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"CONSTITUTIONALISM AND EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY ACTION:
SOCIALISM AND THE DEFINITION OF POLITICS 1910-20"

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Introduction

After the electoral defeat of 9 June 1983, a handful of labour leaders began to talk about the necessity for 'extra-Parliamentary struggle'. Their most frequent justifications for returning to themes, shouted out of court in the case of Peter Tatchell, have been defensive: the only way to safeguard hard-won rights from an intransigent enemy is to adopt tactics of direct action. Extra-Parliamentary forms of politics have, in this debate, most usually been represented as exceptional strategies for adoption in extreme situations. In what follows, we want to make a specifically historical contribution to these issues.

Of course, there are no ready-made answers which the study of history will neatly scoop up. But what is often lost sight of is that the dominant definitions of politics today have a particular historical origin. 'Parliamentary politics', it seems, have no history of their own, but are the paradigm for legitimate political behaviour as such. They represent a a completed political system, with no future (of necessary changes) and no past (of costs, detours or mistakes). Against this, we wish to argue that many modern political assumptions (especially assumptions about what counts as politics) were formed in struggles around the First World War. It was this period, above all, that produced the equation between 'the constitution' and 'poli ic ' and narrowed the dominant conception of legitimate politics to exclude many pre-existing popular forms. Indeed, the narrowing itself depended on breaking the back of an extra-parliamentary socialist movement, and bolstering some elements of an inherited labourism, giving it a fuller popular legitimacy.

More was involved here than the familiar distinction between a reformist camp of Labour and a revolutionary position which, in this period, looked most of all towards Bolshevism. This way of dividing up the political scene on the left was not so clear cut at that time. The emergence of the division

was itself, in part, a <u>product</u> of the resort to constitutionalism. Before

the 1920s especially, socialist strategies were much more varied, resourceful,

fluid and confused, than this simple retrospective dichotomy suggests. There

were a number of strategic areas of struggle which clearly did not conform

to it. It is important to stress the contingent nature of struggles at that

time and our sense of a <u>range</u> of possible outcomes. This matches our belief

that socialist movements are going to have to be very much more experimental

strategically if they are going to make real inroads into the Thatcherite

hegemony. The opposition between 'reformist' and 'revolutionary' routes

or between 'parliamentary' and 'extra-parliamentary' means are relatively

crude categories for this purpose, though they certainly express some impor-

tant differences. In particular we do not reckon that the question of

parliamentary representation is <u>the</u> key for distinguishing a 'revolutionary'

from a 'reformist' politics.

To make these points more concretely we concentrate on the responses of

some of the main socialist groupings to the extension of the franchise, to

the growth of state intervention, and to Conservative 'constitutionalism' in

the period 1910-1924. We approach the period in a necessarily selective way.

Our purpose is to explore how the forms of a <u>statist</u> and a 'constitutionalist'

socialism developed, a socialism, that is, that focussed popular energies on

the demand for state reforms while limiting the forms of struggle within a

particular and narrow conception of legality. We are also concerned with the

process by which this form of politics undercut the commitment to change by

popular agency from below and divided the socialist and labour movements.

Our aim is to show how a narrow and conservative notion of 'the political'

was implanted in the very heart of the labour movement itself.

The Variety of Socialism

When the Labour Representation Committee was formed in 1900, the strategy of extending the struggles of the labour movement into parliament appeared to a whole spectrum of opinion within the labour movement itself as a **viable**, realistic and necessary political choice. The success of popular Liberalism had long depended on such a commitment from working people. Before 1900 any alternative and independent working-class politics had been extra-parliamentary. But in the long-term, the reconstruction of the political field which resulted from the Reform Bills of 1867 and 1884 presented new opportunities for the independent representation of labour. On this, most socialists and non-socialists within the labour movement were agreed. Membership of the LRC included representatives from the parliamentary committee of the Trade Union Congress, the Fabians, the socialist Independent Labour Part and the marxist Social Democratic Federation. Not all these groups, by any means, shared a single conception of how this new political space could be worked, nor was there even consensus on what goals should be followed. There was a basic conflict between the majority of the trade unionists whose tone was fundamentally ameliorative, aspiring to serve 'the direct interests of labour', and the explicitly anti-capitalist demands of the socialists. It was this opposition - forming the classic parameters of 'labourism' - which accounted for the amalgam of currents within the LRC. The impact of the 'new' unionism of the 1880s - in particular the active intervention of unskilled workers in socialist and industrial politics, which loosened the ties binding skilled labour to Liberalism - sharpened rather than overcame this opposition. What was at issue for the majority of socialists and marxists at the turn of the century was not the extension of the struggle into parliament, as a strategic perspective, but the forms and conditions of that extension.

It is on this aspect of socialist politics that we concentrate confining our discussion for the most part to the years 1910 to 1924. The defining feature of this period was the mass transformation in the political allegiance of the working class from Liberal to Labour, a transformation without parallel in modern British history. The development of the various strands of socialism, and particularly the vicissitudes of the relatively tiny marxist groupings, have to be situated within this context. Politics in these years including socialist politics, was in deep flux. Socialism itself carried many and varied meanings. It was only by the end of this period that definitions of socialism – 'reformist' or 'revolutionary' – which seem today so much part of the permanent inventory of left politics hardened into a central, organising principle. The force of this antagonism crucially depended on the apparent possibilities for a parliamentary route to socialism, and the pressures for such a fracture began to develop from the early 1900s. After only one year the SDF pulled out of the Labour Representation Committee. From 1920 the gap between a gradualist, constitutional strategy and a militant industrial politics rapidly widened. An attempt at socialist unity in 1911 attracted only a minority of socialists, with more than half the membership of the new British Socialist Party disappearing by 1914. At the Leeds Convention of June 1917, called to welcome the February Revolution in Russia, although the rhetoric was excitable and enthusiasm for workers' councils unbounded, there were also deep differences which remained more or less unspoken. The process of socialist definition finally culminated in the formation of the Communist Party on the Bolshevik model, and the emergence of the Labour Party as a party of government.

These two parties were divided by their antagonistic conceptions of strategies adequate for a constitutional and formally democratic nation. The split largely pivoted on the parties' respective analyses of constitutional democracy, Communists generally thinking it a sham constructed to deceive the

workers, and the majority of the Labour Party into believing that the key to socialist transformation lay in parliamentary democracy. But our understanding of the _making_ of this division is complicated by the fact that the line demarcating constitutional from non-constitutional was not fixed, nor was it generally agreed where it should be drawn. Indeed, it became a primary _object_ of struggle from 1910 until the General Strike.

Within the lived conditions of working-class experience no hard-and-fast distinction could be established between tactical, ameliorative gains and a long-term strategy aiming for collective ownership. The range of demands included within a trade union perspective, for example, could be very wide indeed. The National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers – albeit an unusually militant union – illustrates this. Their rules, drawn up in 1894, included demands for the eight hour day, equal pay for women, the abolition of piece work and of unpaid overtime, the enforcement of the Truck Act and 'legislation for the betterment of the lives of the working class'. These objectives were to be secured by 'the return of members of the union to vestries, school boards, boards of guardians, municipal bodies, and to Parliament, provided such candidates are pledged to the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'.[1] By the turn of the century, commitment to the independent representation of the working class by a Labour Party tended to blur and disrupt distinctions between immediate and long-term demands to an even greater extent than hitherto. So too did the extension of the state. It was exactly around all these ambiguities that various currents met in the formation of a 'Labour socialism', that is, in a combination of socialist and social democratic elements which cohered in the post-war Labour Party.[2]

The Extension of the State

The essential context of socialist dilemmas was the growth of state intervention itself. Socialism as a doctrine and state formation as a process

were closely intertwined. In much of the dominant discourse of the day, the reordering of the state – the collapse of 'individualism', the increase in municipal and state ownership and control of utilities, the unprecedented regulatory functions of the state, the financing of national welfare schemes by progressive taxation – came to be called 'socialism', as a synonym for collectivism.[3] It became clear after the Liberal administration of 1906 that significant social reforms <u>could</u> be secured through the state. A conception of state-guaranteed social rights – such as the right to a 'national minimum' or living wage – was shared by a number of Liberals and (at least as an immediate demand) by the majority of socialists. This was a broad commitment to a <u>social</u> democracy, and it is significant that until the war, all socialists and marxists considered themselves social democrats. For some, the Liberal reforms actually provided a model for future socialist practice, while for others, notwithstanding the immediate benefits bestowed by these reforms, they were understood as consolidating the drift towards the repressive statism of the 'Servile State'.[4]

But as a result of the accelerating intervention of the state, socialists were daily confronted with quite new choices about how to organise inside the fields of state activity. The dichotomy of working inside or outside the state was never simple, and from this time became increasingly less so. For example, apart from the possibilities for independent representation in parliament, there were a number of apparatuses in the locality which could (and sometimes did) pass to socialist control. As strikes took on a national dimension, and in the wake of the Conciliation Act of 1896, trade unionists began to find themselves negotiating directly with state officials. Trade unions were integrated into the apparatuses of the state to assist with the organisation of trade boards, national insurance and labour exchanges. Tom Mann, SDF member and militant leader of the Dock Strike in 1889, was installed a little

later as a member of the Royal Commission on Labour. Key members of the labour movement were given the opportunity to occupy specific posts and sites within the state due to their 'expertise' on industrial matters or as representatives of the larger movement, as the 'voice' of labour. At every turn, whatever strategies the parties were to adopt, the recomposition of the state directly affected socialist practice.

It is not surprising therefore that the predominant currents within the socialist movement became more and more preoccupied with the state. To summarize a complex pattern of events, we can suggest three particular issues that appeared in a new light. First was the question of participation in the representative apparatuses of the state. The hold of abstentionism, - i.e., the principled refusal to become involved in parliamentary politics - was traditionally very weak in Britain, and as a result political dispute centred, as we have indicated, on the conditions of participation. For the most part, from the 1910s, this effectively meant deciding what to do about the Labour Party. There were moments when it really did seem as if it were on the cards to create an alternative, and specifically proletarian, means of representation which would supersede the parliamentarianism of Labour, particularly when the elect al machine was itself locked into immobilisation during the coalition years between 1915 and 1922. For many, this was the ultimate promise of the shop stewards' movement and the embryonic workers' councils. But while these movements - generated by an industrial politics often of a distinctly insurrectionary temper - began to falter, or were unable to overcome the constraints of sectionalism, the Labour Party continued to develop into a significant national organisation. Even in the adverse conditions of the Coupon Election of 1918 nearly two-and-a-half million people voted Labour and from then until 1931 the Labour Party's share of the percentage of the total vote continued to grow steadily.

The second issue concerned the state as an agent for reform and collec-
tivism - the interventionist properties of the state. From the 1880s, it
was recognised that in all aspects of economic and social life, market forces
could be regulated by state action. From the 1890s proposals for progressive
taxation envisaged the possibilities for the redistribution of the social
wealth, organised through state fiscal policy. By the beginning of the 20th
century there existed a significant body of opinion, self-consciously socialist,
which envisaged the state as a primary means for the socialisation of
'production, distribution and exchange'. The extent to which in practice
these objectives could overlap and cohere is striking. Before the 1920s, the
divisions between those who subsequently emerged as social democrats and
socialists, or between new Liberals and Labour, were frequently unimaginably
fine. The case for 'collectivism' and even for 'socialism' could cut right
across party boundaries, springing up in some unlikely places. The most
divisive issue was the form of collectivism, and inextricably linked to this,
the role to be assigned to the state. Radicals and socialists were united in
a deep distrust of the undiluted Prussianism of the Tariff Reform League - as
they were, after 1910, of Lloyd George. Apart from the outright statist
aspirations of the Unionists, most other conceptions of collectivism (the
Fabians were an important exception) believed democratic control to be integral
to collective control. Whether adequate democratic controls could be secured
inside the existing apparatuses of the state was another matter.

The third new preoccupation directly hinged on this last dilemma. What
should be the ultimate objectives of the socialist movement in relation to
to the state. This sharply raised the problem of the democratic potential
of the (existing) state and the question of its limits as an agent for
socialisation. It was within this period that the two most common solutions -
occupying the state, or "smashing" it - were formulated with greatest force,

although a number of mid-way positions - 'transforming the state' - began to cohere in these years. A new set of oppositions crystallized at this point. How far did those engaged in 'occupying' the state necessarily curtail the self-activity of working people, reproducing in a new form a statism devoid of popular controls? And did commitment to the radical potentiality of working-class activity mean that the only satisfactory solution would be to destroy the state, and create a completely new and alternative structure?

The Late 19th Century

In confronting these questions, socialists were facing new political conditions which were not of their immediate making. As a consequence of Britain's imperial decline, opinion was mobilising in the power bloc and amongst the dominant classes advocating a drastic overhaul of the state, while the state also assumed a new position in socialist thought. It has recently been argued by Stephen Yeo that this preoccupation entailed a severe loss for the socialist movement, breaking up older, more co-operative and spontaneous forms of working-class self-activity, marginalising and driving underground a vigorous radical culture. It is claimed that the breadth and generosity of the socialist vision shrivelled into something altogether more utilitarian.[5] There is undoubtedly substance to this argument. Of the two strands of socialism which achieved dominance by the 1920s, the Labour Party was excessively statist in its conception of socialism and in its practice, while the Communist Party mirrored this excess, both in its vanguardism and in inscribing the state as the concentrate of all power-relations - hence the need for it to be unequivocally smashed.

