was political kite fly-

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<sup>47</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 2, 4 November 1935.

<sup>48</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 2 November 1936, 1 November 1937.

<sup>49</sup> *Scotsman*, 8 November 1945.

<sup>50</sup> GCM, 8 November 1935, p. 18.

<sup>51</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 8 November 1934.

<sup>52</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 2 November 1935.

ing on Dollan's part, and a reflection of his growing ego, for the Labour group bypassed him by nominating John Stewart as the council's first-ever Labour Provost.<sup>53</sup> In what could be considered as a face-saving exercise Dollan told the *Glasgow Herald*: 'Everybody who knows me is aware that if there is a game on I would rather be in the team than sitting in the director's box'.<sup>54</sup> This assertion changed three years later when he was able to garner enough votes from colleagues to gain the nomination for Provost at the end of Stewart's term. From this, one suspects that the real reason for declining nomination in 1935, was that he could not win the vote in the Labour group.

Whilst his hold on the Labour group may have been tenuous at times, there is no doubt that Dollan retained the support and admiration of the Govan Labour activists and constituents throughout his 33 consecutive years as a councillor. Under the council's annual first-past-the-post electoral system with three councillors in each ward, he came up for election in rotation every third year. He could never take electoral success for granted, particularly when splits occurred in the local Labour party or religious divisions intervened as occurred in Govan in municipal elections held in 1927, 1929, and 1932 and resulted in Moderates being elected.<sup>55</sup> The fact that Dollan avoided the mishaps that befell three of his Govan colleagues (including his wife, Agnes in 1932, an early casualty of the split with the ILP) owed more to his popularity and judgement, than luck.<sup>56</sup> Dollan also skilfully avoided any major political mishaps following the involvement of Scottish Protestant League (SPL) candidates in Glasgow elections from 1931. Although a temporary 'political phenomenon'

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<sup>53</sup> Dollan nominated John Stewart for the Lord Provost post at the council meeting. GCM, 8 November 1935, p.16.

<sup>54</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 2 November 1935.

<sup>55</sup> Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 192; *Evening Times*, 1 Nov 1927; *Govan Press*, 4 November 1932.

<sup>56</sup> *Govan Press*, 4 November 1932; As the Glasgow Council Minutes show, following Agnes losing the Springburn Labour nomination in 1925 to George Smith, she later unsuccessfully fought council seats in Whiteinch (twice), Cowlairs, and Kinning Park as well as Govan. Her inability to be selected and elected in a safe Labour council seat surely undermines the supposed "fixer" reputation of her husband.

the SPL attracted a 'significant support by its militant Protestantism and rabid anti-Catholicism' directed at the Irish Catholic population.<sup>57</sup> As well as bringing sectarianism into the political arena in Glasgow the Protestant candidates also brought acute political uncertainty into a hitherto informal 'two-party' electoral system.<sup>58</sup> Although the main casualties of this uncertainty were the Moderates, the Protestant League's intervention in Govan in 1934 with its capacity to split the vote, must have been a concern for Dollan who was again up for election.<sup>59</sup> The Scottish Protestant League had come second in Govan the previous year with over two thousand votes when the successful Labour candidate commented that it was 'a most bitter election in which all sense of decency and fair play was submerged'.<sup>60</sup> Dollan was now faced with a tricky fight as the Moderates agreed to tactically stand aside for an SPL candidate in Govan.<sup>61</sup> A further complication was the apparent intervention of an ILP candidate, despite the majority of former ILP members having moved across with him to the SSP.<sup>62</sup> In the event, Dollan was re-elected quite easily, with over three thousand votes to spare over the SPL. His prospects had been dramatically improved by the ILP's shock decision to pull out of the Govan election at the eleventh hour which caused 'disarray' in the ILP Govan branch and brought about the resignation of their secretary.<sup>63</sup> Given Dollan's reputation as a 'fixer', one would be forgiven for assuming that he did a deal with the ILP, or its candidate, to provide him with an easier contest. That turns out not to be the case. The ILP decision was not to help Dollan nor Labour as the ILP firmly

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<sup>57</sup> Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 194; See also Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, pp.150-69.

<sup>58</sup> James J. Smyth, 'Resisting Labour: Unionists, Liberals, and Moderates In Glasgow Between the Wars', *The Historical Journal*, 46, (2003), pp. 375-40.

<sup>59</sup> *Govan Press*, 10 November 1933.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*; This also calls into question Joan Smith's view that in comparison to Liverpool, 'The labour movement in Glasgow did not face a hostile Protestant working class.' Joan Smith, 'Taking the leadership', in McKinlay and Morris eds., *The ILP on Clydeside*, p. 78.

<sup>61</sup> Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 146.

<sup>62</sup> *Govan Press*, 4 November 1932.

<sup>63</sup> *Evening Times*, 5 November 1934.

believed that: '... nothing but economic barbarism can accrue from Labour's reactionary and reformist policy'. The ILP's decision arose from them deciding to put into practice their 'United Front' strategy outlined by Jimmy Maxton at a meeting in Govan in 1933.<sup>64</sup> This resulted in the ILP withdrawing in favour of the Communist Party candidate.<sup>65</sup> If Maxton believed that such a strategy would see the eclipse of Glasgow's Labour leader, he was sadly mistaken: the Communist Party candidate secured only 420 votes to Dollan's 6,451.<sup>66</sup>

It is clear that the CPGB saw Dollan as a prime opponent of their efforts to win over the working class in Glasgow. He had, after all, been at the forefront of opposition to their attempts at affiliation to Labour. Dollan, like most of mainstream Labour figures, also stood aside from 'United Fronts' or 'Popular Fronts' and rejected such overtures from the Communist Party.<sup>67</sup> The ILP's antagonism towards Dollan, which emanated from their divisive split from Labour in 1932, like that of the CPGB, never abated, and probably accounts for the lack of empathy for Dollan from some subsequent chroniclers of these events. Their antipathy was clearly in evidence when they stood against him in the later 1937 municipal contest; for this was the only ward in which they stood against a sitting Labour councillor in Glasgow, and was viewed as retaliation against Labour's increasing incursions into ILP heartlands.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, the Communist Party in their 'Popular Front' phase had decided not to contest any elections that year but the new right-wing 'rate-payers' Progressive Party founded in Glasgow in 1935, in the wake of the continued failure of the Moderates, did.<sup>69</sup> The election results across Glasgow saw the combined Labour-ILP

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<sup>64</sup> *Govan Press*, 10 November 1933.

<sup>65</sup> *Govan Press*, 2 November 1934.

<sup>66</sup> *Govan Press*, 9 November 1934.

<sup>67</sup> *Govan Press*, 26 October 1934.

<sup>68</sup> *Scotsman*, 23 October 1937; *Glasgow Herald*, 3 November 1937.

<sup>69</sup> The aims of the Progressive Party were: 'To meet the challenge of the Labour Party by opposing its candidates wherever their policy conflicts with the best interests of the city.' See letters column,



majority go down by two, to 16. However, as reported in the *Glasgow Herald*, there was another decisive victory for Dollan, who having received 6,385 votes was returned with a 'convincing' almost 4,000 majority over the Progressive in Govan with the ILP trailing in third and last with almost 5000 votes fewer than Dollan.<sup>70</sup>

Having failed to unseat Dollan, the ILP sought vengeance through another route, by conspiring and voting with the Progressives to abruptly end his term as Treasurer a year prematurely. They did this by using a 'legal flaw' in the arcane council standing orders and opposing an attempt to amend them in a way that would have allowed Dollan to remain as city Treasurer.<sup>71</sup> That this was purely personal is illustrated by the fact that they later supported the suspension of standing orders in similar circumstances, allowing the Labour councillor Tom Kerr to retain his convenorship.<sup>72</sup>

Dollan dismissed the ILP's antics as those of a 'dying organisation', only to receive a verbal volley from the ILP leader in the council who evoked laughter by responding, 'it is the best kind of death rattle I can think of'.<sup>73</sup> Dollan's riposte was less colourful:

I regard the statement made by one of the ILP speakers that they were seizing a golden opportunity to remove me from a key position, as a personal tribute to the work I have done in combating extremism in the city of Glasgow.<sup>74</sup>

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*Glasgow Herald*, 1 November 1937; Smyth, 'Resisting Labour', p. 395.

<sup>70</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 3 November 1937.

<sup>71</sup> *Glasgow Herald*,. Cohen suggests, that Dollan's 'dictatorial methods' was the real cause of the ILP's antagonism, and that they had 'considerable support even amongst Labour councillors' for that view. Cohen, 'Happy Hunting Ground', in Worley ed., *Labour's Grass Roots*, p. 60. This view is not supported by the vote or press reports. See *Glasgow Herald*, 5, 6 November 1937; GCM, 5 November 1937, p. 26.

<sup>72</sup> GCM, 10 November 1939 p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 6 November 1937.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

Dollan's use of the term 'extremism' is instructive and shows how much of a schism had developed between rival socialists following the experiences of two minority Labour governments. Whilst Dollan had become much more pragmatic, it seems clear that the ILP were not prepared to embrace reformism or gradualism in the same manner as Dollan or the Labour Party. Their candidate in Govan ward in 1933, the Marxist Dr Archibald, made this clear in his election address:

Reformism is merely the tool of Capitalism. I ask for your vote to assist the proletariat to achieve its historic mission. Theory becomes material force once it is seized by the masses ... [we] will not compete with other Parties in offering futile reforms to the electorate.<sup>75</sup>

Despite their apparent aversion to Dollan, the ILP could not bring themselves to oppose his nomination for Lord Provost in 1938 as this would have meant the elevation of a Progressive.<sup>76</sup> They did continue their defiance, however, by voting against the recommendation to have a bust sculpted in honour of Dollan at the end of his period as Lord Provost.<sup>77</sup>

### **Lord Provost**

Dollan had no rival when, as its senior member, he was nominated by the Labour group for the Lord Provost's position in November 1938.<sup>78</sup> This was not surprising, as the *Glasgow Herald* remarked, 'His energy and ability contributed largely to the progress made in

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<sup>75</sup> Glasgow, Mitchell Library, ILP collection, W. D. Kerr Box; *Govan Press*, 4 November 1932.

<sup>76</sup> *Scotsman*, 5 November 1938.

<sup>77</sup> GCM, 30 October 1941, p. 2345.

<sup>78</sup> Broady Collection, c 55, *Weekly Scotsman*, 30 June 1960, As most commentators have subsequently remarked, Dollan became Glasgow's first 'Catholic Lord Provost'.

the last twenty years by the Socialist movement in the municipal politics of Glasgow'.<sup>79</sup> It was now said of him that 'wherever Dollan is, things are done'.<sup>80</sup>

Dollan was replaced by Hector McNeil as Labour leader whom, as we will see, he was to cross swords with many times over the following years, particularly over issues relating to civil defence. In accepting the Lord Provost's role Dollan, by convention, also assumed the role of 'Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Glasgow', a role in which he was expected to represent the King.<sup>81</sup> Over the course of his three year term, which encompassed preparations for, and entry into the war, Dollan threw himself with enthusiasm into the task of ensuring that Glasgow and its citizens were protected from aerial bombardment, and played a full part in assisting the war effort. He had already committed himself to such a role when as leader of the ruling group he agreed to become chairman of the council's Air Raid Precautions(ARP) committee established in all councils following an instruction from the Home Office in 1935.<sup>82</sup> Dollan energetically embarked on a recruitment drive for ARP volunteers, which included him touring Clydeside cinemas.<sup>83</sup> This brought further opposition from the ILP on the council, who, unlike Dollan, maintained their pacifist stance and opposed the war.<sup>84</sup>

Some have questioned how Dollan, the conscientious objector in World War One, and the chairman of the SSP who announced at their conference in March 1934, that 'the SSP would under no circumstances take part in war' could have become such an inveterate sup-

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<sup>79</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 3 November 1938.

<sup>80</sup> *The Baillie*, No. 155, 2 March 1935; Woods, Miscellany collection, *Scots Magazine*, December 1980.

<sup>81</sup> <<http://www.thefullwiki.org/ListofLordProvostsofGlasgow>> [accessed 20 December 2013].

<sup>82</sup> GCM, 1 August 1935 pp. 2171-73; GCM, 29 August 1935 p. 2408.

<sup>83</sup> *Scotsman*, 7 Nov 1939; *Glasgow Herald*, (archive article), 27 May 1989.

<sup>84</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 7 November 1936; *Forward* 1 April 1935, quoted in Knox ed., *Labour Leaders* p. 49.

porter of Britain's war effort.<sup>85</sup> Corr and Knox argue that it was during this period that Dollan 'destroyed his reputation as a radical' and saw him embark on a 'journey to the right of the labour movement: a journey that saw him abandon his pacifism and radicalism in favour of patriotism and the status quo'.<sup>86</sup> Iain McLean, however calls this view, an 'odd judgement'.<sup>87</sup> In light of the evidence it does seem that Corr and Knox may have overstated their case somewhat. The left was bitterly divided on the question of rearmament and the threat of war.<sup>88</sup> This was a period when Hitler and Mussolini demonstrated fascist aggression; when the League of Nations appeared to be ineffective; when the Spanish civil war was fought; and when democracy was under threat.<sup>89</sup> Dollan, as a *Daily Herald* journalist was well aware of the shifting tide of Labour parliamentary opinion on the threat from Hitler and fascism. Like countless other socialists and communists (at differing times depending on the latest Moscow directive), he no doubt had his crisis of conscience.<sup>90</sup> But he eventually abandoned the notion that all wars were imperialist wars.<sup>91</sup> This was a notion which was still clung to by the ILP and Dollan's SSP itself.<sup>92</sup> As Knox acknowledges, those on the left who opposed the war failed to take account of the fundamental differences between the First and Second World Wars and thus, 'were increasingly isolated from the

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<sup>85</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 97.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> See Iain McLean's review of *Scottish Labour Leaders*, in, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 16 No. 4, p. 469.

<sup>88</sup> Christopher W. Miller, 'Forward to Obscurity? Another Dimension to the decline of the Radical Left on 1930s Clydeside', *Scottish Labour History Journal*, Vol. 47, (2012), pp. 92-106.

<sup>89</sup> Pimlott, *Labour and the Left In The 1930s*, (Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 88-92.

<sup>90</sup> Comintern decisions 'were binding on the British [Communist] Party'. Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism*, (Manchester: MUP, 1989), p. 13.

<sup>91</sup> See Arthur Woodburn's article in *Forward*, 29 August 1936; Knox implies that this article demonstrates Labour's non-interventionist policy over Spain but Woodburn argued the opposite by calling on the Government and movement to 'take whatever risks are necessary to do its duty and to safeguard liberty' in Spain. Knox, ed., *Labour Leaders*, p. 50.

<sup>92</sup> Ben Pimlott, 'The Labour Left', in *The Labour Party*, eds, by Chris Cook and Ian Taylor (London: Longman, 1980), p 171; Broady Collection, *The Socialist Challenge*, ILP Pamphlet, (1938?).

mainstream labour movement and unrepresentative of working-class thinking'.<sup>93</sup> Dollan was in tune with working-class thinking. He was also employed by the 'virulently anti-communist' Transport House-supporting *Daily Herald*.<sup>94</sup> But he was unable to persuade the pacifist SSP to adopt his stance, again belying his supposed 'machine' control over colleagues, and in 1936 he dropped out of the party of which he had been the key figure in creating.<sup>95</sup>

Not unsurprisingly, the Left was riddled with contradictions during these dramatic events in the 1930s. One example was seen when the SSP, despite its supposed pacifist convictions, demanded immediate military intervention in support of Republican Spain under attack from Franco and his forces.<sup>96</sup> Dollan however, like most of the working-class movement, at least initially was much more cautious. He supported Attlee's non-interventionist policy and spoke of 'doubts and confusion' and fears that intervention could ultimately lead 'to the abolition of Democracy in Europe'.<sup>97</sup> He was, however, (demonstrating a growing tendency for embellishment) to declare later in 1939, when he was fully committed to a war against fascism, that he was 'one of those who believed in British military intervention in the Spanish civil war from the outset'.<sup>98</sup>

Dollan's caution over Spain probably served him well in the Glasgow context because, outside of the Communist Party, the SSP, and the ILP, who all campaigned vigorously on behalf of Republican Spain, there was little enthusiastic support for the Republic

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<sup>93</sup> Knox, 'Introduction' in *Labour Leaders* p. 50.

<sup>94</sup> Ben Pimlott, *Labour and The Left*, p. 87.

<sup>95</sup> Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 213.

<sup>96</sup> Knox, 'Introduction', *Labour Leaders*, pp. 50-51; *Forward*, 29 August, 19 September 1936.

<sup>97</sup> *Forward*, 19 September 1936.

<sup>98</sup> Broady Collection, c 33, P. J. Dollan, *Hail Democracy!* (Undated (1939?), p. 24.

in the west of Scotland.<sup>99</sup> That was particularly true following reports of alleged atrocities perpetrated by Republican forces on Catholic priests and nuns which also caused divisions within the Labour ranks on the council.<sup>100</sup> *Forward* complained that a Labour Party faction in Glasgow's East End were 'supporters of the fascist rebels in Spain'.<sup>101</sup> Support diminished further following the ILP leaderships' accusations of communist tyranny against other members of the left fighting in Spain including the much-venerated Bob Smillie's son.<sup>102</sup>

Whilst Dollan took a keen interest in foreign affairs he also had to ensure that he did not ignore his role as Glasgow's 'first citizen'. His tenure as Lord Provost was associated with his endeavours to paint Glasgow in a better light than the negative picture of desolation, squalor and poverty often presented in publications such as *No Mean City* (1935), and the Maxton-inspired 'fiery image of Red Clydeside'.<sup>103</sup> Dollan had also painted negative images of the city in his *Forward* days, but now, with the burden of civic responsibility, he was keen to re-cast the city in a more positive light. As City Treasurer, he took an active part in the promotion of the Empire Exhibition of 1938, and followed this up the following year when Lord Provost, by bringing the city further into prominence with his

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<sup>99</sup> Daniel Gray, *Homage To Caledonia* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2009), pp. 32-35, 105-25; Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), Introduction; Cameron, *Impaled*, p. 181.

<sup>100</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 125; Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 28, 167-85; Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace* p. 206; Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain-The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 2006), pp. 82, 241; GCM, 31 March 1938, p. 1319; See Tom Johnston's article in *Forward*, 29 August 1936, which repudiates the scale of these atrocities.

<sup>101</sup> *Forward*, 29 August 1936.

<sup>102</sup> Pimlott, *Labour and the Left*, pp. 99-100; John McGovern, *Neither Fear Nor Favour* (London: Blandford Press, 1960), pp. 100-14.

<sup>103</sup> Devine, *The Scottish Nation* p. 319; Maver, *Glasgow*, pp. 236, 239.

civic visit to the New York World Fair.<sup>104</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* commented that 'The world never knew Glasgow till Patrick Dollan got that power.'<sup>105</sup>

Dollan also became Glasgow's symbolic leader of opposition to Hitler. Having determined that the coming war was to be a struggle between 'Democracy and Dictatorship', Dollan's position on the war was now in stark contrast to Jimmy Maxton, who Dollan described as the 'chief spokesman of the pacifists in Parliament'.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, Maxton had considered accepting financial sponsorship for anti-war candidates from Lord Beaverbrook, whilst his ally, the Shettleston ILP MP, John McGovern, not only supported the appeasement policy of Chamberlain in 1939, but sycophantically praised him in the House of Commons.<sup>107</sup>

Dollan's enthusiasm in support of the war effort was such that he was to be dubbed a 'jingo' by his erstwhile colleagues in the SSP.<sup>108</sup> One day, he was visible in support of Athenia survivors torpedoed off Ireland; the next, in promoting the sale of war bonds and savings certificates. He was the head of the city's Central War Relief Fund as well as being the pivotal figure in the extremely successful Glasgow Warship Campaign to fund new ships for the navy.<sup>109</sup> He was much in evidence in his civil defence role and it was no surprise, therefore, when he was found in the middle of the night comforting and assisting those involved in the 'Clydebank blitz', despite most of those affected being from outside

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<sup>104</sup> *Scotsman*, 1 January 1941.

<sup>105</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941.

<sup>106</sup> Broady Collection, c 81, P. J. Dollan, *A Tale of Two Cities*, (1939?), p. 23: Dollan, *Hail Democracy!* p. 18. But Dollan respected 'passive resisters', who were 'idealistic and heaven forbid we should have a world without idealists' p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> Brown, *Maxton*, pp. 292-302; McGovern, *Neither Fear nor Favour*, pp. 127-45.

<sup>108</sup> Dollan, *Hail Democracy!* p. 49.

<sup>109</sup> *Scotsman*, 8 September 1939, 14 June 1941, 27 October 1941, 7 November 1941.

the city boundaries.<sup>110</sup> Dollan was a brilliant self-publicist and regularly featured in the newspapers.<sup>111</sup> As a journalist he had numerous newspaper contacts including his son who was also active within the Labour party and went on to become a President of the STUC.<sup>112</sup> Dollan's propaganda abilities were recognised when he was asked to broadcast to America (as part of the BBC series "Britain Speaks"), on Clydeside's response to the 'Clydebank Blitz'. In this, he spoke of the spirit and morale of the people whom he said 'would never bow the knee to invaders or dictators', and of witnessing 'bravery under fire', and how 'our women are undaunted. They are worthy of the best traditions of the Scottish race'. His use of hyperbole was evident again, when he commented:

Civic boundaries and class barriers have been levelled.  
We have become one great Scottish family, sharing all our  
possessions, and sheltering all our people to the best of our  
ability...Clydeside is now all out to win the war. The  
Covenanting spirit is once more rampant throughout the area.<sup>113</sup>

Dollan was awarded a knighthood in 1941, as most of his predecessors in this office were, including Labour's Sir John Stewart.<sup>114</sup> It was not awarded for, 'his important contribution to the war effort' as suggested by Corr and Knox, but by tradition and according to the official release, for 'successes ...won in the realms of municipal government ... and ... largely to the progress made by the Socialist movement in municipal politics in the city'.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *Scotsman*, 15 March 1941.

<sup>111</sup> The *Times* said of him, 'he was always ready to circulate his latest communiqué to the Scottish Press who regarded him with great affection'. *Times* 31 January 1963; NLS, Woodburn, *Living With History*, Unpublished Autobiography, p. 60.

<sup>112</sup> James Dollan stood as a Labour council candidate in Cathcart. *Scotsman*, 4 May 1949; He was President of the STUC in 1975 and awarded the OBE. *Glasgow Herald*, 24 July 1991.

<sup>113</sup> *Scotsman*, 24 March 1941; Dollan's reference to 'civic boundaries' being 'levelled', should not be seen as an endorsement for encroaching centralisation by the state. This threat at times greatly concerned him as it could 'create a strong reaction against Socialism'. *Glasgow Herald*, 17 November 1941; Macdonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet*, p. 86.

<sup>114</sup> It does appear that Dr James Welsh, one time Labour MP who served as Lord Provost from 1943-46, turned down a knighthood. *Scotsman*, 18 April 1949.

<sup>115</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 98; *Scotsman*, 1 January 1941.



The fact that he accepted this knighthood, together with other awards of distinction like the honorary doctorate from Glasgow University which he received in 1942, particularly when viewed alongside allegations of Dollan's apparent embrace of royalty, have given some the opportunity to argue that this signalled Dollan's departure from radicalism.<sup>116</sup> We are told by Knox, that:

Dollan's constitutionalism also lent itself to the defence of the British monarchy and he was among a group of Labour members on the GTC [Glasgow Town Council] who took part in organising the festivities to celebrate the coronation of George VI in 1937, much to the annoyance of the Glasgow labour movement.<sup>117</sup>

However the Corporation had a tried and trusted procedure practised over many decades diligently followed at the time of Royal visits and national celebrations. Glasgow was no different from any other council in this respect. This was a political fact of life which had been grudgingly accepted by all Labour leaders on Glasgow council including John Wheatley.<sup>118</sup> Dollan found that power and position also brought responsibility and consequently, he cast aside the gesture politics that he had willingly indulged in an earlier period recognising that such festivities were popular with the people. He did not drop gestures altogether, however, and ensured that on this occasion, aside from the usual pomp, there would be a benefit for Corporation employees and also schoolchildren who were granted a holiday. Day trips and celebrations were organised for the Glasgow public, and those on poor relief were granted an additional award of 2s.6d. These concessions ensured that the coronation was widened into a people's event in Glasgow.<sup>119</sup> On the question of royalty, Dollan declared unequivocally, in reply to a critic in 1936 who suggested that he was mov-

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<sup>116</sup> Tom Gallagher suggests that Dollan turned down an OBE in 1938. *Uneasy Peace*, p. 204.

<sup>117</sup> Knox, 'Introduction', in *Labour Leaders*, p. 52; Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 97.

<sup>118</sup> GCM, 25 February 1919, p. 2189.