Yeo's argument is that it's strongest when it highlights the connections between socialism and sexual politics. The socialism of the 1880s and 1890s was perhaps less dogmatic than its immediate successors (although, as the political costumes of William Morris remind us, this can be exaggerated);

a significant number of traditionally-formed intellectuals found in the socialist movement a natural ally in their revolt against high Victorianism; and the socialism of the late 19th Century may have developed a more coherent conception of cultural transformation than in the later period. Its utopian elements undermined many eternalised and naturalised assumptions sedimented in common sense thinking, while after the 1890s there existed no critical intellectual system sufficient to insure against the positivist incrustations of Second and Third International marxism. In general there was probably a greater openness to feminism, while in particular, certain extremely influential individuals within the socialist movement actively thought their socialism in terms of sexual politics.[6] There was little comparable to this in the 1910s and 1920s. A commitment to sexual politics, as a primary concern, was confined to the libertarian margins of the movement. In relation to feminist politics, at critical moments - most dramatically in the formation and development of the shop stewards' movement - a masculinist model of socialism did perhaps restrict its own popularisation. In this sense, it is right to suggest that this earlier model of socialist activity lost its immediate hold, and the political costs involved may have been very significant indeed.

In other respects, there may be room for more scepticism. After the counter-attack of the 1890s, there was not, as Yeo claims a sharp break in which the Labour Party, its head chock-full of state socialism, simply stepped into the vacuum and completed the defeat of a popular spirit of socialist co-operation. This is to ignore the process by which alternatives were rendered subordinate, and hides the resistances to those attempts at the statization of socialism, a statization which was imposed from without, as well as being generated from within. It also ignores the deep ambiguities which ran right through both labourism and the worked-up ideals of Labour

Party collectivism. (Indeed it is paradoxical that some of the worst aspects of a bureaucratic Labour mentality could happily nestle in the older discourse of the 'religion of socialism'). Nor, on the other hand, is it possible to trace any abrupt discontinuities in the language of socialism, although one significant shift was the greater energy invested by socialists in rationalist and secular societies. Individual militants still overwhelmingly identified with the socialist and cultural critics of the 19th century, devouring their writings and treasuring the breadth of their vision. In reading the memoirs of working-class socialists in this period one is constantly struck by the cultural dislocation following the moment of 'conversion' - appearing 'with the force of an irrestible revelation' [7] - and by the <u>totality</u> of commitment.

And there were positive gains, as well as the losses. The energies of the feminists were concentrated in the suffrage movement and in winning entry into the public sphere. Although the relations between the socialist and suffrage movements were far from harmonious, the eventual inclusion of women in the political nation was of absolutely fundamental importance for socialism. Furthermore, through the work of women's organisations - such as the Women's Co-operative Guild and the Fabian Women's Group - specifically feminist concerns began very slowly to penetrate the labour movement. From the 1900s the direction of feminism shifted in a way not dissimilar to socialism, and in the process new issues were opened as points of possible political intervention. The living conditions of working-class women in the family, most especially the appalling burden of maternity, is the most notable example. In fact the conflicts between a eugenist-influenced campaign for state endowment for motherhood - tying women into the home and encouraging procreation for national efficiency - and the experiences and aspirations of women themselves reflects the more general process in which pressures for reform and welfare, from below, were constantly vulnerable to a sustained

reworking and statization as they came nearer to realisation.[8] The super-
imposition of collectivism and socialism could clearly invite such outcomes,
and there can be no doubt that within the mainstream of the labour move-
ment the very conception of social reforms intersected <u>at every point</u> with
dominant definitions of the 'social problem'.

The Labour Party's attempts to formulate a programme of reforms which
would abolish the 'social problem' was highly contradictory: it challenged
the power of capital (forcing the state to construct new political solutions);
but it also reproduced elements of a corporate and subordinate political
culture. Given the domination of political and intellectual forces ranged
against the labour movement this is not so surprising. The contraditions
and conflicts embedded in the social and political programme of the Labour
Party could be resolved one way or another only through a process of
struggle, a struggle which had to be pitched both inside and outside the
party. This is the theme we examine in the following sections looking at
some of the differing perspectives in the socialist tradition.

<u>Syndicalism and Proto-Syndicalism</u>

In <u>The Miners' Next Step,</u> a document produced by the unofficial
committee of the South Wales' Federation at the very beginning of 1912,
the statement on policy opened by declaring:

> I: The old policy of identity of interest between
> employers and ourselves te abolished, and a policy
> of open hostility be installed.9

This is hardly typical of British trade unionism, but it conveys with clarity
the temper of industrial politics in the years before the First World War.
The impact the pamphlet made on Arthur Horner, the future miners' leader,
was far from unique:

> This programme and the movement it created
> throughout the coal-field gave me the inspiration
> I had been looking for......The conception of
> working-class power was to me far more realistic
> than the idea of fighting for seats in parliament
> merely for supporters of the Liberal-Labour Alliance.[10]

In fact Horner's swift transition to Communism is directly representative of that extraordinary transformation in consciousness of the South Wales miners as a whole. The industrial battles of 1910-12 were of critical importance - not only in South Wales - in the disintegration of a popular Liberalism.

The dimensions of these struggles before the war are staggering. The scholarly recognition of unrest hardly does justice. Trade union membership shot up from two million in 1910 to more than double that number by the outbreak of war. Forty million working days were lost as a result of strikes in 1912 alone. The labour threat took hold of the minds of the governing classes, who were repeatedly confronted with a rash of strikes commonly articulated in a language so insurrectional it made genteel blood curdle in fear.[11] It was the apparent irrationality-of these conflicts which so perplexed employers and politicians. The strikes were frequetly violent. Direct engagements between mass pickets and troops or police were common. From this period the military presence in British social life – not merely as spectacle or display, but as a centrally directed coercive apparatus – assumed quite new significance, and was itself an index of a deeper political crisis. Within organised syndicalist groupings, the development of the state came to be perceived in terms of an accentuating militarism. Tom Mann's campaign in Liverpool was integrally linked to an anti-militarist position. Such sentiments touched every section of the labour movement. During the rail strike of August 1911, Ramsay MacDonald, having watched 1,000 mounted soldiers ride down Southampton Row on their way to the East End, complained to Winston Churchill, the Home Secretary, about 'this recurrence to medieval ideals of how law and order are going to be maintained. This is not a medieval state, and it is not Russia. It is not even Germany'.[12] Strikers and mass pickets attacked blacklegs and also collieries, railway stations and business premises; numerous

attempts at arson and sabotage have been documented. In such circumstances intervention by the police was hardly surprising, although the evidence from Liverpool in 1911 is conclusive in demonstrating that it was the massive and provocative build-up of army detachments and police from outside the city which directly led to the first confrontations.[13]

But beyond this, police and military intervention also seems to have been generated by a more profound fear that the 'respectable' worker and citizen was on the verge of being over-run by lawless socialists and anarchists. There may have been a rational core to this for there certainly was a tendency for the old 'labour aristocrat' to be forced into the ranks of the deskilled, and under certain conditions, shift sharply to the left. It is hard to pinpoint this panic in detail. But when it looked as if whole communities (in Liverpool, Hull, South Wales, East London) were capitulating to the 'militants', then there was cause for real worry, as the Chief Constable of Glamorgan gloomily reported on the transport strike in Cardiff in 1911.

> The average lower middle class person does not seem to realise that it is his duty to assist the police in the preservation of Law and Order. It frequently occurs that a small gang of Hooligans commence to destroy property, attack Police, or cause some other form of disorder. These Hooligans are immediately surrounded by a large crowd of apparently respectable people, whose demeanour is rather one of encouragement towards the Hooligans than otherwise. Their presence in such large numbers makes it extremely difficult for the Police to get at the real offenders. Their obstruction brings friction between them and the Police and instead of assisting the latter in their difficult task, they side with the Hooligans. [14]

Most of the strikes in this period were unofficial, fuelled by rank and file discontent; on the occasions when the strikes were official, as in South Wales in 1910, the leaderships came under vehement attack. The growth and amalgamation of unions encouraged a system of national negotiations between employers and trade union leaders which often silenced the

voice of the union branches. From the beginning of the century a permanent suspicion of parliament and the judiciary had developed in response to a string of anti-labour legislation. The effects of the Taff Vale judgement had been overturned by the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, which also gave to unions an unprecedented legal immunity. But contending with an employer hell-bent on getting a wage cut or imposing a lock-out, this may not have seemed exactly to the point. The Osborne decision of 1909 did much to reverse any goodwill won from unionists by the Trade Disputes Act. And for militants, the trade union leaders could be as much a liability as the high court judges. Thus Richard Bell, the leader of the Railway Servants, welcomed Taff Vale - a judgement against his own union - as 'a useful influence in solidifying the forces of trade unionism and in subjecting them to wholesome discipline'.[15] In contrast, after the defeat of the Cambrian strike, in order to break the official South Wales Miners' Federation policy of conciliation it was found necessary to create at branch level an alternative structure, completely separate from the leadership. One motivation in the strike movement can thus be seen as an attempt to win back a measure of popular control of the trade unions.

It would be wrong to think that the conflicts were the manifestations of a shared, syndicalist theory. There is little evidence, for example, that the engineers' strike which swept through the Black Country in the course of 1913 was particularly influenced by syndicalist ideas. In general, the strikes throughout this period were spontaneous, fired by popular outrages, the immediate consequences of accumulations of local grievances. In almost every case the formal objectives were compatible with what we now take to be regular trade unionism - recognition, wages, conditions. However, this doesn't explain the combatative resources on which the strikes could draw, the desire to 'abolish' class conciliation. Struggles for recognition,

certainly, can often be brutal. Furthermore, it was largely between the Dock Strike of 1889 and the conflicts of 1910-14 that modern trade unionism and its legitimate concerns were formed. The unionisation of non-skilled and women's labour was the most visible shift. But also the right to tolerable conditions at work, to have a modicum of time free from the regime of factory or workshop, and the right to a living wage became generalised in this period as social rights, appropriate for all working people.

From the 1890s progressive employers began to urge a more rational consumption of labour power and to invest more in its cultivation, rather than in exhausting it at the quickest possible rate. Board of Trade officials more readily intervened to discipline backward capitals and with the Home Office, to attempt to broaden and make effective the system of the factory inspectorate. Liberal politicians were quick to see the dangers of enfranchised workers experiencing an absolute apartheid in economic life. Certainly, these ethical, economic and political considerations became concentrated in the minds of the dominant classes in response to the socialist revival of the 1880s. The Liberal concern for a 'national minimum' cannot be separated from working-class pressure and from some of the most bitter industrial struggles of the period. Similarly, the proliferation of plans for industrial representation, in and just after the war, were directly determined by decisions by unions - such as that of the NUR in 1914 - to fight for nationalisation with workers' control, and later by the development of the shop stewards' movement. Once more, the totality of these determinations fed into the politics of Labour socialism. But this commitment to a living wage and to social rights injected into the strike movement of 1910-14 the politics of the 'ultimatum' which so baffled the humane and liberal commentators. The national miners' strike of 1912, aiming to secure a national minimum wage guaranteed by the state, was the most forceful example of this transformation, which in this period defined a new trade unionism, and

contributed a further strand to the making of social democracy and socialism.

Although the strike movements were not fully syndicalist, they did create or transform trade union branches which were unusually strong nuclei for the representation of workers. The feebleness of alternative forms of representation was crucial here. A combination of a severe drop in customary living standards and the weakening in the representative power of Liberalism and traditional trade unionism forced people to adopt 'direct action' in order to achieve significant, but not revolutionary, objectives. Commitment to basic economic rights, advocacy of direct industrial representation, a determination to shift the balance of forces in each industry (coal, rail, transport, docks, and to some extent engineering), and the perceptions of a shared class experience - of a class solidarity - were factors which underpinned the main drive of these strikes. These did not necessarily add up to support for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. However, in this specific form, there may be a case for understanding these strikes as expressions of a proto-syndicalism, to borrow Holton's term, a fierce, embattled resistance to the injustices suffered by labour.[17]

On the other hand, there is a great deal of evidence of direct involvement by self-proclaimed syndicalists. Socialist agitation was not just a figment of the police mind. This was especially true amongst the miners of South Wales and the railway workers. Big Bill Haywood, the famous American Wobbly, was in the Rhondda during the Cambrian Coal strike. (The political axis linking South Wales, Dublin, Belfast, Liverpool and Glasgow to the eastern seaboard of the United States was often stronger than that connecting these areas to metropolitan England). The group which produced The Miners' Next Step was avowedly syndicalist, some of its members apprenticed in the Ruskin strike of 1909 and the Plebs League. Syndicalism, as a coherent, theoretically informed ideology, was partly imported into

Britain from North America and France, but was also a theorisation of contemporary developments within Britain itself. It was socialist and revolutionary, advocating the total destruction of the capitalist system. It was specific in that it held that the working class was (potentially) strongest in the economic and industrial field, and that the socialist movement needed above all else to create revolutionary industrial organisations. Some versions were strongly influenced by the advance of capitalism in the United States, identifying in the concentration and centralisation of ca ital an anticipation of the future Britain. (This response to monopolies contrasted forcefully with Labour aspirations for bringing the trusts under public co trol). In this conception, unions restricted to 'pure and simple' trades impeded the ideological and organisational development of the working class, reproducing an anarchronistic, defensive craftism in an age of big battalions. In the most extreme and determinist form of this ideology, trade unionism was condemned as irredeemably reactionary and corrupt.

The impact of syndicalism in shaping popular conceptions of socialism was very great indeed. In pursuing their political strategies, the two major socialist parties - the ILP and SDF - gave very little active attention, as parties, to industrial struggles. Disputes between the leaderships of the socialist parties, or the electoral wranglings between Liberal, Labour and ILP could frequently appear abstract and distanced to all but the most militant - although this didn't prevent working people from voting for Labour candidates.[18] This tended to leave the field open for syndicalism, both in its 'practical' state of proto-syndicalism, and in its more theorised forms. The Socialist Labour Party, which broke away from the SDF in 1902-03, planned, within a few years of its foundation, to overcome the division between economic and political by formulating a strategy combining the two. Influenced by the American 'heretical'

marxist, Daniel de Leon, and by the creation of the Industrial Workers of the World (The Wobblies), in 1906 the SLP organised a group calling itself the British Advocates of Industrial Unionism (which subsequently, after a series of splits, became the Industrial Workers of Great Britain).[19] This was to act as the industrial arm of the SLP. Although informed by a coherent and not unreasonable analysis of the tendencies of the development of monopoly capitalism, the AIU was condemned to marginality because so strict was its adherence to industrial unionism that it concentrated on building the British union movement anew, free from the 'labour fakirs' of trade unionism.

More organic to the labour movement was the Industrial Syndicalist Educational League, founded in 1910, whose prime mover was the ubiquitous Tom Mann. This was the most important organisation of socialists within the pre-war union movement, its conferences drawing delegates representing more than 100,000 workers. It did not entirely escape the crippling disputes about dual unionism (the formation of alternative industrial unions)although it was primarily directed to the reorganisation of trade unions from within, uniting the fragmented craft unions through amalgamation committees. To the syndicalists, the need for this was clear: industrial unions were to secure direct democracy and a complete system of workers' control. According to E.J.B. Allen of the ISEL they must be seen as

> the embryo of a working class republic. Our national
> unions, local unions and other bodies will be the
> administrative machinery of an Industrial Commonwealth.
> We claim that no six hundred and seventy men, elected to
> Parliament from various geographical areas, can possibly
> have the requisite technical knowledge to properly control
> the productive and distributive capacities of the nation.
> The men and women who actually work in the various
> industries should be the persons best capable of
> organising them.[20]

This would be achieved by raising the momentum of industrial struggle, culminating in a general strike; with the nation at a standstill, workers

would take over their industries.

In his lucid account of syndicalism, Bob Holton warns against too
excessive a reading of the socialist potential of these years. He suggests
that there did not even occur 'a universal shift towards industrial dis-
affection and aggression'. Rather, the significance of the period lay in
'a polarisation between militancy and Labourism, that is, a commitment to
gradualist reform within the liberal capitalist framework'.[21] We don't
agree with this restrictive notion of labourism, identified only by Labour
reformism. We understand it as a broader cultural phenomenon: labourism
could be militant, aggressive, and under certain conditions could actually
take the form of proto-syndicalism. But to indicate a polarisation between
constitutional Labour politics, and industrial struggles informed by an
alternative conception of socialism, is a useful approach.

Three aspects of this divergence need to be untangled - the syndicalist
conception of politics and the state; the significance of state capitalism;
and the place of the Labour Party and its relation to the state. Holton
has argued with conviction that within syndicalism there developed a
logically consistent and historically relevant theory of the state, and
that it is a travesty to suggest that syndicalists ignored the political
sphere.[22] Certainly syndicalists recognised the problem of the state, and
with good reason. It was generally understood that in any revolutionary
rupture the state could not simply be by-passed, but had to be challenged
with a force equal to it in strength and organisation. Nor was the diver-
gence between an electoral and an industrial politics always absolute.
'Paralysis' of the state was the predominant metaphor within syndicalist
theories.. A popular vote against the dominant party could contribute to
this paralysis; but the major factor in its achievement would be industrial
action, for it was within economic life that workers would become conscious

of themselves, as workers, and as a class with common interests. Although differing in other respects, James Conholly's formulation was typical of much syndicalist thought of the time:

> This leads me to the last axiom of which I wish you
> to grasp the significance. It is this, that the fight
> for the conquest of the political state is not the
> battle, it is only the echo of the battle. The real
> battle is the battle being fought out every day for
> the power to control industry and the gauge of the
> progress of that battle is not to be found in the
> number of voters making a cross beneath the symbol of
> a political party, but in the number of these workers
> who enrol themselves in an industrial organisation
> with the definite purpose of making themselves masters
> of the industrial equipment of society in general.23

Connolly then proceeded to insist on the need for socialists to organise electorally, and it was this which differentiated him from many syndicalists.

This industrial unionist perspective on politics contained conflicting currents. Negatively, it was straightforwardly economistic, severely reducing political practice to an epiphenomenonal activity whose 'real' motor was located elsewhere, in the economy, thereby precluding the poss- ibility for adequate strategic engagement. But on the other hand, as a critique of dominant political forms, there were ideas here immensely valuable for socialism. First, the <u>existing</u> forms of parliamentary democracy were shown to be inadequate, hinting at the processes of individualisation at work in the abstract act of marking the ballot paper. Second, there was raised the possibility of organising an alternative state founded on a principle of workplace control. Third, a stress on the self-activity of the working-class emerged, with the implication that the working-class must become the <u>ruling</u> class and assume the role of a conscious force in the historical process. At best, these ideas were often embryonic, only to be developed under new conditions at a later date. But the similarities with some of Lenin's subsequent formulations on the nature of the

proletarian state, and with Gramsci's earliest writings, should not be overlooked.[24] In substance, then, within syndicalist ideology, parliamentary democracy and capitalism were viewed as a necessary unity. Ben Tillett's address to the Annual Conference of the Dockers' Union in the summer of 1912 was symptomatic, the anti-parliamentary fervour explicit:

> The class war is the most brutal of wars and the most pitiless. The lesson is that, in future strikes, the strikers must protect against the use of arms, with arms; protect against violence, with violence...The other lesson is that Parliament is a farce and a sham, the rich man's Duma, the Employers' Tammany, the Thieves Kitchen and the working man's despot....Capitalism is capitalism as a tiger is a tiger; and both are savage and pitiless towards the weak.[25]

Even though the speech was delivered in a moment of defeat, and there may have been an element of face-saving in the belligerent rhetoric, Tillett's tone and critique were consistent with much that he had been saying in previous years.[26] Coercion, repression and militarism was all that could be expected from the state.

This analysis could be extended to specific apparatuses of the state. Even 'reforming' apparatuses such as the Board of Trade - the acme of socialism in the eyes of so many employers - were understood as inherently repressive. In the general strike in Liverpool, Mann made this position clear:

> Seamen had tried to induce Parliament to consider their case and rectify some of their grievances, but Parliament had in effect told them to 'go to the devil'. They had approached individual ship-owners and they had adopted the same attitude as government departments and the Board of Trade. The Board....was a body of permanent officials drawn from the capitalist set who administered in the interests of the ship-owners the various acts passed ostensibly in the interests of the workers. The Board of Trade was the enemy of the seamen. The only way to remedy the situation was by Direct Action.[27]

And it could be extended to a critique of 'state capitalism'. The liberal welfare legislation provided plenty of ammunition in this respect.

The syndicalist-influenced Birmingham branch of the newly formed British

Socialist Party drafted a denunciation of the National Insurance Bill:

> The present Government - backed by their friends and
> cousins the Opposition and ardently supported by the
> official 'Labour' Party....is now engaged in engineering
> measures like the national insurance bill aimed at the
> official regulation of wage slavery, the stereotyping by
> law of the social subjection of all non-propertied
> persons, measures that are doubtless in the near future
> to be fortified by such installations of State Capitalism
> as may suit the book of the exploiting interests.28

And as the reference to the Labour Party suggests, an attack on the

collectivism of 'state ca italism' could easily swing round to an attack

on the collectivism of 'state socialism'.

The Labour Party

There is no need to repeat Miliband's analysis of the pre-war Labour

Party in parliament.[29]   The Labour representatives were few; many were not

socialists; and the tactical alliances with the Liberals provided almost

no chance for Labour to push through even the most mild measures of its

own policy. For many of the most militant sections of the labour movement

deep disillusionment set in, not only with the Labour Party, but with the

political conditions in which it was located. To many it seemed the only

representative in parliament who actually listened to working people was

Victor Grayson, and he was a lone - and as it proved, idiosyncratic -

figure.

In 1906 the Labour Representation Committee became a political party

in its own right, the Labour Party. But with the distintegration of the

Unionist forces in parliament, the rifts between Liberal and Labour, and

more especially within Labour itself, grew more pronounced. In 1907 Arthur

Henderson replaced Keir Hardie as chairman of the party, and from the very

start he was at loggerheads with the ILP, for which he had little love.

The ILP members of parliament were frustrated by the Labour Party's

continuing failure to get anything concrete achieved. For the next two years they were in a state of almost continuous revolt, and more than once came to the point of threatening secession. The main matter of contention for the ILPers was whether working as a constituent element in the Labour Party was compatible with the ILP's aims as a socialist party. The force of the ILP critique was directed at the failure of the Labour Party within parliament, but it is significant that there was no concerted attempt to remedy this failure by reassessing the relation between representatives and represented, looking to socialist forces outside parliament.

A central figure in this conflict was Ramsay MacDonald. He had been secretary to the LRC from its formation, first becoming an MP in 1906. He was a socialist and a member of the ILP, politically and theoretically influenced by Hardie and J. Bruce Glasier, and in the pre-war years politically close to Philip Snowden, also of the ILP. MacDonald's socialism, although frequently proclaimed and worrying enough for some trade unionists in the Labour Party, was never construed by them as a real danger, partly because he always maintained excellent relations with the Liberals. Even after the Labour Party asserted its independence, he still favoured an alliance with the Liberals in order to force a progressive anti-Unionist bloc. Like many ILPers, he was profoundly influenced by the new Liberalism, most particularly by J.A. Hobson. The starting point for his socialist theory was collectivism and the regulation of the market, a process which he understood as already having begun with the advent of the new monopolies. As he stressed, in 1905, this approach placed socialism above class, transmuting its meaning into a term which referred to a 'quality' of society, almost to an evolutionary stage. Thus, he claimed socialism was a matter of belief, not of class, and it was as concerned with the reorganisation of intellectual and moral factors as with the economy: 'Socialism marks the growth of society, not the

uprising of a class.[30]

MacDonald did much to shape the socialism of the ILP at this time even though his relations with the ILP were curious. From the beginning of 1908 he demonstrated his increasing impatience with ILP leftists and with their threats to secede from the Labour Party. Indeed it was partly through his skills that the revolt was contained and ILP and Labour remained united. In 1911 he became chairman of the Labour Party and Henderson secretary, initiating a twenty-year alliance. This was an uneasy one, as the two did not get along, but it marked a new phase in the consolidation of the Labour Party as a broadly-based political formation, as a new historic bloc. From this moment, MacDonald seems also to have entertained the idea that the Labour Party might assume political maturity and responsibility by entering a coalition, either with the Liberals, or by securing a rearrangement of the forces inside the power bloc. In 1911 he recorded in his diary a meeting with Lloyd George: '22nd October. Breakfasted with the Chancellor of Exchequer. He sounded me out on coalition Government: "not just yet" '.[31] According to David Marquand, MacDonald's biographer, there is some evidence (although not conclusive) that in the same year MacDonald contemplated joining a coalition with Lloyd George and Balfour, to oust Asquith. This may be far-fetched. But nonetheless in 1912, and again in 1914, the overtures between MacDonald and Lloyd George continued.[32]

In response to the increasing attacks on the Labour Party from within the labour movement itself, the socialists and intellectuals committed to a parliamentary Labour Party attempted to fashion a new 'common sense' of socialism. This task fell primarily to MacDonald and Snowden. In assembling the elements for a specifically Labour socialism, the central tension which had to be resolved was the balance between class and 'community'. In a speech in the House of Commons in 1912, MacDonald

provided one of the clearest possible illustrations of this conception of community, one which was to resonate in Labour socialism throughout the 1920s:

> We are too fond of imagining there are two sides only
> to a dispute.....there is the side of capital, there is
> the side of labour; and there is the side of the general
> community; and the general community has no business to
> allow capital and labour, fighting their battles them-
> selves, to elbow them out of consideration.33

Formulations like these were to prove critical in determining the attitude of Labour Party politicians towards the state.