<sup>119</sup> GCM, 4 February 1937 p. 857.

ing away from socialist principles, that whilst recognising that the King and 'traditionalism' was popular with the public, he nevertheless still favoured 'the abolition of all hereditary privilege'.<sup>120</sup> Like most Labour politicians, he now considered this to be an egalitarian 'ideal', the pursuit of which would be secondary to resolving the priorities of poverty and unemployment.<sup>121</sup> Following acceptance of his knighthood in 1941, he received 'two or three abusive letters from so-called comrades' for having accepted a 'capitalist honour'. The *Glasgow Herald* reported, however, that he received an enthusiastic reception from Labour supporters with his riposte: 'The honour has come from the chief servant of the State for local services, and there is no reason why I, as a Socialist, should not accept recognition for public service; as Socialists, we should encourage it.'<sup>122</sup>

Dollan's outlook and attitude to such issues changed. He lost his passion and fire for strident and vocal opposition to the establishment. However, he never deserted the working-class movement, and remained loyal to the Labour Party throughout his life, even criticising his erstwhile hero, Ramsay MacDonald, whom he said was by 1935, 'more or less a Tory'.<sup>123</sup> In the same year a Glasgow journal said of him: 'Dollan will always be a firebrand. He has laboured for the masses, and it is not surprising that his popularity with them should be a fixed thing.'<sup>124</sup> He also spoke on Labour platforms long after he had stood down

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<sup>120</sup> *Forward*, 19 September 1936; Hobsbawm recognised that by then the 'functions of the monarchy' had 'very little in common with the monarchy of 1750'. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, p. 18.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* Interestingly the 'young' critic of Dollan was William Hannan who became a Labour MP for Maryhill (1952-1974), and moderated his own stance on the monarchy. It was in this period that the monarchy's power was diminished and unions and the Labour Party, already firmly British parliamentary democracy, began to view the State as politically neutral. Jim Phillips, *The Great Alliance, Economic Recovery and the Problems of Power 1945- 1951* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), p. 2; Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance, Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh University Press, 1992), p. 44; David Marquand, *Britain Since 1918: The Strange Career of British Democracy*, (London: Phoenix, 2008.), pp. 37-40.

<sup>122</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 6 January 1941.

<sup>123</sup> Dollan, 'Autobiography', p. 205.

<sup>124</sup> *The Baillie*, 2 March 1935.

from the council in 1946. On occasion he found himself sharing platforms with former adversaries in the ILP disaffiliation struggle like John McGovern and George Buchanan, who had eventually rejoined Labour.<sup>125</sup> He also appeared to stay loyal to the notions of working-class solidarity and his roots and never left the tenements of Glasgow. One journalist said of Dollan in 1960 that he was 'still at heart a working-class man ... who had never lost his proud working-class outlook'.<sup>126</sup> This class outlook was a constant throughout his life; he was critical of those who felt bemused by the prospect of a working man becoming Lord Provost of Glasgow, and expressed pride that working men had been elected as Prime Ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada.<sup>127</sup> He was very supportive of the unions, and gave instinctive and unreserved support to the miners, intervening on their behalf when they raised various grievances with their employers.<sup>128</sup> Other workers trusted him enough to turn to him for support with their grievances, including plumbers' apprentices and shipyard workers.<sup>129</sup> In 1947 he was nominated by dockers as the 'neutral' chairman in their dispute at Glasgow docks.<sup>130</sup> In endorsing the Labour candidate in Hamilton in 1943 he emphasised the necessity for industrial workers to be elected to parliament.<sup>131</sup> In the 1950s he chastised Tom Johnston, for not only backtracking on the hard line he had once adopted on the aristocracy, but also because he 'had his origins in the middle class; he had their out-

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<sup>125</sup> *Scotsman*, 17 February, 27, 29 September 1948, 7 February, 29 April 1950.

<sup>126</sup> *Weekly Scotsman*, 30 June 1960. c 55, Broady Collection.

<sup>127</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 2 November 1935.

<sup>128</sup> *Scotsman*, 31 July, 14 August 1941.

<sup>129</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 28 February 1941; *Scotsman*, 4 August, 17 October 1941.

<sup>130</sup> *Scotsman*, 14 April 1947.

<sup>131</sup> *Scotsman*, 25 January 1943.

look and practice'.<sup>132</sup> From this evidence, it seems that Knox's assertion that Dollan 'put party before class' must, at least, be called into question.<sup>133</sup>

### 'Catholic Machine Politics'

It is difficult to assess Dollan's reputation and legacy without focussing on his Irish roots and Catholicism which for many commentators was an important part of his persona, and for others, indicated an inextricable link to a negative form of machine politics and possible corruption.<sup>134</sup> The issue to be addressed here, therefore, is why did so many commentators emphasise the Irish connection and his Catholicism despite he and his father being born in Scotland, and his antipathy towards organised religion for most of his active political life? In 1935 the Glasgow journal, *The Baillie*, referred to him as, 'this little cheery-faced Irishman'.<sup>135</sup> Almost thirty years later the *Glasgow Herald's* obituary said he 'had an Irishman's facility for taking [charges of inconsistency] in his stride'.<sup>136</sup> This was despite him emphasising his 'Scottishness' through his strong association with Robert Burns, liberally citing Wallace and Robert the Bruce, and being estranged from the Church for around thirty years.<sup>137</sup> For most of his active political life, Dollan was a secularist, only

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<sup>132</sup> Dollan, 'Autobiography', p. 201. It is suggested that Dollan kept his distance from the Socialist League because of their middle-class leadership. Cohen, 'Happy Hunting Ground', p. 57.

<sup>133</sup> Knox, 'Parliamentary movement', p. 174.

<sup>134</sup> The Broady Collection, c 55, *Weekly Scotsman*, 30 June 1960; *Glasgow Herald*, 31 Jan 1963; *Scotsman*, 30 June 1960; Damer, *Going for a Song*, p. 154.

<sup>135</sup> *The Baillie*, No. 155, 2 March 1935.

<sup>136</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 January 1963.

<sup>137</sup> *Scotsman*, 24 March 1931; The precise date of Dollan's reconciliation with the Roman Catholic church is unclear. Corr and Knox suggest that 'he was reconciled to the Catholic faith' during 'a long period of illness which forced him to retire from the GTC' in November 1946. Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 98; Middlemas is more ambiguous saying only, 'he returned to the Roman Catholic Church before he died', Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, p. 281; When he was elected Lord Provost in 1938, the *Catholic Herald*, somewhat tentatively described him as 'a baptised Catholic, ex-miner son of an Irish Catholic' which indicated their desire to see him as 'one of their own', whilst acknowledging his lapsed status within the church at that time. *Catholic Herald*, 26 November 1938.; In an interview with the *Catholic Herald* in November 1946, when referring to support for the Poles he says, 'we Catholics must give it to them'. See the *Catholic Herald*, 15th November 1946; We also know that Agnes 'was received into

rejoining the Church around the end of his period on the council when discovering 'the value of spiritual principles and values in politics'.<sup>138</sup> He and Agnes latterly became involved with Lutheran minister, Dr Frank Buchman's multi-faith, Moral Re-Armament organisation.<sup>139</sup> During his time on the council, however, Dollan never served on the Committee of Management of Roman Catholic Industrial and Reformation Schools, a post held on rotation by Catholic councillors including John Wheatley which was a clear indication that he was not seen to be associated with Catholicism.<sup>140</sup>

Dollan could never disguise his Irish Catholic background from the overwhelmingly Protestant majority in Glasgow as his two Christian names, and his surname, were unmistakably Irish and Catholic-oriented.<sup>141</sup> Dollan recalled that in his childhood, 'Catholics were all regarded as Irish' and, as Smyth argues, the reverse was also the case.<sup>142</sup> Ian Wood comments, that there was an 'instinctively strident anti-Catholicism which disfigured much of Scottish life in the inter-war period'.<sup>143</sup> This was a period when Irish Catholics were still regarded as 'outsiders' in Scotland and the Church of Scotland saw them as a 'menace' and

the [Catholic] Church' in 1948. *Catholic Herald*, 19 November 1948.

<sup>138</sup> *Catholic Herald*, 13 May 1949.

<sup>139</sup> *Scotsman*, 28 September 1949; See the Obituary of Archie Mackenzie CBE one of its "leaders", *Glasgow Herald*, 17 April 2012; McGovern, *Neither Fear Nor Favour*, pp. 183-206.

<sup>140</sup> GCM, 4 November 1932, pp. 16-35 and GCM, *passim*. He was also the sole dissenter when councillor John Andrew Kennedy was appointed as the Corporation's Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. GCM, 20 March 1924 p.1035.

<sup>141</sup> He was registered as plain Patrick Dollan. See Birth Certificate <<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/library.htm> [accessed 17 January 2013]. Joseph, (which may have been his confirmation name) was added later to provide added status perhaps.

<sup>142</sup> *Mercat Cross* in Pat Woods Miscellany collection: Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 127.

<sup>143</sup> Wood, *Wheatley*, p. 155; For anti-Catholic discrimination see also, Fry, *Patronage and Principle*, p. 166; Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, p. 18; Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 142; Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt*, p. 60; Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, p. 110.

threat to Scottish culture and the 'native stock'.<sup>144</sup> The founding of the Scottish Protestant League which campaigned against Catholic schools calling for an end, as they saw it, to 'Rome on the rates' was symptomatic of the anti-Catholic hysteria in these years.<sup>145</sup> So Dollan, having eschewed his Catholic faith, was never quite able to escape the stigma associated with being 'Irish' which pervaded much of Scotland during his life. Perhaps in some ways, he was trying to overcome this stigma and enhance his 'respectability' by enthusiastically embracing Robert Burns, a poet seen as a talisman by Freemasons, and as a consequence, viewed as anathema by less discerning working-class Catholics.<sup>146</sup> Such considerations meant little, however, to the SPL leader and sometime councillor, Alexander Ratcliffe, who clearly perceived Dollan as 'Irish' and accused him, without providing a shred of evidence, in 1934 of pursuing 'Roman Catholic policy in the City Chambers'.<sup>147</sup> He also referred to him as a 'conscientious papist' in his journal, *Vanguard* in 1939.<sup>148</sup> Dollan was further criticised in being ecumenical when - although not a practising Catholic himself he invited magistrates to a celebratory mass in the Catholic Cathedral requested by Catholic family and friends, when elected Provost.<sup>149</sup> The anti-Catholic bias of the time, can be seen in the action of 'the leader of the Progressive Group' who 'registered an imme-

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<sup>144</sup> Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 152; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, pp. 77-82.

<sup>145</sup> Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, pp.50-157.

<sup>146</sup> The Roman Catholic Church forbade Catholics to become Freemasons. *Catholic Herald*, 17 March 1939; Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, p. 319; For a Catholic outlook on Burns, see Dollan, 'Unpublished Autobiography', p. 15; James MacMillan, 'A Tommy Burns Supper', in Joseph M. Bradley ed., *Celtic Minded 3* (Glasgow: Argyll, 2009), p. 189.

<sup>147</sup> *Govan Press*, 26 October 1934.

<sup>148</sup> Quoted in *The Catholic Herald*, 17 March 1939.

<sup>149</sup> Tom Gallagher suggests that Dollan was honouring a promise to a late friend when he decided to go to the Catholic cathedral. Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace* p. 204.

diate protest' despite Dollan's assurance that this would not detract from the official and ceremonial Protestant service of the 'Kirkin O' the Council'.<sup>150</sup>

Dollan came to the defence of the parents of Catholic schoolchildren evacuated to the countryside during the war who were said to be 'filthy', 'verminous and undisciplined' by an alleged 'East Side Minister' writing to the Scotsman, who castigated Dollan and his 'Hibernian eloquence' (indicating how Dollan was perceived by the public), for trying to argue that poverty was at the root of their physical condition, when the Irish preferred to 'spend their money -nearly all public funds - on pictures and pubs than on soap and water'.<sup>151</sup> It is little wonder, then, that such attitudes helped establish long-term discrimination and prejudice towards the Irish and Catholics in Glasgow.<sup>152</sup> That he was elected by the overwhelmingly non-Catholic Labour group as leader, and subsequently nominated by them to be Lord Provost, demonstrated their ability to rise above the West of Scotland 'deep subterranean division' of prejudice caused by 'religion and sectarianism'.<sup>153</sup> It could also of course demonstrate that Dollan's attempts to cast off his Catholic connections were to some extent at least within the Labour group successful.

But despite his outlook and actions, Dollan has not escaped being linked with Catholicism. Some historians believe that his ethnicity and politics brought forth the nurturing of an Irish-political machine in Glasgow.<sup>154</sup> Even accounting for his secularism this argu-

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<sup>150</sup> *Catholic Herald*, 25 November 1938.

<sup>151</sup> *Scotsman*, 16 September 1939; Engels held a similar view of the Irish whom he believed engaged in 'bestial drunkenness'. See John Burrowes, *Irish* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2003), p. 89.

<sup>152</sup> T. M. Devine ed., *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2000), passim.

<sup>153</sup> Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, p. 18.

<sup>154</sup> See Introduction pp. 6-8: Some comments seem unnecessarily gratuitous; for example, Cohen says, 'ILP hostility only increased after Dollan was appointed the first Catholic Lord Provost of Glasgow.' But ILP hostility had nothing to do with his Catholicism. Cohen, 'Happy Hunting Ground', p. 60.

ment becomes less tenuous when we consider that as late as 1938, when Dollan became Lord Provost, only ten of the 116 councillors were Catholics.<sup>155</sup> It has also been shown that the effect and homogeneity of the Irish vote in these times has been much exaggerated.<sup>156</sup> The evidence, therefore, hardly justifies the image painted by Smout of the, 'Catholic, party machine man ... [who] manipulated the electorate', or Damer's, 'Murphiosi', the alleged 'Irish political machine ...[which] was oiled and greased by Wheatley's hand-reared boy, Paddy Dollan'.<sup>157</sup> That argument looks unsustainable, considering that Dollan was regularly snubbed by his fellow Labour councillors when it came to voting in the council chamber. Nor does it explain Labour's four lost deposits in the general election of 1935 in the Catholic areas of Glasgow's east-end and Gorbals, when the ILP candidates (despite Catholic church disapproval) swept aside Dollan-supported Labour candidates.<sup>158</sup> This was also a time when Labour's and the ILP's membership was declining and their organisation was verging on the moribund rather than 'machine-like'.<sup>159</sup> The supposed omnipotence of the Labour 'political machine' in the inter-war years in Glasgow has been much exaggerated by some historians, as well as romantically over-dramatised by some of those involved.<sup>160</sup>

Many historians seem to imply agreement with Michael Fry that Glasgow in this period, even under the 'able leadership of Dollan', was 'riddled with corruption'.<sup>161</sup> Harry McShane, the communist activist, raised suspicions 'widespread in Glasgow at the time'

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<sup>155</sup> *Catholic Herald*, 25 November 1938.

<sup>156</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 160; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 65; Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p. 152.

<sup>157</sup> Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People*, p. 274; Damer, *Going for a Song*, p. 154.

<sup>158</sup> Cohen, 'Happy Hunting Ground', p. 59.

<sup>159</sup> Huchison, *Scottish Politics*, pp. 72, 89; Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 240.

<sup>160</sup> Introduction, pp. 4-5; For a corrective account of inter-war Labour organisation see C. M. M. Macdonald, 'Following the Procession', in *Grass Roots*, ed. by Worley, p. 41.

<sup>161</sup> Fry, *Patronage and Principle*, p. 191; See also, Harvie, *No Gods*, p. 106; Macdonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet*, p. 231; Carol Craig, *The Tears*, p. 215.



over the allocation of council houses, and said that 'Nobody believes that all councillors who got houses were among those in the greatest need.'<sup>162</sup> Damer directly links Dollan, the Irish under the guise of the 'Murphiosi', and 'the [Labour] party machine who were singularly bereft ... of moral honesty ... not interested in politics but power and profit'.<sup>163</sup> A letter writer to the Scotsman said something similar when he suggested:

Climb any stair in a new municipal housing scheme, and one sees name after name obviously Hibernian; while true-blue Scots citizens try in vain to secure one. The Irish Catholic vote is vital now to all who engage in municipal politics. Is it any wonder that a breed of Councillors - even Magistrates - has appeared who are ready to pander to the lowest elements in order to secure power.<sup>164</sup>

Such contemporary allegations no doubt sowed the seeds of suspicion in the minds of the Glasgow public. When some members of a council delegation to a conference in Rome took time out to visit the Vatican, it provoked the Protestant League to write to the council in protest.<sup>165</sup> This episode by itself no doubt linked council largesse with Catholicism in the eyes of some. But how much of this perception and impression of graft and corruption, sectarian and religious discrimination, and outright conspiracy on the part of a so called 'political machine' can be justified? When one looks at the allocation of council houses it seems clear that there was no widespread corruption involved here. The first wave of council allocations went to the lower middle classes and some skilled workers; those who were able to afford the high rents for their cottage-style houses and who tended to be Prot-

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<sup>162</sup> Harry McShane, 'Glasgow's Housing Disgrace', (1947 pamphlet), reprinted in *Militant Worker*, eds, by Duncan and McIvor, p. 35.

<sup>163</sup> Damer, *Going for a Song*, p. 196.

<sup>164</sup> *Scotsman*, 16 September 1939.

<sup>165</sup> GCM, 3 October 1929 p. 2284.

estant.<sup>166</sup> In the 1930s, however, when the slum clearance schemes came in, large numbers of Catholic families were being re-housed mainly into tenement blocks where the rents were cheaper. Whilst it is understandable how the SPL in the 1930s could whip up Protestant emotions by pointing to the large number of 'Irish' being re-housed before the indigenous Protestants on the council waiting lists, nevertheless, the evidence does not prove pro-Catholic favouritism (or anti-Protestant discrimination) or corruption on the part of a Labour group ostensibly dependent on Catholic votes.<sup>167</sup> The fact was that the council's prioritised slum-clearance schemes re-housed the poorer and unskilled inner-city slum-dwellers - and those were by definition - 'Irish' and Catholic.<sup>168</sup>

There were a number of alleged and some proven episodes of corruption during Dollan's period on the council. Several councillors were jailed and banned from office in 1941 under the Corrupt Practices Act for procuring bribes in return for awarding a council contract. It has to be noted, however, that they were not confined to the Labour party.<sup>169</sup> Serious allegations of impropriety had also been raised earlier when the Moderates were in power in the city chambers. These were in relation to licensing irregularities in 1929, and the allocation of Corporation houses and market stances in 1933.<sup>170</sup> Dollan was never cited as being involved in any of these cases, and throughout his thirty-three years on the council he consistently called for optimum scrutiny and accountability.<sup>171</sup> He criticised Tom Johnston, then Scottish Secretary, for not going far enough in dealing with the issue of liquor

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<sup>166</sup> Iain Paterson, 'Sectarianism and Municipal Housing Allocation In Glasgow', *Scottish Affairs*, volume no. 39 (Spring 2002), passim.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, passim; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 71.

<sup>168</sup> Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 69.

<sup>169</sup> GCM, 18 September 1941, p. 2080, 16 October 1941, p. 2246, 27 October 1941, p. 2338; See also *Glasgow Herald*, 28 October 1941.

<sup>170</sup> GCM, 3 October 1929, p. 2284, 3 August 1933, p. 2183, 31 August 1933, p. 2395.

<sup>171</sup> He argued for the outlawing of contractors canvassing for work. See GCM, 20 Feb 1936, p. 911; He demanded a much more searching inquiry than that proposed by council leaders following the 1941 corruption cases. *Scotsman*, 17 October 1941; *Glasgow Herald*, 28 October 1941.

licence irregularities and called for licensing to be taken out of the hands of local authorities altogether.<sup>172</sup>

Despite Damer's damning assertions, at least down to 1946 when Dollan left the council, there has never been any evidence presented of a Labour, Irish or Catholic conspiracy within Glasgow's civic affairs. Those with most to gain from the exposure of such supposed conspiracies, that is Labour's political opponents within the council chamber, never raised such issues.<sup>173</sup> Indeed, the Progressive leader went out of his way to emphasise that Dollan could never be tainted by allegations of corruption.<sup>174</sup> Government ministers and law officers were involved in investigating various allegations over the years and never suggested that there were any more than a few corrupt individuals within the Corporation.<sup>175</sup> Ironically, it was often Labour councillors who exposed or raised allegations of impropriety demanding that they be thoroughly investigated and dealt with.<sup>176</sup> What we are left with therefore is smear and innuendo which has helped to stigmatise Glasgow Corporation. Dollan said in 1941, that '98 per cent of the men and women in public life to-day cannot be bought, and I am proud of the fact that I have never been approached to accept a bribe'.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *Scotsman*, 16 February 1942.

<sup>173</sup> The closest they got to this, was when a Progressive called for publication of a list of councillors' relatives in Corporation employment together with their qualifications, which Labour defeated. See GCM, 20 February 1936, p. 910 and 30 April 1936, p. 1512; Some Glasgow residents seemed to believe that Catholics were receiving preference in the allocation of council jobs. Again, there is no hard evidence to support such perceptions. Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 73.

<sup>174</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941.

<sup>175</sup> *The Times*, 10 March 1933.

<sup>176</sup> Labour councillors, John McGovern and Dr Bennett raised corruption allegations at council meetings in 1930. These were investigated by the Lord Advocate and Procurator Fiscal. *Glasgow Herald*, 24 January and 3 July 1930.

<sup>177</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941.

That a few councillors of various political colours in Glasgow, as elsewhere, succumbed to temptation is proven. But it would seem that most of those Labour members involved in local politics in Glasgow during the inter-war years, were honest, committed, hard working and wanted to see their city prosperous and successful. To say, as Christopher Harvie does, that this was: 'The time of the "wee hard men"', is not only patronising, but also does not stand up to scrutiny.<sup>178</sup>

### **Council Divisions**

Lord Provost Dollan was acknowledged by the government in 1941 to be carrying out 'excellent work'.<sup>179</sup> His portrait was included in a national collection of those who 'have made a notable contribution to the national effort'.<sup>180</sup> He could never be taken for granted by authority, however: he was no 'yes man'. His argumentative personality, which saw him described as 'controversial' as a matter of course, would not allow that.<sup>181</sup> It was not surprising to find him publicly criticising the government's wartime censorship rules on several occasions during the Second World War, as he did when the scale of devastation and death caused by the 'Clydebank Blitz' was suppressed.<sup>182</sup> He took the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, to task over what he considered to be the government's misrepresentation of Rudolph Hess's motivation for flying to Britain, which Dollan controversially suggested was to deliver 'peace terms'. The government was subsequently accused in the House of Commons of being unable to 'curb Sir Patrick Dollan's activities'.<sup>183</sup> Dollan further pro-

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<sup>178</sup> Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes*, p. 106.

<sup>179</sup> *Scotsman*, 14 May, 17, 20 June 1941.

<sup>180</sup> *Scotsman*, 30 June 1941.

<sup>181</sup> Broady Collection, c 55, *Weekly Scotsman*, 30 June 1960.

<sup>182</sup> *Scotsman*, 20, 21 March, 21 June 1941; Roy Jenkins, *Churchill*, (London: Macmillan, 2001), p. 651.

<sup>183</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 June 1941; This episode was revisited some years later in 1960 when it was bizarrely reported that 'neo- Nazis had sentenced him to death' due to his 'treachery' against Germany. See the *Weekly Scotsman*, 30 June 1960, Broady Collection c 55; This report has to be seen in the same light

vocatively accused the Ministry of Information of 'bungling and muddling' and stated that he was going to ignore it, and, 'take the responsibility of making facts known to the people', retain 'his independence and 'speak [his]mind'.<sup>184</sup>

He also demonstrated increasing independence and upset colleagues on the council following his appointment as Lord Provost in 1938, by failing to vote for many Labour group decisions. This was particularly the case on civil defence and war issues, where he often abstained or voted against Labour.<sup>185</sup> He seemed increasingly to relish being seen to be above party and partisan politics whilst voting in the council chamber. Examples of this are seen when consideration was given to granting the use of Corporation land for military activities; publicising war savings schemes; and allowing military cadet recruitment to take place in schools.<sup>186</sup> He upset his fellow Labour councillors when, on the declaration of war, he ruled Labour leader Hector McNeill's motion out of order; this called for a small special committee to 'be appointed with power to deal with matters of urgency which may arise between meetings of the Corporation during the period of the present emergency'.<sup>187</sup> Dollan then seemed to go against everything he had previously believed in when he declined to vote on the Labour group's proposals to deal favourably with council-employed conscien-

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as Dollan's claim in the same article that he was the first person to know that America was coming into the war, following a *sotto voce* discussion with Harry Hopkins at a dinner in Glasgow also attended by Churchill. His claim, which again illustrates a retrospective exaggeration, does not sit well beside other versions of the same event. See Roy Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 650; Johnston, *Memories*, pp. 145-46.

<sup>184</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 March, 18 June 1941.

<sup>185</sup> GCM, 25 May 1939, pp. 1972, 2085.

<sup>186</sup> GCM, 13 April 1939, p.1512, 11 May 1939, p. 1812, 22 June 1939, p. 2264, 4 January 1940, p. 531, 26 September 1940, p. 2312, 17 April 1941, p. 1167, 18 September 1941, p. 2080.

<sup>187</sup> GCM, 28 September 1939, p. 2968, 12 Oct 1939, p. 3059.

tious objectors.<sup>188</sup> He was firmly of the view by this time, that 'we were now in the most serious hour of our history'.<sup>189</sup>

Towards the end of Dollan's tenure of office as Lord Provost in 1941, there was talk in the press (encouraged, by the Progressive group) that in view of his outstanding success as Lord Provost, he should be given a second term.<sup>190</sup> This idea was given short shrift by the Labour group who declined to support the by now 'unconventional' Dollan.<sup>191</sup> When called upon by the pro-Dollan Govan ward committee to explain his refusal to back this suggestion, Hugh McCalman, a fellow Labour councillor for Govan, argued that it was against all precedents. The proposal to grant Dollan a further term received just nine votes and his humiliation was compounded when he failed to win a place on the group executive.<sup>192</sup>

Dollan, who was only 56, decided to defy the convention that Lord Provosts retire from the council at the end of their term of office. He now had little support with Labour colleagues who overlooked him for any council position which he blamed on 'party factions or worst of all, personal jealousy'.<sup>193</sup> He was, however, able to comfort himself with the knowledge that he retained strong support in his Govan ward. His Ward Committee expressed 'disappointment and some resentment that his Labour colleagues had not supported his continuation as Lord Provost but decided 'unanimously...[to] ask him to continue

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<sup>188</sup> GCM, 25 May 1939, pp. 1972, 2085.