The most sustained defence of the Labour Party and its relation to the state w s Snowden's Socialism and Syndicalism, written in 1913. Snowden established his labour-movement credentials by defending Marx, who, he claimed, was important for the scientific study of the social problem; but, while agreeing that there existed an antagonism between classes, Snowden rejected the notion of class war. The remainder of the book depended on three major propositions. First, in a curious mirroring of syndicalism, he insisted that the Labour Party aimed not for the 'conquest' of political power, but rather the 'conquest' of economic power, in other words, the regulation of trusts and monopolies. Second, political power by contrast was to be 'acquired', or as Snowden put it, with a large degree of wishful thinking, 'nowadays not even the loudest voiced Revolutionary Socialist thinks that the Social Revolution will be achieved in any other way than by the gradual acquisition of political power by democracy and the gradual transformation of the capital system into a co-operative commonwealth'.34 And lastly, he argued that just as anarchism was an off-shoot from the main body of socialism in the 19th century, so syndicalism was an off-shoot of contemporary socialism. Socialism, he concluded, by definition accepted the beneficence of the state.

There was not much here to convince the likes of Tillett or Mann, whose
hopes stuck firmly to the syndicalists. They could argue, with justification,
that the Labour Party had provided pitifully little for working people,
whereas direct industrial action had won some notable victories. But proto-
syndicalism was perhaps more unstable than the militant leaders imagined. It
could fluctuate between sudden angry outbursts, and then slide back into a
more recognizably accommodative stance, sullen perhaps, but without the
resources to sustain continual set-piece confrontations with the state.
Localised pockets of intransigent anarcho-syndicalism continued to exist,
such as in Chopwell, with its formidable tribune, Will Lawther. This is
not to say that within the collective memory of the working-class movement,
and within specific organisational forms, the critique of statism was lost,
or the embryonic shifts towards conceptions of workers' control halted.
But with the onset of the war, and then later during the period when
massive defeats were inflicted on the labour movement, the grip of social
democracy on the minds of the mass of the working class was much greater
than the syndicalist leaders had bargained.

The Socialist Labour Party

The most far reaching attempt to build on the achievements of
syndicalism was carried in the shop stewards' movement during the war.
Before we turn to this we must comment on the Socialist Labour Party which,
according to Hinton, was 'the major political influence on the shop
stewards' movement.[35]

The SLP was a miniscule grouping, located mainly in the industrial
area of the Clyde, and even at the height of its influence only gained the
flimsiest organisational hold in England and Wales. In Glasgow, its
political centre, it was entirely overshadowed by the ILP until the first
years of the war. It endured spasms of unbelievable purism which –

together with periodic expulsions - did much to keep membership down. The pressure of political events ensured that its absolutist conception of politics did not operate at a constant tension all the time, and it appears as if in the four or five years before the war the party was shedding some of its sectarianism. Time and again it was thrown back on its own resources, and this was both its great strength and weakness. Before the war, apart from one dramatic but short-lived intervention in the Singer strike in Kilbowie in 1911, it was above all a part of propaganda. Its commitment to education, although born out of its purism, needs to be counted as its most positive legacy.

Throughout the zig-zags of its internal politics, the SLP never wavered in its advocacy of a frontal assault on the whole capitalist system. No aspect of daily life escaped its scrutiny, and all was invariably explained by the determination of the capitalist class to perpetuate wage-slavery. The goal of the SLP was to free working people from capitalist mystification.[36] Some of the assumptions underpinning this goal were undoubtedly naive, and when projected into the marxism of the 1920s they could lead to the worst perceptions of working people as mere objects or dupes of capitalist propaganda.

It is easy, now to dismiss all of this. But its important not to undervalue the mainsprings of the culture in which political education of this kind could thrive.[37] Marxist education demanded from working people inordinate energy, a high degree of self-discipline and prodigious learning. As the memoirs testify, the experience of individual self-discovery was an integral moment in the biography of many socialists. The SLP aimed to connect with and deepen the long tradition of working-class autodidactism, and the party's vast publishing programme was directed to this end. Its intention to disseminate a popular marxism and to create

socialist intellectuals drawn from the working class cannot b e faulted.
In this the practice of the SLP - like the educational initiatives organised
by socialists throughout the 1920s and 1930s - followed a line demarcating
a position of absolute autonomy from the education provided by the state.

The autonomous tradition of working-class education, to which the SLP
contributed, was productive. In general, the intransigent refusal to
struggle in the political field inscribed by the state proved not to be.
From inside the party it appeared that all reforms, a priori, functioned
only to tie chains tighter. Thus in 1911 the SLP opposed proposals from
within the labour movement for the nationalisation of the railways, what-
ever the conditions, demanding instead the break-up of the capitalist
state. This type of response had been prefigured as early as 1903 in the
first year of the party's existence. In its Manifesto to the Working
Class of that year a general critique of 'state capitalism' had been out-
lined. In the same year the SLP's fundamental conception of parliamentary
politics took shape in the tirade launched against the German SPD, which
within international socialism was reckoned to be the marxist party of the
age. In its pamphlet What is a Revolutionary Party?[38] the SLP mounted
an astonishing analysis of the SPD's drift into electoralism, anticipating
many of Lenin's polemics against Kautsky of more than a decade later. The
SLP's own position was that the three million votes won by the SPD could
not signify the endorsement of socialist politics by three million people
and that to engage in mass electoralism weakened a socialist party
because it blurred the issues. The logical conclusion to this (which at
one point was adopted by the SLP) was that votes would only be sought from
those who accepted the full party programme.

The SLP's socialism resembled in many respects that of the syndicalists:
the socialism of de Leon, the greatest theorist of industrial unionism, was

filtered through the SLP, gained wide acceptance, and as a result until 1917 proletarian marxism in Britain had a distinctly North American flavour. But the party also went out of its way to insist 'We are not syndicalists'. Against pure syndicalism it was maintained by the SLP that a political party was necessary in order to co-ordinate and give direction to the industrial unions, and to confront the state in the moment of revolution. And clearly, the party was conceived as an intellectual organiser and even, in modern terms, a vanguard. James Connolly, a founding member of the SLP, although describing the political as an 'echo' of the economic, nonetheless attempted to persuade syndicalists of the indispensability of political work. It is impossible to say whether Connolly's precise formulation won much currency within the SLP, but the positions which led from it — defending industrial unionism and the political party —were wholly characteristic.

But if the SLP was not syndicalist neither was it the British version of Bolshevism, as one historian has recently claimed.[39] Its members considered themselves revolutionary marxists and as crusaders against reformists. But there was nothing remotely leninist in their practice, and little in their theory.[40] However, in the revolutionary moment of 1917, from April to October, the Bolsheviks adopted a programme — frontal assault on the state, soviets, outright opposition to the gerrymandering in the duma, immediate peace — which appeared to converge with the objectives of the SLP. This delighted the membership, legitimating their past intransigence. And these were heady days. In March 1918 the party's paper, The Socialist, announced in its headline, 'Triumph of the SLP Tactics in Russia'; by December the claim was more modest: 'We Are the British Bolsheviks'. But any such convergence was ninety-percent fabrication, for the detailed strategy appropriate for a six month period

in Russia in 1917 was entirely in appropriate for immediate conditions in
Britain, and recognised to be so by the leading Bolsheviks. The real
extent of the divergence became clear in the years immediately following,
when the majority of the party fought tooth and nail against Lenin's own
prescriptions for Communist unity in Britain.

But if the SLP was not syndicalist, nor Bolshevik, neither was it
some deformed aberration. Its theorisation of the capitalist state, of the
transition to socialism and of democratic reconstruction was exactly part
of that same process in which the socialist movement as a whole was forced
to reconceptualise the relation between socialism and the state. It was
formed by the same conjuncture of events as Labour socialism. The
socialists in the SLP guessed closely enough where the identification of
socialism with an (abstract) collectivism and with the abolition of the
'social problem' was actually leading. They sensed the possibilities for
the reorganisation of the state on more reforming and welfarist lines,
built upon the foundations of an intensified extraction of surplus labour
from the subordinate class. And they harboured the deepest suspicion of
those enlightened and zealous intellectuals - the state officials,
journalists, doctors, academics and so on - whose job it was to analyse,
administer and regulate the social problem, dedicating themselves to the
disinterested service of mankind. In an attempt to get to grips with the
new situation, they went back to Marx to retrieve what concepts they
could. They fastened onto theories illuminating the centralisation of
capital and the tendency for the rate of exploitation to increase, using
these to flail opponents.

A resonant, but not untypical, example appeared in The Socialist in
July 1909. The title of the article was succinct and to the political
point: 'Fabianism - The Enemy'. Two trends in socialism were distin-
guished:

On the one hand the pure-and-simple political Socialists,
who would supplement and finance a new form of political
party government by trades organisations, and whom we
call the Fabians; and, on the other hand, the advocates
of a democratic industrial organisation of the working
class, that will defend itself during development by
political action, and that will ultimately form the
machinery of social administration, and this group is
composed of Industrial Unionists.

It was suggested that the Fabians had the obvious answer for social

reconstruction, the completion of the power of the state for their own

ends. This would involve state ownership and a new bureaucracy, backed

by a more sophisticated repressive apparatus. The argument continued:

> By a study of the methods and proposals of the Fabian
> Socialists it is easily possible to imagine ourselves
> well-fed, well-clothed, well-doctored, and well-stabled
> in garden city compounds, producing under any given
> method of production, the greatest possible amount of
> surplus value.... We may today, when we have neither
> liberty or security, envy the plump and secure slaves
> who toil to increase Lever's millions, or who compete
> for prizes in respectability in the Cadbury Compound,
> but disillusion comes with the recollection that the
> first villeins and the early wage-slaves in comparison
> with their former state, fared equally well. The
> capitalists, as they have retired from business, or
> rather, as the development of industry has eliminated
> them, have brought into existence an ever-growing
> organisation of professional governors. The
> 'professional governors' comprise the managers and
> directors of the production of surplus value, permanent
> state officials, inspectors and educationalists of all
> kinds. Already this middle class, this class that is
> neither exploiter nor exploited, is rebelling (joining
> the Socialist Movement as they call it) against the
> restraint imposed by the shareholding capitalist. They
> are men with ideas as to how things should be done;
> they say that they know how to organise industry, how
> to look after workers, criminals and children, how to
> get the best results out of everything. They are
> eagerly supported by the priests of the new theology,
> priests of the new drama, doctors who will innoculate
> everybody, men of astonishing and unparalleled genius
> like that detestable amateur breeder H.G.Wells, who
> wants to interfere in our love affairs. They claim
> to be the experts - the aristocracy of talent - but I
> say that they are the enemies of the working class.

The force of this analysis, its power to locate developments which only

at the time of writing were gathering pace, and its reasoned, political

conviction are startling, most of all because in these years the immense bulk of writing on this subject came from the self-same 'priests of the new theology'.

Strategically, insights like this were valuable. Or more accurately, they could have been valuable if they had not been produced in the political vacuum of SLP 'impossibilism'. The translation of this critique into a viable politics was never achieved and this was a failure integral to the self-induced intransigence of the SLP. But it is important to ask why, at this stage, opposition to statism was driven into such absurd corners. This is to question the historical conditions and available resources for socialists. It is to return to the problem of the process by which socialist groups attempted to break from the limitations imposed by the subordinate culture, and to the problem of the means by which corporate demands specific to a class could have been raised to a more general level.

The political forces which combined to form Labour socialism were immeasurably stronger than those which were generated exclusively from within the working class. Again we need to stress the complex and contradictory unity of Labour socialism. We have already suggested that a central feature of the development of the state in this period was the process by which popular aspirations could become completely overhauled and bureaucratised, the institutionalisation of reforms taking controls out of the hands of those most deeply affected. The intellectual forces of Fabianism and new Liberalism which shaped and gave political coherence to popular pressures for reform, and through which such demands entered a public and national discourse, were more formidable than the theoretical and intellectual resources of socialists who opposed state provision of this kind. However, the process of bureaucratisation was not only a question of aspirations being reworked as they reached deeper into the

state, for in their very generation they were also framed by certain

horizons and expectations. Many of the demands emanating from the working-

class struggles of the period could be accommodated by Labour socialism -

not, as we can see in hindsight, and as some saw at the time, without new

contradictions arising, but accommodated all the same. For many people,

perhaps the majority of the working-class, it could plausibly be expected

that a party representing labour, if in government, would be able to

carry out the reforms necessary to alleviate the social conditions of

working people. So in explaining the strength of Labour socialism, we

have to note that to a certain degree it _was_ representative of its

working-class constituency, and also that it was the meeting point for

other political and intellectual forces which widened its reach beyond the.

merely corporate.

From the turn of the century (until 1917) alternative conceptions of

socialism could not equal this in its coherence as a _political_ force. For

socialists who placed themselves outside the formation of Labour socialism

there existed no model of socialism which was adequate to the new

political conditions. Nor could older forms simply be extended.

For example, the co-operative and ethical dimensions of the 'religion

of socialism' did not disappear at one quick stroke in the middle of the

1890s. Some of its elements were reworked and incorporated into Labour

socialism (the stress on 'community' and 'commonwealth', raising its

discourse to one 'above' class). Alternatively, its spirit of co-operation

could also provide the critical foundations for an opposition to the

statisation of socialism. But while this older socialism could motivate,

it could not deliver adequate solutions to new strategic questions. For

this reason as much as any other it was recast, and in the process

re-emerged in a number of conflicting ideological positions.

The point here is not that this tradition of socialism was redundant
because it was constituted in ethical terms, but rather a commentary on
the altered political conditions. As the SLP demonstrated, there could
also be a return to Marx the economist. In some respects this was
rewarding, bringing renewed attention to some of the tendencies in the
development of industrial capitalism, and marking with clarity the
structures of economic exploitation. This provided criteria for distin-
guishing between the variety of socialisms and collectivisms. On the
other hand the predominant reading of Marx was extremely positivist; and
the more triumphalist passages confused tendencies with actual develop-
ments, encouraging the adoption of an absolutist political practice. But
whether good or bad, the answers which socialist were searching for in
Marx's writings (especially in those texts then available in translation)
did not really exist. Questions posed by the reconstruction of the state
and the beginnings of 'collectivism' could not adequately be answered,
except at the most general level, in terms of earlier traditions.

The process of constructing political definitions inside the labour
movement was at high pitch in these years, and by the outbreak of war
positions were entrenched. From 1910 to 1914 Labour socialism was perhaps
more closed and tightly formed than it was to be for the rest of the decade.
Any conception of socialism hostile to that appropriated by the Labour
Party had to rely on its own experiences and resources - including its own
intellectuals - in developing a theory of the relation between socialism
and the state. The greatest resource was the struggles of the working-
class, the outbursts of syndicalism and proto-syndicalism. In practice,
the insurgency of the strikes forced the power bloc onto the defensive
and badly rattled the Labour leaders. It was from these experiences that
figures like Tillett, Mann and many in the SLP developed their conceptions

of socialism. But the socialist groups were immersed in a perpetual
battle to prevent the strike movement collapsing into a belligerent but
narrowly corporate struggle, and fought all the time to raise its
political horizons. This was the point pressed home by the majority
of the syndicalist leaders and theoreticians. The SLP, for example,
turned to the experience of North America (and later Russia) to provide
this dimension. But by August 1914 their success in constructing a
socialist politics was minimal, whereas Labour socialism - although
tactically on the defensive[41] - was on the point of emerging as a
decisive political force.

The War and the Labour Party

The outbreak of the First World War had a devastating, cataclysmic
effect on the European socialist movement, virtually destroying the
Second International and splintering party after party. The collapse of
1914 drove a wedge deeper and deeper into the socialist movement, forcing
a split of unprecedented proportions.. From 1914 developments within
European socialism had direct repercussions on the configuration of the
socialist parties within the British Isles.

However the immediate impact on the Labour Party was - relatively -
muted. Ramsay MacDonald moved into a position of outright opposition to
the war, which drew him back into the political orbit of the ILP and
opened a breach between him and the official Labour Party, forcing him to
resign as party chairman. By the end of the year he was working with the
Union of Democratic Control, a group of pacifist-inclined liberal and
social-democratic intellectuals. His power and influence within the
Labour Party rapidly diminished. It was not until 1922 that he was
re-elected chairman; and not until the same year that he again entered
parliament, having been defeated in the 1918 election by the coalition

candidate, largely due to his anti-war stand. During the war, any official position of power he was to assume in the party depended upon the amount of support he could gather round him, and upon the decisions of Arthur Henderson.

Henderson's response to the war was in keeping with his own formation in and commitment to trade unionism. It was through him that the War Emergency Committee was set up, which had for its prime objective the defence of working-class interests for the duration of the war. The Committee was chaired by Henderson himself, and composed of representatives of the Labour Party executive and the trade unions. The WEC gave Henderson enormous powers at a time when other Labour leaders who opposed the war were marginalised. It was clear to Henderson that the war provided unrivalled opportunities for the accredited leaders of the labour movement to win legitimacy in national politics, just as it became apparent to the government that before very long there would have to be centralised and state supervised bargaining with the representatives of the working-class, especially over the deep-seated conflicts arising from the production of munitions. Between them, Henderson and Lloyd George were instrumental in drawing up the Treasury Agreement between government and unions in March 1915. Two months later Henderson was invited to join Asquith's newly formed coalition government, and thereby reached heights unprecedented for a Labour politician.

In December 1916 Henderson was admitted into Lloyd George's new cabinet of five ministers. In the following year he was delegated by the new government to visit Russia and assess the military and political situation. While in Russia, he reversed his earlier position and swung round in support of the proposed socialist peace conference. On

his return he recommended British representation to Lloyd George; the latter refused and in August 1917 Henderson resigned from the government.

With Henderson virtually sacked, and certainly disillusioned with Lloyd George, a regrouping occurred involving, as the key figures, Henderson himself, MacDonald and Webb. The prospect of the Labour Party cashing in on the growing opposition to the Lloyd George coalition healed the breach between the pro- and anti-war factions inside the Party. Strategically, a fundamental transformation took place: no longer did this trio seek to build a progressive alliance with the Liberals, but on the contrary, they sought to forge Labour as an independent political force, as a potential party of government in its own right. This seriously shifted the balance of forces within the power block, for above all else the immediate strategy of the Labour Party needed to prevent a possible post-war revival of the Liberals. And in the minds of those who were responsible for instigating this new policy, it was imperative that the Labour Party should build itself in the image of the Liberal Party it planned to oust, because only then would it be possible to enter the constitutional conflict recognised as a serious contender.

Within a month of his resignation Henderson was already drafting the plans for the reconstruction of the Labour Party. These were drawn up in the conviction that within a short time, certainly before the war ended, the government - submitting to pressures from those who had risked their lives and health in service to the state - would have little option but to enfranchise the vast majority of working people. Henderson's long memorandum proposed extending the membership of the Labour Party, extending and strengthening the local constituency parties, increasing the number of parliamentary candidates, and producing a full party programme. In the course of the discussions which followed this memorandum

three new principles emerged. First, the party was to be opened to
individual membership. As Henderson wrote at the time in a letter to
C.P. Scott, his policy 'was to enlarge the bounds of the Labour Party
and bring in the intellectuals as candidates. The Labour Party has been
too short on brains'.[42] This dispiriting conclusion not only disparaged
the potentialities of the working-class membership, but also assumed that
the intellectuals organic to the Labour Party had to be recruited from
outside rather than created from within. However this objective squared
exactly with the process by which new Liberal and Fabian definitions of
the 'social problem' were channelled into the Labour Party. Second, the
national executive was to be elected by the full party conference. This
gave to the unions, with their undivided block votes, an incomparable
boost, installing an institutional and corporate power inside the party
apparatus which pulled in an opposite direction to the new powers invested
in the constituencies. In particular, this hit hardest at the ILP. Third,
f r the first time in its history, the offical objective of the Labour
Party was to be the attainment of socialism.

The Representation of the People Bill passed through the House of
Commons in December 1917, while these negotiations were in progress. The
bill marked the victory of the principle 'one man, one vote', providing
for the enfranchisement of all the male population aged twenty-one and
over (but still allowed for university seats and second votes for business
premises, both of which survived until 1948). After a free vote in the
House of Commons, women aged thirty and above wer to be enfranchised as
well. According to Ross McKibbon, this was the most cautious and
conservative bill the coalition government thought it could possibly get
away with.[43] However, the bill enfranchised more than all the previous
reforms bills put together, amounting to some eighty per cent of the new

voting population; it 'transformed the conditions under which Labour grew';[44] and it was of critical importance in shifting the allegiance of the working class from Liberal to Labour.

In January 1918 Henderson's plans were put to the party conference; in February they were accepted by a special conference. In June of the same year the Representation of the People Bill was accepted by the Lords and became law. The reorganisation of the Labour Party at the end of the First World War was intimately connected at every stage with the extension of the franchise. By the time of the armistice at the end of the year the Labour Party was poised to enter future elections as a potential party of government, awaiting only its constitutional mandate from the electorate.

The Shop Stewards' Movement

At this point it is necessary to retrace our steps and examine some of the significant developments in industrial politics which occurred in the course of the war. The most militant actions were often a <u>direct</u> response to the manoeuverings of those labour leaders who hoped to use the oppor-tunities afforded by the war to shape the movement into a distinct corporate entity, directly represented in all the relevant apparatuses of the state. Thus the Treasury Agreement of March 1915 had conflicting results. It secured the National Labour Advisory Committee, representing the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC and the leadership of the Labour Party, which negotiated with the government on labour matters for the rest of the war. In return, the traditional defences of those trade unions representing workers in the munitions industries were to be suspended. This was a voluntary agreement; for anything to come of it, however, the support of the munitions workers themselves was indispensable. But this was precisely what the labour leaders were unable to guarantee. Indeed, the Treasury Agreement and subsequent legislation sparked off demands for

immediate and direct forms of representation which could deal with issues as they arose, plant by plant. The logic of corporate voluntarism carried with it the strong possibility of subsequent compulsory state regulation of labour which, to be effective, would need to penetrate industrial relations, even to the most local level.

Technical revolution in the metal industries, accelerated by the imperatives of a war economy, threatened the position of skilled workers as never before. The vast appetite for munitions resulted in an influx of semi-skilled and unskilled labour, generally women, who worked on jobs (or parts of jobs) done previously by skilled union labour, thereby diluting the skills of the male engineers, the old 'aristocrats' of the craft.[45] So long as it was restricted to war work alone, the dilution of labour was sanctioned by the union leaders and codified in the Treasury Agreement. Where the fragmentation of customary forms of work was particularly sudden, and when this breakdown in custom was combined with the dismantling of traditional trade union defences, militant committees of shop stewards were forced into existence.[46] With the full might of the state behind them, employers had unparalleled opportunities to curtail the workers' control of the labour process. In many instances, effective resistance would only be organised by rebuilding the union movement from below, in the locality, with a lateral network of shop stewards' committees.

The detailed history of the shop stewards can best be followed in Hinton's account. In his interpretation Hinton places a great deal of emphasis on the developments of January 1918, arguing that at this juncture the shop stewards' movement must be seen as 'the point of transition' between syndicalism and communism.[47] Six of the eight members elected to the National Administrative Council of the Shop Stewards'

Movement were to join the Communist Party in its very earliest moments,
including such influential figures as Arthur MacManus (the Party's first
chairman), Willie Gallacher and Jack Murphy. In some instances the links
between pre-war syndicalism, the shop stewards and the Communist Party
were direct. Murphy particularly had been active in Sheffield in the
national amalgamation committees which endeavoured to create industrial
unions by amalgamating pre-existing trade and general unions,[48] and both
Murphy and MacManus were members of the SLP. Not only did the shop
stewards' movement have its roots in syndicalism, it also superseded it,
for the pre-war dilemma of dual unionism was resolved in the practical
functioning of the workers' committees. The attempt to link the
industrial objectives of the movement with a more general anti-war
politics carried the promise of overcoming the sectionalism which had
dogged the shop stewards' organisations in their first years. By 1918 the
dominant elements in the movement adhered to a programme of workers'
control and soviet power with which early British Communism was to be
prominently identified.

In the last year of the war socialist shop stewards succeeded in
placing themselves at the forefront of a movement which began to
challenge both labour sectionalism and the state, a moment of supreme
importance in the reconstruction of an independent working-class politics.
Hinton recognises this but remains careful in his final estimation. However,
the structure of his analysis is organised by a conception of socialism
which rigidly differentiates the sovietism of those Communists formed in
the shop stewards' committees from all other socialist groupings which
come to be designated as reformist or opportunist.[49] This is much too
stark. On the one hand it diverts attention away from the continuing
difficulties which faced the militants in the shop stewards' movement.

Above all, the narrowness of the movement persisted in throwing up obstacles which impeded its own advance. In factories where technical development had already undermined the power of the skilled labourer before the war the main concern of munition workers was with higher wages, and workers' committees on the autonomous model of Sheffield or Clyde made little headway. The demands of the women munition workers only intermittently registered in the shop stewards' programme, and indeed, the two were constructed in a potential relation of antagonism. The shop stewards' movement was organised initially at any rate, to defend male skills. Building links with workers in other industries (let alone those conscripted in the army and navy) proved immensely difficult. In March 1918 an attempt to set up workers' committees in the mines and on the railways failed to materialise, for miners and railway workers were content to rely on their own rank and file committees inside their respective unions. The stewards' programme was a precarious base from which to launch a movement capable of leading the working class as a whole, and the inability to perceive forms of oppression other than those generated by class antagonisms restricted the movement's potential for broadening and raising its appeal. The strength of the anti-war position in January 1917, which Hinton sees as the summation of the shop stewards' movement, was also a moment of defeat, where the plan for the strikes were abandoned and the socialist leadership lost the initiative.