<sup>189</sup> *Scotsman*, 21 June 1941.

<sup>190</sup> *Scotsman*, 6 November 1941.

<sup>191</sup> *Scotsman*, 21 August 1941; Professor John Glaister when presenting Dollan with his LL.D. said he had an 'unconventional approach to the many varied and difficult problems inevitable in troublesome times . . . ' *Scotsman*, 20 April 1942.

<sup>192</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941; *Scotsman*, 13 November 1941.

<sup>193</sup> *Scotsman*, 31 October 1941; There were often 'animosities' within the inter-war Labour movement which 'held the movement back'. Macdonald, 'Following the Procession', in Worley, *Grass Roots*, ed., p. 36.

as a councillor'.<sup>194</sup> He carried on as a councillor, in an almost 'semi-detached' fashion, for the next five years, during which time he was gradually reconciled with the Labour group. When he eventually decided to stand down in 1946 his Ward Committee, believed 'Govan needs Sir Patrick more than ever', and implored him to 'seriously reconsider his decision', thus demonstrating that whilst Dollan may have had his differences with Labour colleagues he retained the support of his constituents in working-class Govan.<sup>195</sup>

### **War and Communism**

Dollan came into dispute with many in the Labour movement in the 1930s due to his apparent volte-face over his attitude to war. This was compounded by his increasingly vigorous and explicit opposition to communism for which he became notorious due to his willingness to provide journalists with ready quotes. His anti-communist stance has been commented on in 'Red Clydeside' accounts by Willie Gallacher and Harry McShane, which have influenced many subsequent histories of these events and added to Dollan's ostensible notoriety.<sup>196</sup> What needs to be addressed here is the extent to which the picture painted is accurate and if so what factors influenced it?

Dollan became actively engaged in organising support for various expatriate servicemen, including Polish, Dutch, and French forces stationed in Scotland during the Second World War.<sup>197</sup> But it was his strong belief in eastern European nations' rights to self-determination that cultivated his increasing hostility towards the Soviet Union and com-

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<sup>194</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941.

<sup>195</sup> *Govan Press*, 11 January 1946.

<sup>196</sup> See Gallacher, *Revolt*; McShane and Joan Smith, *Harry McShane*; Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p.58; Knox, 'Parliamentary movement', in McKinlay and Morris eds, p.166.

<sup>197</sup> Dollan received honours from all of these countries. *Scotsman*, 25 June, 21 August 1942, 25 January 1943, 29 June 1944, 1 December 1945, 8 June 1946, 4 July 1947, 4 August 1950; *Glasgow Herald*, 11 March 1943.

munism. This was heightened as Dollan immersed himself in Polish affairs as chairman of the Scottish Polish Society, eventually becoming endearingly known as 'Dollanski'.<sup>198</sup> He organised a fund-raising concert in 'Aid Of The Poles In Russia'; and he was critical of Churchill's attitude towards Poland which he said, 'practically told Poland to accept the unreasonable Curzon line scheme of the Soviet Government'. Dollan argued that 'any attempt to Russianise or Communise Poland would be resented by 95 % of the Polish people'.<sup>199</sup>

Dollan's initial empathy for the Poles was borne out of the affinity established long before in the Lanarkshire coalfields.<sup>200</sup> It was later to coalesce with his emerging rapprochement with religion as can be seen from a letter he wrote to the *Catholic Herald* in 1945 expressing 'bitter grief on the calamity that has befallen the great Christian Citadel of Europe'.<sup>201</sup> In an interview with the same newspaper a year later, we can see a decisive change in direction when he argued that 'we Catholics' must give the Poles more support, and commented, 'Communists alone have tried to break up meetings organised to support the Poles and the remarks at the Trade Union Congress were undoubtedly Communist-inspired'.<sup>202</sup>

The German-Russian pact of 1939, which he believed was 'a military pact for aggression' between 'two of the most callous despotisms history has known', and the subsequent Russian invasion of Poland and Finland, had troubled Dollan a great deal:

There is no fundamental difference between the imperialism

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<sup>198</sup> *Scotsman*, 22 September 1942; Rachel Clements, 'Press Reception of Polish Migrants In Scotland', in T. M. Devine and David Hesse eds, *Scotland And Poland*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2011), p. 177.

<sup>199</sup> *Scotsman*, 18 June 1942 and 20 May 1944.

<sup>200</sup> *Catholic Herald*, 15 November 1946; See also Campbell, *Scottish Miners*, p. 100.

<sup>201</sup> *Catholic Herald*, 13 July 1945.

<sup>202</sup> *Catholic Herald*, 15 November 1946.



of Germany and that of Russia...The Communist mugs and dupes in this country were instructed to shout for democracy while the Stalinites were preparing for it destruction...Some comrades in Scotland have been too mealy-mouthed about Russia's knavish part in the conspiracy against the peace of Europe.<sup>203</sup>

Such comments helped to establish the view that Dollan was 'unshakeably' and 'staunchly anti-communist'.<sup>204</sup> He was certainly no Marxist, but few inter-war socialists were, including some who acted as tutors under John Maclean.<sup>205</sup> Like many socialist pioneers, Dollan believed that socialism was built on 'Christian, ethical, and moral principles' rather than materialism.<sup>206</sup> He never saw the need to work with the Communist Party and consistently opposed their affiliation to the Labour party. But in adopting that stance, he was no different from most Labour Party activists, many of whom like Dollan, viewed it as a fringe organisation, who gave 'unquestioning obedience' to Moscow whilst undermining British parliamentary democracy.<sup>207</sup> Dollan was unlikely to join with them in their 'united' or 'popular' fronts given that he had experienced personal and ideological attacks from them when they regularly opposed him and his wife at elections.<sup>208</sup> Where Dollan was different, was that he was prepared to publicly speak out against the Soviet Union and communism as he did with his criticism of Glasgow Trades Council, who not only opposed the

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<sup>203</sup> Dollan, *Hail Democracy!*, pp. 7, 43-48.

<sup>204</sup> Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, pp. 59-64; See also Knox and McKinlay eds, 'The Remaking of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', p. 180.

<sup>205</sup> Broady collection c 56, P. J. Dollan, *Socialists and Poland*, (n.d.1944?); Introduction, Knox, ed., *Labour Leaders*, p. 32.

<sup>206</sup> *Scotsman*, 25 July 1950; Dollan held these beliefs in common with most of the pioneers of the ILP. See Pimlott, 'The Labour Left', p. 180; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 75.

<sup>207</sup> Dollan, *Hail Democracy!* p. 29; Former communist Denis Healey was to say in 1948: 'The Communist elite was a secret army of intelligent and courageous robots, a religious society without God in which rationalization replaced nationality, the organized replaced the organic.' Quoted in Roger Siefert and Tom Sibley, *Revolutionary Communist At Work: A Political Biography of Bert Ramelson* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2012), p. 15. This work alludes to the mistakes made by the Communist Party in the inter-war period. p. 21.

<sup>208</sup> Dollan, *Hail Democracy!*, p., 54; Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism*, pp. 12-20; Harris, *Attlee*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1984), p. 116; Chris Bryant, *Stafford Cripps*, (London: Hoddart and Stoughton, London, London.), pp. 142-6; Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, (London: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 44.

war, but supported the Soviet Union's invasion of Finland in 1939 which Dollan called 'dastardly and cowardly'.<sup>209</sup> Perhaps some see that as breaching working-class solidarity. But the CP did itself no favours with its controversial and dramatic policy switches on the threat from Hitler, and its 'class against class tactics, which distanced [it] from the mainstream labour movement'.<sup>210</sup> Nor was its credibility enhanced by its defence of the Moscow Show Trials, together with its 'steady infiltration in the Labour movement' which caused alarm within the Labour Party and the TUC.<sup>211</sup> Dollan sat beside Attlee in Glasgow when the leader 'was given an enthusiastic reception' by a crowd of 4,500 by arguing that 'Communists and their fellow travellers' were undermining the Marshall Plan and 'do not care a jot for the sufferings of the peoples of Europe'.<sup>212</sup>

That Dollan was in tune with working-class attitudes is again borne out by the fact that not one Communist Party candidate was ever successful throughout Dollan's lifetime in any municipal or parliamentary election within the City of Glasgow.<sup>213</sup> The CP had to explain why they consistently failed to win the support of the working class in 'Red Clydeside' and it was tactical to blame 'betrayal' on Dollan's part and other Glasgow figures on the Left, including the much loved Maxton, whom they described as 'weak and sentimental'.<sup>214</sup> But Dollan was no 'McCarthyite' fanaticist, which in a sense John McGovern be-

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<sup>209</sup> Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism*, p. 202. *Scotsman*, 21 December 1939.

<sup>210</sup> Knox ed., *Labour Leaders*, p. 49; See also Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 74-75.

<sup>211</sup> *Scotsman*, 22 December 1947.

<sup>212</sup> *Scotsman*, 11 April 1949.

<sup>213</sup> Ironically, when Peter C. B. McIntyre stood as the Communist Party candidate against Dollan in Govan he came bottom of the poll, but he was elected as an Independent Socialist for the vacancy created when Dollan retired. *Govan Press*, 10 November 1933, 8 November 1946.

<sup>214</sup> Knox, *Maxton* p. 75.; For CP attitudes and tactics see William Gallacher M. P., *The Case for Communism*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1949), pp. 162-65; David McLellan, *Karl Marx: The Legacy*, (London:BBC,1983), pp. 155-59.

came.<sup>215</sup> Dollan voted for communist newspapers to be displayed in council libraries, and later fiercely fought for the right of the Communist Party to hold demonstrations on Sundays.<sup>216</sup> He frequently supported the NUWM and argued for its the right to be heard at Corporation meetings, despite it being viewed as a "Communist front" organisation.<sup>217</sup> Once the Soviets had entered the war, he was at one with the Communist Party in supporting their cause and acknowledging Britain's debt to them.<sup>218</sup> He implored cheering workers at Rosyth dockyard, to increase production to ensure that 'Russia was to be saved as all of us hoped she would be'.<sup>219</sup>

The real question to be asked from this perspective, therefore, when for much of Dollan's lifetime, communism seemed to represent a rejection of the Labour party and parliamentary democracy and loyalty to a country other than Britain; is not so much why Dollan should have been anti-communist, but, why anyone active within the Labour party at that time, should have been pro-communist?<sup>220</sup>

### **Council Legacy**

Dollan's political opponents in the Progressive party recognised that he was 'for long one of the most outstanding and most colourful personalities in the public life of the city'.<sup>221</sup> Even the ILP, who had good cause to see him as a fierce political enemy, 'recognised the

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<sup>215</sup> Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 213; McGovern, *Neither Fear*, p. 204; *Scotsman*, 27 September 1948.

<sup>216</sup> GCM, 2 March 1922, p. 963, GCM, 10 September 1925, p. 2208.

<sup>217</sup> GCM, 21 August 1930, p. 2214; GCM, 2 October 1930, p. 2530; GCM, 16 March 1933, p. 1128; Worley, *Labour Inside The Gate*, p104; Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War*, p. 32.

<sup>218</sup> *Scotsman*, 5 January 1942.

<sup>219</sup> *Scotsman*, 6 November 1941 and 26 January 1942.

<sup>220</sup> It was not until the 1950s that the CPGB accepted parliamentary democracy with the publication of *The British Road to Socialism*. See *Tribune*, 19 April 2013; Siefert and Sibley, *Revolutionary Communist*, p. 305.

<sup>221</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941.

zeal and energy he which he brought to public life'.<sup>222</sup> The President of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce said, 'that during the period of crisis he had been an outstanding civic figure. He had shown the highest qualities of leadership and had been an inspiration to the city'.<sup>223</sup> But he was also controversial and irascible. The Labour group leader in 1941 acknowledged Dollan's 'many notable achievements' and said that he had 'done a splendid job', whilst adding that there had also been 'some sharp differences of opinion'.<sup>224</sup> His fellow Govan councillor, John Storrie, who supported him for a second term as Lord Provost, indicated as much when he said:

There is no man in the Corporation or in public life  
- irrespective of how much you disagree with him or  
how much you may detest his policy - who has done more  
for the city of Glasgow and for the people of Glasgow.<sup>225</sup>

However, it is unlikely that many within the Corporation would agree with him, when he commented later that Dollan had 'unassuming modesty' as well as 'outstanding ability'.<sup>226</sup>

Dollan again confirmed his inclination for controversy when shortly after stepping down from the Lord Provost's post he publicly called for the dismissal of alleged incompetent senior officials.<sup>227</sup> This further sullied his relations with the Labour group and brought accusations of irresponsibility from his successor.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 28 October 1941.