Many of these dilemmas were encapsulated in the debates about soviets and representative councils. The wartime shop stewards' movement was almost exclusively concerned with factory organisations and, after 1917, interpreted the Russian experience of soviets as confirmation of their own developing practice. But in the immediate aftermath of the war, some groups within the socialist movement explicitly recognised the

need to organise outside the workplace, extending the council to the local district as a means for the general representation of all working people in the community. Support for this came in articles published in The Socialist, The Worker and the Workers' Dreadnought. The case for what were called social committees was most clearly elaborated in the 1919 Scottish Workers' Committees pamphlet, Direct Action, in which Gallacher and J. R. Campbell argued for local committees both to contribute to the industrial struggle and, once power had been seized, to share with industrial committees the task of 'organising the industrial and social life of the community in a planful manner'.[50] In England Sylvia Pankhurst gave a particular interpretation to the idea of local committees: 'These are the workshop committees of the mothers, for the streets and the houses they live and work in are their workshops'.[51] A gathering of industrial militants at a rank and file conference early in 1920 voted in favour of housewives electing their own delegates to social committees.[52] Similarly the SLP, although it clearly did not foreground the issue of domestic labour, insisted that the 'Communist form of organisation... is dual in character, i.e. industrial and residential'.[53]

The post-war slump and political victimisation of 'troublemakers' effectively killed the stewards' movement, but the idea lived on in the formal objectives of the Communist Party. Social committees however were forgotten. Hinton explains the post-war enthusiasm for social committees as a symptom of the decline of the political vigour of the shop stewards' movement.[54] His excessive privileging of the workplace over the locality needs the corrective of Rowbotham's recognition that social committees could have linked housewives into the major combative organisations of the working class.[55]

On the other hand the terms of Hinton's analysis allow very little

weight to socialist activity which was shaped only partially, and not at all, by the experience of shop stewards' organisations. The impulse to construct institutions of direct democracy did not derive solely from industrial struggles, as the attempts to create social committees show. But more important than this, by approaching the issue in this way the multiple questions arising from the problem of representative democracy are not so much resolved as abolished. In general the proponents of direct democracy intended to mount a frontal assault on the state. The spread of revolutionary aspirations in the years between 1917 and 1920 is understandable. But by 1921 a strategy demanding immediate assault on the state appeared far less convincing, and shop stewards were forced either to modify their positions or drift into political isolation. In the post-war period the Labour Party rapidly emerged to stake its claim as the political force which could unite and lead the working-class. The overwhelming problem facing socialist was the <u>relation</u> between direct and representative democracy. This was not a question which had already been settled before the end of the war - such that to engage in representative politics was tantamount to reneging on on socialism - but rather one which was open to negotiation and struggle. It rocked the Labour Party itself. And it was the overwhelming factor in the pro- tracted disputes on the formation of the Communist Party.

The Formation of the Communist Party

By the time of the founding of the Communist Party in the latter half of 1920, the situation had already become bleak for socialist. The shop ste ards' movement had collapsed. The 40 hour strike in Glasgow in January 1919 was defeated despite its great hopes. Unrest in the armed forces had died down and the police strikers had been sacked. In March 1920 a motion at the TUC demanding strike action to secure the

nationalisation of the mines was lost. By the summer, unemployment began to bite and this proved decisive in rolling back militancy. In the spring of the following year the bitter failure of the three-month long miners' strike signalled a defeat for the labour movement as a whole. From that moment struggles became desperate and defensive. The early years of the party were characterised in its slogan, 'Stop the retreat'.

.The most positive feature of 1920 marked a significant political reorientation. In August local councils of action were set up to co-ordinate opposition to British intervention in Russia. These were based on local trades and Labour councils, which at the time comprised the local constituency Labour Parties. Both the parliamentary Labour Party and the parliamentary committee of the TUC were suffiently pressured to lend their official support. In the following months approximately 288 councils of action were formed, many emerging from trades and Labour councils; of these, according to John Foster, 139 passed resolutions in defiance of the national leadership and backed calls for political strikes to end the economic sanctions on Russia and to force withdrawal of troops from Ireland.[56] This combination of both constitutional and direct action, drawing on support from the Labour Party and marxists in the Communist Party, formed a _political_ force which had few precedents.

After extensive negotiation the groups which united to form the Communist Party (predominantly the BSP and a minority of the SLP), resolved to run candidates for parliament and to apply for affiliation to the Labour Party. This latter decision was only narrowly passed, and excluded from joining the Communist Party a significant number of marxists who had no intention of ever having anything to do with the Labour Party. Some, such as Tom Bell, Arthur MacManus and Willis Paul, all of the SLP, came to the conclusion that unity was more important than

the decision on the Labour Party and - having been expelled from the SLP - joined the CP on these grounds, while having little or no faith in affiliation. Nor did Tom Bell see much hope in representative democracy: he believed one of the first duties of the party was to liberate 'the minds of the masses from their superstitious faith in parliamentary democracy'.[57] Initial approaches by the CP to the Labour Party lacked urgency. When the Labour Party first refused affiliation The Communist replied: 'So be it. It is their funeral, not ours'.[58] The hostility of Labour to the Communist Party was no doubt reinforced by the latter's decision to run a candidate against Labour in Caerphilly in 1921 - and also by its claim that its campaign for abstention in Woolwich East in late 1921 had ensured that MacDonald lost his chances of a seat. After these first bouts of bravado, it was made clear to the CP that the Communist International intended it to take the issue of affiliation more seriously, and the early 1920s were periodically punctuated by further applications and further rebuffs. This did not stop the Communist Party (until the mid 1920s) from having individual members in local Labour parties, but its impact on the Labour Party fell far short of full affiliation.

As for the issue of parliament, due to the fact that abstentionists had mainly stayed out of the party there was some enthusiasm for running candidates - certainly more than there was for wrangling with Labour. Because of their local position it was possible in the early years for some Communists to run as Labour candidates, either unofficially (supported by the local Labour Party but not endorsed nationally) or sometimes with national executive approval. The hardening of Labour's attitude to the CP in the subsequent years put an end to this, and Communists were compelled to fight against Labour if they wished to enter the national electoral arena. Although no systematic national study

exists, it appears from Macintyre's work that close connections between the Communist Party and the Labour Party survived longer in some localities, even to the extent of creating alliances to participate in council elections.[59]

If commitment to adhere to the Labour Party was in practice dilatory, what fundamentally united the marxist groupings which eventually formed the Communist Party was support for soviets, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Third International. The success of Bolshevism had had a shattering impact on European socialism, constituting and organising the process by which marxist groups split away from socialist and social-democratic parties. The foundation of the Third International was intended to rally all the socialist forces which recognised as universally applicable soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In reality the First Congress, held in Moscow in January 1919 at the height of the Civil War, was a beleaguered affair, claiming only a handful of representatives from Western Europe who had either happened to be in the Soviet Union at the time or who had crossed the frontiers of Europe illegally and in great danger. Few socialists outside the Soviet Union knew anything of this until after Comintern had been formed. Two general aspects of Comintern influence need to be stressed. First, Bolshevik slogans - whatever the specificity of their origins - made a great deal of political sense to whole numbers of European marxists. No variant of the 'Moscow-gold' thesis, which depends only on an explanation in terms of external manipulation, can take us very far. Second, in no European country (with the possible exception of Bulgaria) was a Communist Party formed without drastic upheaval, multiple splits and protracted regroupments.

The reasons for this were various. Of crucial importance was that

simultaneously to the struggles between socialist and communists there <u>also</u> developed critical points of antagonism between socialists and social democrats. In this respect events in Britain closely followed the European pattern. One unintended effect of Comintern hostility to reformism, encompassing socialists and social democrats alike so long as they refused to support soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat, was that it neutralised these points of conflict between socialists and social democrats. This operated as a strategic closure, forcing socialist back into an alliance with social democracy, and encouraging the construction of a new political bloc, explicitly anti-Bolshevik, and with formidable staying-power.

Throughout 1920 the transformed situation in Europe and the strategic response of Comintern threw the British communists into confusion. By the beginning of the year it was clear to what must have been the majority of European marxists that there no longer existed the chance for achieving a straight repetition of the Bolshevik Revolution in the West. An over-powering factor in this analysis was the allegiance of an increasing number of working people to social-democratic parties. The response in Moscow was clear. In <u>Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disease</u>, written in May, Lenin advocated the need for Communists to create tactical alliances with the social-democratic parties. A copy of this pamphlet was issued to each delegate at the Second Congress of Comintern, held two months later. From this Congress emerged the 'Twenty-One Conditions', outlining on what conditions parties would be eligible for membership of the International. This document was of historic importance in codifying and making absolute the organisational division between Socialists and Communists. This was not at odds with Lenin's earlier prescriptions. The Congress resolutions displayed a concern for strategy which was

characteristic of Lenin's own political practice - split, then ally: split to create a coherent organisational and political presence, ally to to win broad support. This was exactly the strategy to which Comintern was moving in 1920. It recognised the hold of social democracy in the West, and also the necessity for nationally specific approaches to the moment of revolutionary rupture and dual power. It was also premised on the belief that, to be effective, a Communist Party had to be a _mass_ party. By the end of the year this strategy was instituted as the United Front, by which the new-formed Communist Parties were directed to ally with social democrats in order to expose the treachery of reformist leadership and the fallacies of parliamentary socialism.

In Britain, opposition to the Labour Party ran deep in the marxist groupings and many most active in their support of Comintern had arrived at that position precisely through a critique of the Labour Party. In the very moment of its foundation the Communist Party was ordered to affiliate to Labour. For this to be achieved an immense amount of pressure, argument and cajoling from Lenin and Comintern was required. The prestige of the October Revolution was of the first importance. So, in some cases, was personal contact with Lenin, although on occasion unease, resentment and vitriolic bitterness resulted from rapidly changing opinions. It was mainly through Comintern pressure that the marxist sects fused and created in Britain a new type of marxist party which sought mass membership and an organic connection to the mainstream of the labour movement. However, even in theory the strategy of the United Front severely underestimated the penetration of social democracy into the labour movement: onslaughts against the leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC and clear revolutionary principles made little impact. In practice, espousal of the strategy was cautious. But increasingly

socialists were forced to make a choice between social democracy and Leninism.

The relevance of Leninism to the British socialist movement became an issue of burning polemic. Perceptions of Russia as a barbaric outpost on the very frontiers of European civilization fuelled argument and counter-argument. For the miners' leader Frank Hodges 'Russia had nothing to teach' socialists in Western democracies.[60] MacDonald's belief was similar, for he was convinced that direct democracy of the soviet type was an expression of a social formation more backward in the evolutionary scale, and representative democracy its summation. To him Comintern appeared 'a sort of mayfly, created on the forcing ground of the Russian Revolution' attempting to export a model of socialism antithetical to the West.[61] Discussions on the respective merits of direct or representative democracy were deeply inflected by the East/West metaphor, a continuing legacy to this day. Recognition of the specificity of Russian conditions could also organise the ground for a critique of Leninism from the left. John S. Clarke, the editor of the Scottish revolutionary paper The Worker, rejected the notion of a Leninist party and after a visit to Russia in 1920 announced that 'The difference between conditions in this highly-organised, industrially-centralised, politically-compact and insular country, and medieval, semi-barbaric, loosely-organised and politically infantile Russia is almost inconceivable to those who have not been there to see'.[62] Others again, such as Sylvia Pankhurst, argued that the very strength of the parliamentary tradition within the British working-class necessitated not the revolutionary use of parliament, but on the contrary a complete and total rupture from all the dominant structures of British political life.[63]

Pankhurst was expelled from the Communist Party for refusing to

relinquish control of her newspaper, and formed a short-lived rival group.
The majority of the SLP and the small grouping around John MacLean
declined from the beginning to join the Communist Party, and in the event
were pitched into the political wilderness. There were a handful of
others who tried to escape the dichotomies imposed both by the Twenty-One
Conditions and by the absolute rejection on the part of the Labour Party
leadership of anything to do with Communism. Some were to be found in the
Labour Party itself (in the ILP or around George Lansbury) and some in
the educational Plebs League. Dissidents in the ILP included figures such
as Dick Wallhead, John Paton and, surprisingly perhaps, Manny Shinwell.
Others joined the CP only to leave fairly quickly, such as Ellen Wilkinson,
Raymond Postgate, J. T. Walton Newbold (a former Communist MP) and the Plebs
leaders Frank and Winifred Horrabin. The arguments of these dissidents were
by no means identical, but they all revolved around the key issue of
recognising the absolute centrality of parliament and the Labour Party
to the British labour movement — thereby distancing themselves from the CP —
while at the same time appreciating the CP's critique of the Labour Party.
Thus the ILP leaders, for instance, proposed a scenario of revolutionary
change involving a parliamentary socialist government willing to call
upon mass-mobilisation and, in the event of resistance from the dominant
classes, upon loyal sections of the armed forces.[64] Although elements in
the reasoning of such dissidents were important, in reality their
political reach proved limited.

Constitutional versus Direct Action

In effect the reconstruction of the Labour Party in 1918 and the
formation of the Communist Party in 1920 separated socialists and social
democrats, on the one hand, from marxists on the other. With historical

hindsight this seems so familiar a bifurcation that it hardly warrants comment. However, we want to argue against such received perceptions by emphasising, first, the fluidity of the political situation in the period 1918 to 1924, and that, second, the Labour Party was only won to a position of constitutional gradualism and parliamentarianism as a result of a number of decisive struggles which were fought both inside and outside the Labour Party, and determined the limits of constitutionalism itself. The question which then emerges is what were the political and ideological conditions which enabled this division between socialists and marxists to be produced?

In May 1920 John MacLean, with characteristic insight, declared that the Lloyd George government was about 'to clear the ground for a safe and sane Labourism'.[65] But whatever the predictive qualities of this statement, its grasp was at best partial. MacLean failed to distinguish conflicting strategies inside the power bloc which, by early 1920, were far from settled. The dominant strategies represented by the coalition, for instance, scarcely pinned their hopes on letting any kind of 'Labourism' onto the state scene. In addition, he underestimated the continuing struggles within the Labour Party, especially the major emergent point of antagonism between social democrats and socialists - the issue of direct action. It would perhaps make more sense to argue that the success of a Labour socialism subordinated to MacDonald, Henderson and Thomas was all but secured as a result of the shattering defeat inflicted on the miners in 1921. This defeat not only marked the collapse of the socialist aspirations of the previous decade, but also drastically weakened the possibilities for successful working-class political activity on a national scale. Furthermore, as McKibbon demonstrates, the centre of gravity of the Labour Party remained

extra-parliamentary until as late as 192?. But the significance of
MacLean's view is not simply one of timing. Rather it indicates the
opinion, endorsed by the vast majority of marxists of the period, that
representative democracy was in diametrical opposition to direct democ-
racy (a belief shared by MacDonald). Thus when the very frontiers of
constitutionalism were most open, and when (from 1918) the Labour Party
occupied a strategic place in determining the possibilities for expanding
a democratic politics, those drawn to the Communist Party were excluded
from effectively intervening.

In June 1917 at the Leeds Convention resolutions were passed
supporting the establishment of soviets and workers' and soldiers'
councils in Britain. Despite the deep differences which separated the
participants politically, the discourse of direct action and of direct
democracy spread across the whole spectrum of radical and socialist
opinion. In an excess of enthusiasm and excitement the question of the
divide between constitutional and non-constitutional politics hardly
appeared.

However after the reconstruction of the Labour Party as a potential
party of government, the imposition of a specifically constitutional
politics came to be reasserted from inside the labour movement itself,
by the leadership of the party. At the Annual Conference in June 1919
this had become the predominant and most contentious issue. The Chairman
of the Labour Party, J. McGurk of the Miners' Federation insisted:

> We are either constitutionalists or we are not
> constitutionalists. If we are constitutionalists,
> if we believe in the efficacy of the political
> weapon (and we do, or why do we have a Labour
> Party?) then it is both unwise and undemocratic
> because we fail to get a majority at the polls to
> turn round and demand that we should substitute
> industrial action.

The pre-war polemic between the 'non-political' syndicalists and the
parliamentary socialists took a new turn from this point: to believe
in the political was to accept the pre-given constitutional forms of the
parliamentary process. Miliband is correct when he notes 'The opponents
of direct action... sought to defeat the Left by narrowing the altern-
atives open to the Labour movement to constitutional, meaning parlia-
mentary, action on the one hand, and revolution and civil war on the
other'. The argument of the direct-actionists was often more pragmatic:
on specific, short-term issues, direct action was seen to work. Robert
Smillie, also of the Miners', complained that the executive committee of
the Labour Party 'feared more than anything else what had come to be
called direct action', and switched the terms of the debate by suggesting
that the coalition government (elected on the basis of 'coupon' candidates)
were 'returned to power under false pretences'. Similarly, Fred Bromley
of ASLEF attacked the notion of a numerical majority, proposing instead
that the leadership of the party 'give the rank and file a lead'. This was
very different from the strategic instincts of those in the leadership
who were grooming the party to be fit for government. The full weight of
of this position was put, aptly, by Henderson:

> To force upon the country by illegitimate means the
> policy of a section, perhaps a minority of the
> community involves the abrogation of Parliamentary
> Government, establishes a dictatorship of the
> minority and might easily destroy eventually all
> our constitutional liberties. It is moreover a
> two-edged policy. When Labour conquers political
> power and accepts responsibility for the machinery
> of Government, I cannot see it prepared to admit,
> say the followers of Sir Edward Carson, or the
> medical profession, to set the Executive at
> defiance of any process of direct action.

Or more succinctly, as J. H. Thomas responded - in his inimitable style.-
to the councils of action: 'It means a challenge to the whole Consitution

of the Country...it definitely challenged the Constitution'[66]

The positions put forward by MacDonald, Henderson and Thomas deserve closer examination. Undoubtedly they were a development of the socialist theory elaborated inside the Labour Party before the war in which 'labour' was to be integrated into the larger community and in which socialism was deployed as a non-class theory. Thus as a party of government, Labour owed a responsibility to the whole 'community' and not simply to its own 'sectional' constituency. This could overlap with a more orthodox ''Second-International' variety of socialism in which the road to a democratic society was conceived as organic and evolutionary. From this perspective, the form of the state itself appeared neutral - which, once commanded by socialists, could simply provide the means for the implementation of socialist policy. The critique of such views, from inside and outside the Labour Party, by those who defended a socialism committed to the breaking of class divisions, to the self-activity of working people and to the reconstruction of the state were thus of the utmost importance. And one more tactical grounds, it is clear that those installed in the leadership from the ranks of the direct-actionists - a prospect which was by no means unthinkable during the moment of the councils of action.

While all this is true, it would be wrong to suppose that the confrontation inside the Labour Party can be reduced to a straightforward conflict between a bureaucratic leadership and a belligerent and activist rank and file. The containment of the direct-actionists depended not only on the organisational advantages in the hands of the leadership, but also on the fact that this built a degree of consensus for their strategies.

The crucial factor in the strategic analysis of the constitutionalists was the perpetual anxiety that there would occur either a political back-

lash engineered by the radical right, or, more probably, that the coalition government would be able to achieve a sufficient degree of stablisisation, on an explicitly anti-Labour and anti-socialist ticket, to exclude Labour from office for the foreseeable future. Such assessments of the political situation were not unfounded. Henderson's reference to Carson was no flourish but rather a realistic posing of the problems which would face a future Labour government. The general drift of the coalition government made it clear to all in the labour movement that, far from heralding social reconstruction, the slow accretion of gains in the field of social reform would have, at some point, to be defended. To those who argued most forcefully for the constitutional position within the party, political backlash and the erosion of welfare rights could only be prevented by the consolidation of the Labour Party's role as a constitutionally accredited party of government. Indeed, this reasoning took hold of the party through the 1920s. Marquand concludes his biography of MacDonald by emphasising: 'As MacDonald pointed out _ad nauseam_, the ground which the Labour Party gained between 1918 and 1922 was vulnerable to counter-attack!.[67]

Similarly it was common amongst the leaders of the Labour Party to defend their stance from a legalistic framework, as a continuation of the respect for the rule of law supposedly carried by the traditions of working-class struggle. Now while much of this _was_ rhetorical and abstract, it nonetheless did connect with a strong, non-revolutionary, current within the labour movement which had little or no desire to upturn Britain's 'liberal' civil traditions. This exerted constraints on direct-actionists as much as on constitutionalists. Robert Smillie recounds the episode of the interview of the leaders of the Triple Alliance with Lloyd George in 1919 - when Lloyd George's admission of

impending defeat was enough to encourage the union leaders to draw back from the offensive.[68] And this cultural reflex of subordination and deference was lived by committed revolutionaries as well. Gallacher later referred to himself and other militant socialists of the time as 'legal revolutionaries', and said of the Forty Hour strike in January 1919, we should have made a revolution 'but it never entered our heads to do so'.[69] Thus the rhetoric of legalism was matched and counter-balanced by the rhetoric of insurrectionalism. This was compounded, as we suggested when we discussed the East/West metaphor, by the prevailing mentality of chaos, the fear that Britain would tumble into the social breakdown and collapse witnessed in central Europe after the war. The identification of social collapse and Bolshevism was clearly fixed in the social democratic and conservative imagination, and was a long-lasting theme of state propananda. But there was a reality to it for all that which, when generated from inside the labour movement itself, could help to sustain the marginalisation of direct-actionists.

The fear of social disintegration or of the reversal of Britain's historic 'liberal' route by the forces of the right provided the conditions by which the Labour representatives could present themselves as the historical guarantors of Britain's constitutional traditions. The political break which made this possible, and which gave an unprecedented ideological credibility to the constitutionalist camp within the party, was the extension of the suffrage and the passing of the Representation of the People Bill in 1918. Formally incorporating the mass of the people into the political nation registered simultaneously the process of the conquest of violence and extremism: if all equally shared a voice in the democratic process, then unconstitutional action could have no possible justification. Or in the words of Lord Russell,

during the debate on the bill, suffrage should be made universal 'as a substitute for riot, revolution and the rifle'.[70] This defence of the British democratic system could now be given a specifically Labour articulation. In addition, the very lifeblood of the Labour Party as an electoral party depended upon the expanded suffrage. Henderson and Webb drew up their plans for rebuilding the party at exactly the moment when the Representation of the People Bill was in the process of being discussed and debated. In the eyes of many of the leading figures in the Labour Party the rules of the political game had been transformed, unparalleled opportunities existed for the labour movement, and this was no time for a political recklessness which could destroy everything which had been so painstakingly constructed.

The Forms and Conditions of the Extension into Parliament

In shaping the passage of the Labour Party to government, some key moments and determinations can be identified: the reorganisation of the party in 1918, the Representation of the People Act, the codification of Comintern's policies in the Twenty-One Conditions in July 1920 (which made absolute the distinction betwe n representative and direct democracy), and the break-up of the coalition government in October 1922, which opened the prospects for a renewed two-party parliamentary system. And in conjunction, touching every aspect of this passage, there developed the defeat, weakening and exhaustion of the shop stewards' and rank and file movements, especially from 1921.

To many conservatives it seemed as if the Representation of the People Act threatened the very constitution itself: a simple numerical majority of socialists in the lower House could at one blow sweep away all the institutions of British democracy. But at the same time, to some more liberal and far-sighted politicians it also provided the

conditions for the taming and 'constitutionalisation' of the Labour
Party, for its insertion into the political system as the (second) party
of government, and served to balance the rotation of parties from Party
No. 1 to Party No. 2. (This was the strategy which was ultimately to
find its key proponent in Baldwin). Thus from 1918 to 1924-26, the pre-
occupation of power-bloc politics rested on riding this contradiction,
and above all, ensuring that the constitutional limits, as existing in
1918, were strictly adhered to. The political logic of this strategy was
to assume even greater significance after the defeat of the coalition
in 1922, for the recomposition of the power bloc at this stage was itself
achieved on the basis of the opposition between a parliamentary-
constitutional structure and a Lloyd George variant of a corporate
coalitionism.

The more the Liberal Party was sold down the river by Lloyd George's
commitment to coalition government, and the more the two-party
alternative gathered pace as a strategic option, then the more the aims
of the constitutionalist perspective inside the Labour Party converged
with the 'Baldwinite' forces in the power-bloc. According to Marquand,
after the break-up of the coalition, MacDonald's first objective 'was to
ensure, if possible, that politics revolved around a struggle between the
Conservative and Labour parties in which the Liberals could be dismissed
as irrelevant'. And as MacDonald himself perceived the situation, this
needed above all else to be a victory in parliament: 'If the Party fails
in Parliament, it fails in the country, and the dream of a Labour
Government will vanish for a generation'.[71] To McKibbon, this remained
a feature of the party throughout the 1920s: 'the electoral and, as
it were, rhetorical strategy of the Labour Party in the 1920s was aimed
less at upsetting the Conservative predominance than at forestalling a

Liberal revival'.[72] In short, what begins to emerge from 1922, if not
before, was an identity in political language between what were fast
becoming two of the key sections in the power bloc: the Baldwin faction
and the MacDonald faction.

This is not to say that Conservative and Labour versions of the
'constitution' or the 'community' carried exactly the same meanings in
relation to policies or aspirations. But the convergence in political
language did derive from the convergence in immediate political aims:
the installation of two-party constitutionalism built around Labour and
Conservative. The creation of the 'universal' democratic subject of the
Representatation of the People Act effectively disorganised the socialist
movement, fracturing it down the middle, deepening the split between the
adherents of representative democracy on the one hand, and direct
democracy on the other. In other words, the political effects of the
introduction of a system of 'universal' suffrage served ultimately to
compound the divisions which were being generated from inside the labour
movement itself, and in this the Twenty-One Conditions imposed by the
Third International were of critical importance. Out of this double
movement - the recomposition of the power-bloc and the divide within the
labour movement - emerged a fully-formed and modern Labour socialism.

Without doubt, fears of backlash, loss of real democratic gains,
and the threat of the state being permanently occupied by an anti-
socialist block all had a real pertinence. That no radical right
venture materialised as a decisive political force must also be recog-
nised. The new means of representation for the working-class - the
Labour Party itself, the trade unions and the TUC, the nascent
corporate institutions - massively shifted the political terrain, and
at least for those organised in the mainstream of the labour movement,

resulted in some important material gains. And the constitutionalist position within the Labour Party was in all probability right in its assessment that in order to break the caesarism of the Lloyd George coalition, a necessary requirement was the rotation of parliamentary parties with the Labour Party itself integrated into the dominant structure.