<sup>224</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> *Govan Press*, 25 October 1946; The ILP accused Dollan of having 'a temperamental weakness of exhibitionism' and being a 'frustrated megalomaniac'. Cohen, 'Crank's', in Worley ed., p. 60.

<sup>227</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 25 November 1941.

We have confirmed in this chapter that Dollan was no machine politician and had a penchant for upsetting others within the council and wider Labour movement by standing up for his class and what he believed in regardless of the implications for his political career. At the end of his term as the City's civic head he was denied a meaningful role on the council. His morale and ego were soon to be given a boost, however, when he received several Labour government appointments. These appointments were to give him the opportunity to further demonstrate his undoubted ability and apparent unbounded energy, whilst at the same time keeping him in the public eye which he had grown so accustomed to.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> According to Dollan he had been offered several government posts earlier which he had turned down. *Govan Press*, 7 December 1934; *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1941; *Scotsman*, 31 October 1941.

## EPILOGUE

### THE 'QUANGO' YEARS

The first-ever majority Labour government elected in 1945 heralded in a 'cradle to the grave' welfare state. This was intended to abolish the 'five giant evils' identified by Beveridge, namely, 'Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness', whilst the introduction of state control and planning over the economy was intended to eradicate the negative effects of the *laissez-faire* market economy by ending the ravages of mass unemployment as encountered during the inter-war years.<sup>1</sup> Although Dollan had retired from the Council in 1946 at the age of sixty-one, he was not content to sit back and allow others to deliver Labour's 'New Jerusalem'.<sup>2</sup> As a chairman of several public bodies he was to play an active part in delivering Labour's programme. He was, however, no mere public bureaucrat in this period for he retained an active role in Labour Party affairs.

Far from lacking in scruples or principles, or indeed, a belief in socialism, as McShane and Smith suggest, we can see that Dollan exhibited extreme loyalty throughout his life to Labour governments and this was no-less the case with the 1945-51 governments.<sup>3</sup> This of course could leave him open to the charge that his definition of socialism was in line with that of the pragmatic Herbert Morrison, another supposed 'machine politician' who

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<sup>1</sup> Sir William Beveridge, *The Pillars of Security* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1943), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Donoughue and G. W. Jones, *Herbert Morrison, Portrait of a Politician* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), p. 387; *Eastern Standard*, 8 November 1941.

<sup>3</sup> McShane and Smith, *Harry McShane*, p. 110.

cynically declared that socialism is 'what a Labour governments does'.<sup>4</sup> In considering Knox's charge that Dollan helped to sow the seeds of 'disillusionment' within the Labour movement it would seem that this does not stand up when we consider that Dollan's evident enthusiastic support for the Labour government was shared by the bulk of the working class throughout the tenure of the Attlee governments.<sup>5</sup> This hardly suggests a disillusioned working class. Dollan's continuing commitment to the worker's cause in the post-war period can be seen in his willingness to get involved in an unpaid capacity in many voluntary organisations, including the Dunoon Convalescent home, a facility catering for injured workpeople and their dependents.<sup>6</sup>

Dollan derived enormous pride from the Labour governments' achievements and 'devoted himself to active propaganda' on their behalf.<sup>7</sup> He shared the government's view that class struggle was no longer necessary or at least should be suspended during the period of a labour government. As Arthur Woodburn reflected:

At one moment about 1948, it became possible to say of Great Britain that for the first time in any country, there was no need for any child to go hungry or be denied the opportunity to develop to the full all the gifts which nature had endowed it. The ideals of [the socialist] pioneers, that society could and should be planned to provide prosperity for all had been accepted as national policy and the development of technology made this possible.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Donoghue and Jones, *Herbert Morrison*, pp. 33-34, 368-71, 387.

<sup>6</sup> Corr and Knox, 'Patrick Joseph Dollan', p. 97; Knox, 'Not a Parliamentary movement', p. 174.

<sup>5</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 240; Jim Phillips, *The Great Alliance*, p. viii; Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour In Power 1945-51* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> *Scotsman*, 4 February 1948, 1 November 1949, 21, 26 August 1950.

<sup>7</sup> *Scotsman*, 17, 19 April 1947.

<sup>8</sup> NLS, Acc 7656, Box 4, file 4, Arthur Woodburn, 'Living With History', (unpublished ), p. 1.

### **Socialism In Practice**

Within weeks of leaving the Council in November 1946, Dollan became chairman of the Scottish Advisory Council for Civil Aviation, which also brought an appointment as the Scottish representative on the Board of the newly nationalised British European Airways Corporation (BEAC).<sup>9</sup> The following year he was appointed as the first chairman of East Kilbride Development Corporation.

Dollan had earlier been appointed to chair the Scottish Fuel Efficiency Committee, a body charged with eliminating waste and conserving fuel. Dollan was a pro-active chairman publicly calling for solidarity, innovation, and sacrifice. He encouraged the miners to increase productivity and called on manufacturers to adopt fuel efficiency measures.<sup>10</sup> Once again illustrating his obduracy and independence, Dollan continually harangued the government to curtail football matches and other sporting events together with dance-hall opening hours, in order to conserve energy and reduce pit and factory absenteeism.<sup>11</sup> Dollan received a modicum of support for these austerity measures from certain sections of the community, including the Church of Scotland, and some like-minded MPs. He received more notoriety from press coverage on the issue, however, than success at persuading the government, who considered such 'killjoy measures' bad for

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<sup>9</sup> *Scotsman*, 29 November 1946; See *HC Deb.*, vol. 565, col. 1437, 28 February 1957.

<sup>10</sup> The NUM also met with Attlee to discuss ways of increasing productivity. *The Times* 4, 6 January 1951. Lord Citrine, the former TUC General Secretary, took the view that in Labour's Britain: 'now all were employed in a great public service'. *The Times*, 23 June 1947; *Scotsman*, 7, 8 April 1944, 20 September, 11 October 1947.

<sup>11</sup> *Scotsman*, 23 December 1946, 17, 19 January 1947, 1 April 1948, 24 February, 28 March, 11 November 1949.



morale and electoral prospects.<sup>12</sup> It may have one thing for the country to, 'Shiver with Shinwell and Starve with Strachey', but it would be quite another to deprive the working class of their regular diet of dance, football and gambling on greyhounds.<sup>13</sup> In endeavouring to deal with the nation's problems, it seems that Dollan adopted a similar demeanour to Stafford Cripps, who it was said, 'appeared almost to enjoy the austerity and self-flagellation that he exhorted the nation to adopt'.<sup>14</sup>

In his aerospace appointments where he served as chairman of the Scottish Advisory Council for Civil Aviation in Scotland and BEAC Board member, he was viewed as a firm supporter of government policy. The *Scotsman* called him 'an indefatigable apologist for state aviation'.<sup>15</sup> The Ministry's nervousness at appearing insensitive to Scottish needs ensured that Dollan became the main voice of the industry in Scotland and involved in all the aerospace deliberations affecting the country.<sup>16</sup> It was in this capacity that Dollan's ability and effectiveness was challenged publicly for the first time. This arose from the Earl of Selkirk's resignation from the Civil Aviation Advisory Committee in August 1947 alleging that Dollan 'had made himself a willing tool of the Ministry of Aviation and the

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<sup>12</sup> *The Times* 15 February 1947, 4, 30 January 1951, 13 February 1952, See *Scotsman*, 14 February 1950 ; *HC Deb.*, vol. 500, col.241, 6 May 1940; See also Norman Baker, 'Going to the Dogs - Hostility to Greyhound Racing in Britain', *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 2 (Summer 1996), p. 115. Baker says: 'Even the most ardent advocates of [greyhound racing] restriction, such as Sir Patrick Dollan, were unable to come up with concrete evidence to support ... a connection between mid-week sport, absenteeism and production.'

<sup>13</sup> Slowe, *Manny Shinwell*, p. 216; Maver, *Glasgow*, pp. 275-80.

<sup>14</sup> Morgan, *Labour In Power*, p. 363.

<sup>15</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 May 1950.

<sup>16</sup> Morgan, *Labour in Power*, pp. 61,101-02; David Marquand, *Britain Since 1918* (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 132; Christopher Harvie, 'The Recovery of Scottish Labour, 1939-51', in *Forward!*, eds, Donnachie, Harvie, Wood, p. 79; *Scotsman*, 15 April 1947.

corporations whom he was supposed to advise, and was only too ready to recommend anything which suited their convenience'.<sup>17</sup> The *Scotsman* mounted a campaign against Dollan and his committee, and at times they were joined by Unionist M.Ps who questioned the effectiveness of the committee and Dollan's objectivity.<sup>18</sup> Dollan stridently defended himself by accusing the Earl of acting from vested interests as a Prestwick-based director of Scottish Aviation, Ltd. Whilst Dollan was able to point to anti-Labour bias here, this could not be said when Tom Johnston (by now out of government) argued that a major opportunity for aircraft manufacturing at Prestwick had been missed by Dollan's committee.<sup>19</sup> Johnston received support from the Prestwick shop stewards who issued a press statement saying that Dollan's committee were negligent and demonstrated 'a certain vindictiveness' towards the Prestwick facility.<sup>20</sup> They called for Dollan's removal, or at least that he be prevented 'from making irresponsible statements and half-truths which to the uninitiated have the hallmarks of official approval'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Earl of Selkirk, later Duke of Hamilton, was a Unionist councillor in Edinburgh and became a Unionist MP and government minister by 1951. In his early series of articles on the mining industry Dollan had called an earlier Duke of Hamilton an 'an idle landlord and capitalist'. *Scotsman*, 11 August 1947, 16 April 1948; *Forward*, 25 June 1910.

<sup>18</sup> *Scotsman*, 17, 19 April 1947; *HC Deb.*, vol. 458, col. 327, 16 November 1948.

<sup>19</sup> *Scotsman*, 3 December 1949; Johnston's comments appear to have been taken personally by Dollan which could explain his uncharacteristic acerbic comments on Johnston in his unpublished autobiography. See Dollan, 'Autobiography', pp. 203-04; Whilst active in the Clyde Navigation Trust, Dollan also crossed swords with the Scottish Tourist Board which Johnston chaired. *Scotsman*, 3, 4, 8 November 1949.

<sup>20</sup> *Scotsman*, 3 December 1949.

<sup>21</sup> *Scotsman*, 3, 9 December 1949.

This public criticism stung Dollan into a frenzy of activity over the next few months to salvage his reputation in the eyes of the unions, government and public. Dollan's guile was soon demonstrated. Firstly, he wrote to the *Scotsman* to clarify any 'misunderstandings' that had arisen over his statements on Prestwick.<sup>22</sup> In this letter he also appealed to the workers' class instincts and solidarity and cautioned them on the support they had received from the *Scotsman*:

Keir Hardie, my respected tutor and guide in politics and economics, told me when I was a youngster to be on my guard when the Tory Press praised the Labour movement. It's a sure sign [...] that if they praise you, you are on the wrong track.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, he hastily received a vote of confidence from the government minister Lord Pakenham who, on a visit to Prestwick, said:

I know that in Scotland there is a certain amount of criticism. No one objects to that, it keeps everyone on their toes. But whatever is or is not done by those working in England for civil aviation in Scotland, you have very doughty champions in Sir Patrick Dollan and his colleagues. The case for Scotland is put with infinite vigour and infinite subtlety by Sir Patrick in a great many ways.<sup>24</sup>

His position apparently strengthened by the Minister's intervention, Dollan held a conference within days with shop stewards from the four unions at Prestwick. In typical Dollan style, a press statement was issued afterwards which stated that, 'complete agreement was reached on constructive proposals', to explore, 'any helpful scheme to

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<sup>22</sup> *Scotsman*, 6 December 1949.

<sup>23</sup> *Scotsman*, 9 December 1949.

<sup>24</sup> *Scotsman*, 9 January 1950.

increase employment in the aircraft industry in Scotland'.<sup>25</sup> It was no surprise therefore to see him a few months later, alongside shop stewards, the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Bilsland as well as local MPs as part of a wide-ranging deputation to Ministers calling for safeguards for Prestwick's future.<sup>26</sup> He also ensured that the unions were now also engaged in deliberations on the industry's future. There were no more calls from union members for his resignation and he continued to serve in his aviation roles until 1961.<sup>27</sup>

We learn a number of things about Dollan from this episode which should be factored into his legacy. Firstly, he was prepared to take responsibility. Second, he was a firm supporter of nationalisation and state control. Third, despite his public appointments he was still a partisan politician. Fourth, whilst he appeared to dislike criticism, he was shrewd enough to know when to listen, take account of the criticism, and adjust his position accordingly. This was particularly so when it came from the organised working class.

### **East Kilbride and Housing Reform**

Dollan was given an opportunity to assist further in Scotland's transformation when he was appointed as chairman of the first new town in Scotland at East Kilbride in 1947.<sup>28</sup> The decision to develop East Kilbride new town, was established under the New Towns Act

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<sup>25</sup> *Scotsman*, 16 January 1950.

<sup>26</sup> *Scotsman*, 22 June 1950.

<sup>27</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 23 January 1961.

<sup>28</sup> *Scotsman*, 26 July 1947.

1946.<sup>29</sup> This was an acknowledgement that Glasgow Corporation was incapable by itself of resolving its housing problems despite its councillors' and Chief Engineer's best intentions.<sup>30</sup> The appointment, for which Dollan refused to accept payment, presented him with the opportunity to almost replicate the experiences he enjoyed as Lord Provost in Glasgow.<sup>31</sup> He was the public persona, the spokesman, the motivator and the marketing officer for East Kilbride all rolled into one. The town's shape and development, however, was driven by planners rather than politicians.<sup>32</sup> Dollan, nevertheless, saw an ideal opportunity for social engineering on a grand scale and expressed his delight at how working-class people were adapting to a new town environment far removed from the slums of Glasgow and pit villages of his youth. For him, the contrast in East Kilbride could not have been more striking:

The residents are cultivating their gardens and doing it very well. Their houses are well kept; the windows are beautifully curtained and ornamented. Nearly every housewife has flowers or ornaments in the windows. Over 20 cultural and self-help groups have been formed. The membership of the churches is increasing ... over a 1,000 trees have been planted and an orchestra and choir have been formed. Hotels and public houses, we hope, will take the form of social parlours rather than pubs as we know them in some Scottish towns ... [ I ] note especially how well the clergy, the farmers, the scientists, the teachers and the professionals are blending with the technicians, artisans, shopkeepers and other workers.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ian H. Adams, *The Making of Urban Scotland* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 211.

<sup>30</sup> G. C. Cameron, J. D. McCallum, J. G. L. Adams, (Coopers & Lybrand Study), 'An Economic Study Conducted For The East Kilbride Development Corporation', (June 1979, copy in the general library, University of Glasgow) p. 6; Miles Horsey, *Tenements and Towers, Glasgow Working Class Housing 1890- 1990*, (The Royal Commission On The Ancient & Historical Monuments Of Scotland, 1990), pp. 27-33; *Evening Times*, article, '60 Years Since The First New Town', 14 May 2007; *The Times* 10 May 1947; *HC Deb.*, vol.422, col. 1129, 8 May 1946.

<sup>31</sup> *Scotsman*, 26 July 1947.

<sup>32</sup> Horsey, *Tenements and Towers*, p. 32 ; Morgan, *Labour In Power*, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> Broady Collection, c 45, P. J. Dollan, 'East Kilbride New Town, I Say It Is A Bargain At £45,000,000.'

It is clear that by now that Dollan, like most of the Labour movement's pioneers, had willingly embraced practical reformism and had long eschewed notions of class warfare.<sup>34</sup> But it would be wrong to conclude as one Scottish Nationalist opponent did that: 'Dollan has mellowed progressively as he has climbed the dizzy heights of municipal success, and has thereby lost much of the reforming ardour that typified his earlier days.'<sup>35</sup> Dollan had lost none of his passion for improving the society of his childhood. William Hannan, the Labour MP for Maryhill, in complimenting Dollan's 'magnificent work' at East Kilbride, said 'it was pleasing to see the idealists of years ago now having the opportunity to carry into practice [the building of a new town with decent homes] which they had campaigned for over the decades'.<sup>36</sup>

By the time Dollan stood down as chairman of the Development Board in 1958, East Kilbride's population had grown from 3,000 to almost 21,000.<sup>37</sup> These were high quality, mainly low-medium density cottage -style houses in keeping with Dollan's concept of the 'garden city' and the original Wheatley '£8 cottage' scheme.<sup>38</sup> East Kilbride did not solve Glasgow's housing crisis - it was always unlikely that it would do this on its own.<sup>39</sup> But

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<sup>34</sup> 'Red Clydesiders' Neil Maclean MP, the former SDF member was now the chairman of the PLP, Kirkwood was an 'elder statesman' and George Buchanan a minister then an administrator. The ILP was a dying ember following the death of Jimmy Maxton in 1946. Morgan, *Labour in Power*, p. 59; Knox, 'Introduction' in *Labour Leaders*, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> NLS, R. E. Muirhead Collection, ACC3721/624/72, Letter in *Scots Independent*, August 1940.

<sup>36</sup> *HC Deb.*, vol.578, col.1330, 28 November 1957.

<sup>37</sup> Cameron et al, Lybrand Report', pp.15-25; *East Kilbride News*, 9 November 2011.

<sup>38</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 24 July 1958; *Scotsman*, 5 November 1913.

<sup>39</sup> Cameron et al, 'Cooper & Lybrand Report', p. 15. This became apparent to Glasgow Corporation who embarked on a massive high density, high-rise re-housing programme within its city limits

housing was only part of the equation, because East Kilbride was also given a regenerative role in keeping with the government's industrial objective of ensuring a fairer redistribution of new factories throughout the country.<sup>40</sup> East Kilbride delivered everything that it was meant to deliver: new jobs, decent houses in a pleasant environment, a young-upwardly mobile population. It can be considered as one of the most successful post-war economic achievements in Scotland.<sup>41</sup> One 1979 report pointed out the contrasting results of East Kilbride and Glasgow housing strategies:

A paradoxical outcome, seen today, is the popular and relatively well-maintained 'town' of East Kilbride only two miles from the disastrous 'estate' of Castlemilk.<sup>42</sup>

Dollan was determined that East Kilbride would not simply become a dormitory suburb of Glasgow, or a 'scheme' like Castlemilk or Drumchapel, but would become instead become a vibrant self-sustainable community providing employment, recreational and social outlets, together with the necessary shopping, educational and medical facilities - the typical requirements for community living and everything that Glasgow's new peripheral

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including the erection of thirty-storey high flats 'planted haphazardly on gap sites anywhere in the suburbs'. See Horsey, *Tenements and Towers*, p. 45; Christopher Harvie implies that Dollan had some responsibility for Glasgow's strategy of building high-rise 'multi-storey' flats, which seems untenable given that he left the council in 1946 whilst the multi-storey building programmes took place in the 1960s. Christopher Harvie, 'The Economic and Social Context of Scottish Labour', in *The Scottish Labour Party*, ed., by Gerry Hassan (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 56.

<sup>40</sup> Arthur Woodburn MP, had pointed out, that of 2,668 factories started in Britain between 1932 and 1936 only 102 had been in Scotland. *HC Deb.*, vol. 530, col. 704, 15 July 1954; Morgan, *Labour In Power*, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> In a survey of 17 major industrial estates and the same number of new towns, East Kilbride came out top in attractiveness for inward investing companies and second in living environment. Cameron et al, 'Cooper and Lybrand Report', pp. 86, 127.

<sup>42</sup> Inquiry Into Housing In Glasgow ('Grieve Report'), 1986, p. 18. Quoted in Horsey, *Tenements and Towers*, p. 27.

housing schemes lacked.<sup>43</sup> As one study pointed out, the success of East Kilbride was dependent on a number of factors, including the need for 'active promotion' and a 'missionary belief in the merits of the New Town'.<sup>44</sup> There is no doubt that Dollan brought these attributes to his role as chairman and his efforts on behalf of East Kilbride were widely recognised from all sides of the political divide. The Tory MP for Glasgow Central said that Scotland owed him, 'a deep debt of gratitude'.<sup>45</sup> In the second reading of the 1957 New Towns Bill, Scottish MPs were lining up to praise the success of East Kilbride as 'one of the best investments the nation has made' and 'a roaring success'.<sup>46</sup> Jean Mann, a Lanarkshire MP, praising Dollan's 'driving force' said

The success of our New Towns must depend upon the industry that we provide within them. I must pay tribute to Sir Patrick Dollan, because I do not think that without him East Kilbride could have attracted the industry that it has attracted there.<sup>47</sup>

### **Taking Sides**

With such a high profile and public body workload Dollan could have been forgiven for opting out of front line partisan politics altogether at this stage. That he never did so, and was clearly identified in the public mind as 'Labour' throughout his life, demonstrated his strong commitment to the working class which, as we have seen, many of his critics are

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<sup>43</sup> Adams, *The Making of Urban Scotland*, p. 212.

<sup>44</sup> Cameron et al, 'Cooper & Lybrand Report', p. 128.

<sup>45</sup> *HC Deb.*, vol. 530, col.739, 15 July 1954.

<sup>46</sup> *HC Deb.*, vol.578, col.1330, 28 November 1957.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1322.



reluctant to give him credit for. Everyone knew what political side Dollan was on, he never made any attempt to disguise his Labour credentials. But he was no political cipher. He also had a strong independent streak. This is seen again on the issue of Scottish Home Rule where he refused to support the Labour policy of Home Rule contained in Labour's 1945 manifesto.<sup>48</sup> Dollan, however, had become decisively anti-Home Rule by 1940 when he wrote an article for the *Scots Independent* refusing to countenance 'any scheme of decentralisation' that would weaken 'the strength of Central Government'.<sup>49</sup> Dollan's main reasoning was that small states had been unable to withstand the might of fascist Germany and this demonstrated the need for strong centralist states such as Britain. Dollan went further by citing fervent nationalism in the Baltic states which he argued had acted as a prelude to many of them being annexed by Russia. In doing so, he also illustrated his capacity to provoke other political activists, one of whom accused him of 'trailing the Communist red herring across the stage'.<sup>50</sup> Dollan's controversial comments brought about an outpouring of indignant letters to the *Scotsman*, so much so that the editor was forced to declare: 'We have received so many letters critical of Sir Patrick Dollan's views that it is possible to publish only a selection. The correspondence on this subject is now closed.'<sup>51</sup> But his opposition was not totally based on geo-political grounds. With the election of a Labour government in 1945, he believed that home rule was deemed irrelevant as state economic planning and intervention in the economy would cancel out Scotland's regional disadvantages, abolish its inherent mass unemployment, whilst the welfare state would

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<sup>48</sup> Devine, *Scottish Nation*, p. 568 ; See also Glasgow, Mitchell Library, Carmichael Collection, Doc 118, W. H. Marwick, *Labour In Scotland - A Short History of the Scottish Working-Class Movement*, p. 28.

<sup>49</sup> NLS, R.E. Muirhead Collection, ACC 3721/624/72, *Scots Independent* press cuttings.

<sup>50</sup> NLS, R.E. Muirhead Collection, 3721/624/72, various press cuttings dated July 1951.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

lead to the of endemic poverty.<sup>52</sup> He argued that 'we have more to gain in Scotland by being linked up in industries and other services with other parts of Great Britain than by pursuing a separatist policy in economics and industry'.<sup>53</sup> Dollan's political antenna and judgement was shown to be sound for by 1950 the Labour Party and STUC caught up with him in rejecting Home Rule.<sup>54</sup> The Royal Commission on Self-Government set up in 1952 included Agnes Dollan as one of its members. Following three years of considering, 'emotional dissatisfaction which was disclosed in much of our evidence', the Commission unanimously recommended only minor changes, and suggested that discontent, 'has, we think, been aggravated by needless English thoughtlessness and undue Scottish susceptibilities'. It concluded with the phrase: 'We have to realise that 1707 was the turning point in the prosperity and progress of Scotland.'<sup>55</sup> Dollan, who was described as 'a determined opponent' of Home Rule could rightly feel vindicated.<sup>56</sup>

Even towards the end of his life Dollan's enthusiasm for the Labour cause was unabated - he was not a tragic political cynic in the way that some other pioneers became.<sup>57</sup> He appeared on many Labour platforms.<sup>58</sup> Despite leaving the council in 1946 he still

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<sup>52</sup> As Lenman has argued, not only were the regional economies of the United Kingdom fusing together 'with a strong equalising trend' but so also were the labour movements. See Bruce Lenman, *An Economic History of Scotland*, (London: B. T. Batsford, 1977), p. 236.

<sup>53</sup> *Scotsman*, 7 March 1945.

<sup>54</sup> Marwick, *Labour in Scotland*, p. 28; Michael Keating and David Bleiman, *Labour and Scottish Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 140.

<sup>55</sup> *HC Deb.*, vol. 536, col. 915, 1 February 1955.

<sup>56</sup> Keating and Bleiman, *Labour and Scottish Nationalism*, p. 63.

<sup>57</sup> This was the case with Ben Tillett former trade union official and MP, for example, who became a 'broken' man after losing his idealism. NLS, MS 25274, J. Ramsay MacDonald Collection, letter to Sir Alexander Grant, dated 29 September 1931; Alan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin* (London: Heineman, 1960), pp. 193- 97.

<sup>58</sup> *Scotsman*, 11 April 1949, 7 February 1950.

publicly supported Labour municipal candidates.<sup>59</sup> Nor did he moderate his partisan language. We see this when he vilified the Progressives in Glasgow alleging a 'Tory conspiracy' and 'dictatorship' when they captured control of Glasgow Corporation in 1949.<sup>60</sup>

Dollan was by now in the mainstream of the Labour Party. There is no evidence to show that he disagreed with any of the 1945-51 Labour governments' policies whether on the domestic or foreign fronts. Dollan, was, however, always prepared to argue his corner, a trait which often meant he crossed swords with many allies as well as opponents. We saw this in his political disagreements with Maxton and Wheatley, and with the example of his public dispute with Tom Johnston at Prestwick where he was not slow to rush into print.

### **Retirement**

Dollan formally retired from public life in 1961 at the age of 75 when more than 350 of Scotland's leaders from politics, journalism and industry 'gave him a dinner and sang his praises'.<sup>61</sup> Throughout his long political life he found it difficult to remain out of the limelight. As he ran out of public issues to raise, he took to regaling newspapers with personal anecdotes; in doing so perhaps revealing undoubted deep reserves of vanity. The Scottish public were now informed that he was facing eviction for standing up to his

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<sup>59</sup> *Scotsman*, 29 April 1950.

<sup>60</sup> *Scotsman*, 9 May 1949.

<sup>61</sup> *Evening Times*, 30 January 1963.

landlord.<sup>62</sup> They were then advised of his fight against Glasgow Corporation for allowing a circus to be sited in Queens Park.<sup>63</sup> He also returned to the devolution issue in 1960 by advising the *Times* that 'slogans had been chalked outside his home ... accusing him of betraying Scotland to England'.<sup>64</sup> Most dramatically of all, following receipt of a letter from a crank in 1960 he announced to the media that he had received a death threat from neo-Nazis for his stance against Hitler in the Second World War. This incident, as well as illustrating his customary hyperbole, perhaps indicated that his mental capacity was now in decline. The press interest in this also allowed him to repeat his claim, which seems unlikely, that he was 'the first man in Europe - even earlier than Churchill - to know that America was coming into the war'.<sup>65</sup> At the same time he alleged that 'during the war he had received about twenty threats to his life from people claiming to represent different organisations'.<sup>66</sup> It is episodes like this that caused the *Times* was to say, in an otherwise glowing obituary, that Dollan exhibited 'an occasional cavalier disregard for the strictures of precise facts'.<sup>67</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* whilst recognising his undoubted talents also, nevertheless, felt obliged to refer to his 'inconstant' and 'inconsistent' traits.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 14 November 1959.

<sup>63</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 23 August 1958.

<sup>64</sup> *The Times*, 24 June 1960.

<sup>65</sup> Glasgow University Library, Broady Collection, c 35, 'The Man Who Lives In The Shadow Of The Swastika', *Weekly Scotsman* article, 30 June 1960. Dollan's recollections were at variance to Tom Johnston's recollections and Roy Jenkins account. See Johnston, *Memories*, p. 146 and Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 650.

<sup>66</sup> *The Times* 24 June 1960.

<sup>67</sup> *The Times*, 31 January 1963.

<sup>68</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 31 January 1963

Sir Patrick Joseph Dollan LL.D, D.L., J.P. died as a result of illness following a heart attack in January 1963. His life was celebrated at a requiem mass attended by a number of MPs and civic dignitaries including Glasgow's Lord Provost Jean Roberts.<sup>69</sup> His enduring links with the working class of Glasgow was in evidence by the attendance of many pupils from St Gerard's school in Govan at which he had presided at the official opening many years before.

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<sup>69</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 2 February 1963.

## CONCLUSION

In traversing Dollan's life we can see that his reputation as a machine politician, a kind of 'desiccated calculating machine', rather than as a conviction politician, is a gross exaggeration. So also is the notion that he led an Irish Catholic group which had a 'corrupting influence' on Glasgow politics.<sup>1</sup> The reality is that he was anti-religion for most of his political life and there was no Labour 'machine' in Scotland in the sense that Smout, Harvie and others have suggested.<sup>2</sup> Again, in scrutinising the evidence there is little justification for Lynch's assertion that he 'eschewed Westminster politics in favour of richer rewards in municipal politics'.<sup>3</sup> He did not seek 'richer rewards' in Glasgow. He was, as the evidence clearly shows, a dedicated public servant. Nor was there any widespread or endemic corruption in the council as argued by Damer and others.<sup>4</sup> Again, the Glasgow council Labour group between the wars was more likely to be led by a journalist or an accountant than the 'wee hard men' as depicted by Harvie.<sup>5</sup> Dollan's and the ILP's success in winning over the working class of Glasgow was based on a clear demonstration of commitment and dedication to housing and other reforms coupled with excellent 'propaganda' and presentational skills which were used to paint a visible picture of solidarity and delivery of achievable reforms rather than a 'Godless' revolution. It was the

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<sup>1</sup> Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow*, p.127.

<sup>2</sup> Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People*, p. 274; Harvie, *No Gods*, p. 180; McLean, *Legend*, p. 192; Damer, *Going for a Song*, p. 154; Knox, *Maxton*, p. 105; Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Lynch, *Scotland - A New History* (London: Century, 1991 ), p. 431.

<sup>4</sup> Damer, *Going for a Song*, p. 196; Carol Craig, *The Tears that Made the Clyde*, p. 215.

<sup>5</sup> Harvie, *No Gods*, p. 106.

practice, as opposed to the theory of politics, which Dollan perfected and used to build support for Labour in Glasgow.

We have witnessed Dollan's departure from the revolutionary slogans of his youth and his adoption of reformism and gradualism as he grew older and became a mature politician. He never left the ranks of the working class or sold out to the establishment. He lived in a rented tenement flat in Glasgow throughout his adult life. That he was continuously elected by the working class of Govan over 33 years whilst Labour colleagues in the same ward suffered the vicissitudes of electoral defeat was testament to his popularity and effective representation rather than political manoeuvring or chicanery. He made himself available to the workers' cause whether on housing, rents or industrial disputes. His sensitivity to the criticism directed at him from Prestwick shop stewards together with his actions to secure their and their unions' trust and support, showed a person who keenly wanted to be on the side of the workers, rather than an aloof, cynical burnt out former politician. His record down the years, whether in Glasgow or East Kilbride, is one of solid delivery of meaningful reforms which benefitted the working class of the west of Scotland. Why then was Dollan viewed by so many in such a negative light?

For one thing, no one has previously looked closely at the evidence of his life. Many preferred instead to rely, at least as a frame of reference, on the narratives or hagiographies of 'Red Clydesiders', some of which presented Dollan as an impediment to the advance of socialism in Glasgow. Gallacher, MacLean and McShane, all clearly dedicated in their way, nevertheless, supported fringe political parties that lacked the real base of support in Scotland that the ILP and Dollan commanded. They were unlikely, therefore, to consider Dollan in fraternal terms since he was a bulwark to their own personal political cause.

Dollan was a major contributor in winning the Clydeside working class to the ILP and zealously fought to ensure that it was not being drawn in ideological directions that he considered both unpopular and unrepresentative. He became convinced that finding common cause with communists was unlikely to be in the interest of the Clydeside working class. Perhaps, therefore, those struggling to explain Labour's 'forward march' being halted in Maxton's Glasgow following the evangelical optimism arising from the 'breakthrough' general election results in 1922, found it convenient to blame Dollan and 'machine politics' for sowing disillusion which allegedly dampened the radical and revolutionary fervour of working-class 'Red Clydeside'.

As we have seen, even within the ILP from around the mid-1920s, there was an internal tactical struggle going on between those who wanted to offer a fundamental revolutionary change in society, and those who preferred to support the gradualist reform of Capitalism advocated by the Labour party leadership. Whilst Dollan was in the latter camp, Maxton and Wheatley were in the former. In many ways this has created a false dichotomy which has exaggerated their ideological differences at least down to Wheatley's death in 1930. As we have seen, none of these ILPers could be considered Marxist. Dollan wanted the same ends as Maxton and Wheatley. Their differences were more about tactics and strategy than ideology. Dollan firmly supported the radical economic policies of the ILP but he was not prepared to accept its drift out of the mainstream Labour movement. Prominent Clydeside ILPers followed Maxton through personal loyalty rather than a shared political strategy which was demonstrated following his death in 1946 when his parliamentary adherents drifted back to the PLP.



In many ways Dollan's legacy has suffered because of the romanticism and empathy surrounding the charismatic and idealistic Jimmy Maxton. Maxton would win any poll based on personality, affection, and popularity over the cantankerous, prickly but practical Dollan. However, as we have seen, when it came to political decision making in Scotland, Dollan was invariably in the ascendancy.

Dollan, came from dire poverty and spent his life seeking respectability. He more than likely adopted the middle name Joseph because he felt that it gave him some gravitas. He undoubtedly enjoyed the recognition and celebrity that his awards and the Lord Provost's office gave him. In reviewing a 1938 archive photograph featuring a group of civic dignitaries a journalist said that Dollan oozed 'municipal self-importance in which he is replete'.<sup>6</sup> He was never slow to remind journalists, however, of how proud he was that a working man had reached such a lofty position. He was in many ways an individualist and a political maverick which is hardly the hallmark of a machine politician. The minutes of Glasgow Corporation clearly illustrate that. Dollan was vain and possessed an insatiable desire for public comment on political matters. His press comments were not always driven by journalistic demands and could often be at variance with the prevailing political mood sometimes provoking rancour and resentment within the Labour movement. This desire for self-publicity, when a premium was placed on delivering the quote, rather than reflection or accuracy, created a cycle which included a penchant for self-justification ultimately leading to a reputation for inconsistency and controversy. He also displayed a fierce Calvinistic outlook on moral issues, even taking account of the working classes' social-

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<sup>6</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 20 March 1990.

conservatism of the period.<sup>7</sup> This outlook resulted in him failing to support the case for birth control despite him being a progressive supporter of other 'women's issues'.<sup>8</sup>

Dollan had many redeeming features. He was capable, and always prepared to take responsibility. He exuded energy, drive and commitment. He was a tireless worker of Stakhanovite proportions for working-class interests. This was symbolised by the slogan often heard at the time, 'Wherever Dollan is, things are done.' The *Manchester Guardian's* obituary said: 'He was a champion of the poor, the underprivileged, and the oppressed.'<sup>9</sup> He was immersed in Labour politics for over fifty years during most of which time he spent constructively delivering for the working class. And yet he has many detractors who have negated his contribution.

But, as McIvor shows, some earlier Labour history accounts 'in the "magnificent journey" mould' now require 'the adoption of a more rigorous detached' methodology.<sup>10</sup> This thesis points to the need for a more 'detached' and objective positioning of Patrick Dollan and Clydeside politics in the inter-war years. Whilst Knox and McKinlay have very usefully shed light on the post-'Red-Clydeside' Labour movement, it is apparent that further work requires to be done. This is particularly so when considering their theme of supposed 'disintegration of the radical tradition in Scotland and its replacement by a more authoritarian and statist alternative'.<sup>11</sup> Knox and McKinlay illustrate clearly that Labour organisation in Glasgow was 'in disarray', which was hardly the background in which a

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<sup>7</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 236.

<sup>8</sup> Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 31 January 1963.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur J. McIvor, *A History Of Work In Britain, 1880-1950* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p. 237.

<sup>11</sup> Knox and McKinlay, 'The Re-Making', p. 174.

legendary 'electoral machine of high efficiency' suggested by Fry could prosper.<sup>12</sup> But it is also critical of Dollan's (and Labour's) abandonment of the class struggle.<sup>13</sup> This latter point raises a fundamental question. That is, how relevant was the concept of class struggle to the working class in 1930s Glasgow? This thesis would suggest that Dollan, whilst recognising that class consciousness was critical in developing political identities, was also aware that abstract notions of 'class struggle' was irrelevant when it came to addressing workers' 'here and now' needs. He soon also recognised that real gains could be made for workers from a Labour administration and thus enthusiastically embraced parliamentary democracy. Dollan, like many of his contemporaries including Red Clydesiders, David Kirkwood, Manny Shinwell and George Buchanan eventually compromised with capitalism. However, as McIvor has again pointed out, capitalism also compromised with the Labour movement, and we should not underestimate the real gains delivered by the Attlee governments for the working class.<sup>14</sup> That Dollan pursued a reformist and gradualist strategy is clear. What is also clear is that many workers in Glasgow and East Kilbride benefitted from his strategy. He deserves a better legacy and understanding than that which most historians and commentators have afforded him to date.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 177; Fry, *Patronage and Principle*, p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> Knox and McKinlay, 'The Re-Making', p. 192.

<sup>14</sup> McIvor, *A History of Work*, pp. 247- 48.

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