The great weakness of Labour socialism was that it extended the movement into parliament on exactly the same terms as before, creating Labour in the image of the Liberals before them. The legacy of the late 19th-century democratic reforms, and the insertion of Labour into the centre of the parliamentary area both precluded the likelihood of a long-term authoritarian solution (as MacDonald and others insisted) and provided the means for the internal recomposition of the power-bloc. But it was on this dilemma that Labour socialism was caught. On the one hand it aimed to defend and implement the results of the previous struggles against a potential political backlash. On the other, the very terms of this defence spurned a strategy which could construct a mass popular democratic movement. Without such a popular basis from below, from which to generate its own political strength, the leadership was led time and again into 'betrayals', reproducing a class corporatism inside the state itself. The creativity of class and popular struggles – councils of action, rent strikes, the politics of the unemployed – were disciplined, not harnessed. The educative role of the party was minimised not enhanced. For those who set the course of the Labour Party, the 'constitution' was taken as the premise or the definer of the possibilities of political action, whereas in fact (as Baldwin himself understood much more acutely) this was precisely what the struggle was all about.[73]

The relation of the Labour Party to the state, as expressed in the constitutionalist perspective, had its parallel in the Labour Party's commitment to an abstract collectivism. Given the ambivalent connotations attributed to 'collectivism' and 'socialism' in the pre-war years, there occurred an easy passage by which collective state ownership could become _identified_ with socialism.[75] The rationality of collectivising, for example, the mining industry or the railways could be perceived from well outside a socialist framework. In the immediate aftermath of the war, a number of the most inveterate right-wingers in the power-bloc were advocating nationalisation of specific industries. It was only later (by 1920 or 1921), when demands for nationalisation became integrated into a predominantly socialist discourse, strengthened by a commitment to workers' control, that the anti-nationalisation position of the Conservatives became so entrenched. As we have noted, debates on collectivisation were articulated to the imperatives of the reconstruction of the state itself. The effects (if not the ideologies themselves) of new Liberalism and Fabianism were to suffuse conceptions of collectivism in a rhetoric of statism.[76] At a critical moment in the ideological formation of the Labour Party these theories had a decisive influence on leading Labour intellectuals. This merging of an undifferentiated collectivism with the socialist project was a crucial step in the developing _statism_ of the Labour Party, and, more generally, in the reconstruction of the British state along the lines of a 'passive' revolution, a reconstruction by and large confined to the _internal_ and administrative recomposition of the apparatuses of the state.

The containment of a rank and file activism in the labour movement by 1921, the subsequent stages of the constitutionalisation of the Labour Party, and the contribution of the latter to a 'passive' regeneration of

the state determined the complexion of some of the key class conflicts in the 1920s. For the working class these struggles were primarily defensive, and localised or sectional, intersecting at three major points: the resistance to the dismantling of the staple industries, resistances to unemployment, and struggles to break the disciplinary and coercive core of the state system of welfare. Cumulative struggles over these issues at times overcame a narrow and formalistic definition of constitutionalism, and, by following a much broader definition of the general democratic tasks of the labour movement, raised corporate issues to a more general and popular level. Although, in the older vocabulary, the movements which grew up around these struggles in the 1920s were firmly 'direct-actionist', the dichotomous and ultimately negative attitudes to the institutions of representative democracy ran far less deep. Indeed, many of the fiercest struggles were concentrated within and against the apparatuses of the local state.

We have argued that between 1918 and 1924 a central object of the struggle between the major classes was the issue of constitutionalism. The showdown during the General Strike finally secured for Baldwin his victory against the forces of direct action. However, for a number of years before 1926 the focus of class struggle had begun to shift. It is an irony that the predominant initiatives intended to regulate and restructure the working-class through state practices in the 1920s had precious little to do with a 'constitutional' form of politics. The characteristic mode was administrative. For example, a memorandum or directive from the Ministry of Health could have devastating effects on those receiving unemployment benefit. 'Profligate' local councils were placed under the controls of non-elected auditors, carrying unprecedented financial powers. Similarly, appointed government committees, although

only advisory, could wield enormous power - especially when representatives
of labour added their signatures. The most infamous occasion was the
Blanesburgh Committee of 1927 which advised the reduction of unemployment
payments and the tightening up of the 'genuinely seeking work' clause;
the final report was signed by three trade union representatives, including
Margaret Bondfield, a member of the TUC and future minister of Labour in
the 1929 government. The incorporation of Labour and trade-union
representatives at the very highest levels of the state could mean that
socialists in various localities might find themselves pitched in
struggle against their own representatives.[77]

Evidence from accounts of the 'Little Moscows', of the unemployed
struggles, and of Poplarism[78] suggests that on specific issues, as in the
period 1918-1920, the constitutional/non-constitutional distinction was
simply inoperative at the local level. Perhaps the primary determination
for this was that, as a result of the remorseless administrative logic of
the bureaucratic machine, rights which had come to be regarded as _social_
rights, the prerogative of all citizens, came increasingly under threat.
This was partly a product of economic considerations - the dominance of
the Treasury was no mirage - but was also due to concerted moves by the
central state to curb the constitutional and democratic routes by which
forces perceived as hostile to central government could win command of
various apparatuses of the local state. Rights which were seen as
guaranteed constitutionally by parliament were systematically pared down
in the 1920s. Conflict with the state was exacerbated by the fact that
it was the state itself which was decisive in regulating the distribution
of what was increasingly becoming a 'social' wage. Collective, anti-
state resistances were thus integral to the politics of the labour move-
ment in the 1920s - even when only apparently economic issues were in

dispute. But far from remaining defensive, at their most developed, anti-state struggles of this type could be raised to the offensive. The building of popular alliances in specific communities against the vindictiveness of petty officialdom could be extended to a movement _for_ the deepening of democratic rights in order to secure the substance, as well as the form, of social rights. The unemployed struggles organised by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement were particularly assertive in this respect, engaging in dramatic, symbolic actions to demonstrate the lived realities of unemployment and the coercive and regulatory functions of the local welfare apparatuses of the state. The objectives of the NUWM were to smash the bureaucratic dominance of the welfare system and expand into the state itself a representative structure which could encourage real popular controls. The greater the purpose of these resistances, the greater the conflicts with the Boards of Guardians, the Ministry of Health, the police and cabinet and party representatives. Similarly, the case of Poplarism illustrates the significance of struggles _within_ the state, the electoral success of the Poplar councillors against Labour Party bureaucratism of the Morrison type, the possibilities for the redistribution of wealth through the local apparatuses of the state, and above all, the mainspring of the Poplar action showed that popular legitimacy could be won for an intransigently 'unconstitutional' campaign.

At best, official Labour Party support for such actions remained dilatory; at worst, overtly hostile and obstructive. The effect of these anti-state struggles were necessarily undercut by the persistently ambivalent response of official Labourism and by the structural constraints of its insertion into the power-bloc on the constitutionalist ground which had been staked out between 1918 and 1924. By disciplining

and hobbling its own base, the room for those who represented the Labour Party in the power-bloc to exert a strategic and assertive presence, transcending the passive recomposition of the state, correspondingly looked weaker and weaker.

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1. S. and B. Webb, <u>Industrial Democracy</u> (Longmans, 1902), pp.147-8

2. We take this term from Stuart Macintyre, <u>A Proletarian Science.
   Marxism in Britain 1917-33</u> (Cambridge University Press, 1980).
   We come back to this point later.

3. In the 1880s the Fabians defined the two strands of socialism as
   'Collectivist' and 'Anarchist', but found it too early to decide
   which would be the dominant trend in Britain. Given the broad
   connotations of 'collectivist' and 'anarchist', it was a
   pertinent analysis. <u>What Socialism Is</u> (Fabian Tract 4, 1886)

4. For one of the earliest commentaries, typical apart from its date,
   see the discussion of Theodore Rothstein's article of 1901 by
   Bill Baker, <u>The Social Democratic Federation and the Boer War,
   Our History</u> 59 (1974), p.12. Rothstein noted the onset of
   imperialism, regulation superseding laissez-faire, the
   accentuation of nationalism and the tightening of the links
   between class and state.

5. Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain
   1883-1896', <u>History Workshop Journal</u> 4 (1977). See also the
   correspondence by Sheila Rowbotham, Royden Harrison and Stephen
   Yeo in <u>History Workshop Journal</u> 5-7 (1978-79). A rather similar
   perspective, although differing in conclusion and chronology, is
   suggested by Stanley Pierson, <u>Marxism and the Origins of British
   Socialism</u> (Cornell University Press, 1973) and <u>British Socialists.
   The Journey from Fantasy to Politics</u> (Harvard University Press,
   (1979). Yeo's analysis of the shift in this period from
   co-operative to capitalised and state insurance is more compelling,
   'Working Class Association, Private Capital and the State', in N.
   Parry et al. (eds.), <u>Social Work, Welfare and the State</u> (Edward
   Arnold, 1979).

6. See especially S. Rowbotham and J. Weeks, <u>Socialism and the New
   Life</u> (Pluto Press, 1977).

7. T. A. Jackson, <u>Solo Trumpet</u> (Lawrence and Wishart, 1953), p.49

8. For the latter, see M. Llewelyn Davies (ed.), <u>Maternity. Letters
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   statism and motherhood, Jane Lewis, <u>The Politics of Motherhood.
   Child and Maternal Welfare in England</u> 1900-1939 (Croom Helm, 1980).

9. Unofficial Reform Committee, <u>The Miners' Next Step</u> (Pluto Press,
   1973), p.29. For the historical location, H. Francis and D.
   Smith, <u>The Fed. A History of the South Wales Miners in the
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10. Bob Holton, <u>British Syndicalism 1910-1914</u> (Pluto Press, 1976),
    p.87.

11. The best account is given by the Board of Trade troubleshooter, G. Askwith, Industrial Problems and Disputes (John Murray, 1920). Despite his faith in the powers of conciliation, and even though he exerted a measure of control, the anxiety is still communicated through these pages.

12. J. M. Winter, Socialism and the Challenge of War. Ideas and Politics in Britain 1912-1918. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) p.20.

13. Harold Hikins, The Liverpool General Transport Strike of 1911 (Toulouse Press, 1980), pp.18-22.

14. Holton, British Syndicalism, p.89; and J. White, 1910-1914 Reconsidered' in J. E. Cronin and J. Schneer (eds.), Social Conflict and the Political Order - Modern Britain (Croom Helm, 1982), p.81.

15. H. A. Clegg, A. Fox and A. F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unionism Since 1899. Volume I. 1880-1910 (Clarendon Press 1964), p.319

16. For the most detailed discussion, Richard Hyman, The Workers' Union (Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 51-62.

17. The term is introduced by Holton, British Syndicalism. He sees it referring to 'forms of social action which lie between revolt and clear-cut revolutionary action', p.76. We understand it more as a specific form of revolt, which carried its own self-imposed limitations.

18. On this point see R. McKibbon, The Evolution of the Labour Party (Oxford University Press, 1974), p.71.

19. For the programme of the AIU see Tom Bell, Pioneering Days (Lawrence and Wishart, 1941), pp.71-2.

20. Industrial Syndicalist, November, 1910. Hobsbawm's observation is acute: 'Ben Tillet, deriving his first strategic ideas from an East End lecture on Napoleon by a subsequent archbishop of Canterbury, and later, Arthur Horner, reading Clausewitz in jail, reflect this urgent need of trade union leaders for a theory of industrial welfare', E. J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974), p.221.

21. Holton, British Syndicalism, p.77.

22. ibid., and R. J. Holton, 'Syndicalist Theories of the State', Sociological Review (February, 1981).

23. James Connolly, Socialism Made Easy (Irish Labour Party Publication, 1972; first published 1909), p.51.

24. Both Lenin and Gramsci were to acknowledge the influence of Daniel de Leon, and recognise his contribution to a theory of

soviet power; and Lenin, in State and Revolution, defended
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Trade Union Leader 1881-1940 (Heinemann, 1960), p.35.

26. R. Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism (Merlin, 1973), p.28.

27. Holton, British Syndicalism, p.91. In June 1911 the Liverpool
Sailors' and Firemans' Union and the Transport Workers'
Federation had called upon the Board of Trade to persuade the
ship-owners to adopt a more conciliatory attitude. The Board
refused.

28. ibid., p.179

29. Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism.

30. David Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald (Cape, 1977), p.90.

31. ibid., p.142.

32. ibid., pp.143,150 and 159-160

33. ibid., p.146. For a classic example of this reasoning which
(a) privileges 'community' over 'producers', (b) posits
'community' against both private monopolies and labour
organisations, and (c) advocates the 'channelling' and education
of 'syndicalism' to these ends, see Emil Davies, The Collec-
tivist State in the Making (G. Bell, 1914).

34. P. Snowden, Socialism and Syndicalism (Collins, 1913), p.133.

35. James Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement. (Allen and
Unwin, 1973), p.122.

36. And, of course, to free them from false socialism. The
scientificity of marxism was crucial for explosing the multitude
of reformist ideologies masquerading as socialism. Thus: 'The
explanation of how the heat of radium disintegrates and
reintegrates completely upset our old Laplacian theories of
gradual dissipation of the earth's heat and ultimate death –
the earth becoming a dead moon. We applied this idea (new for
us) to politics, and particularly to the hide-bound ideas of
the ILP, which were now as ossified as the rocks in the
Grampian Hills', Bell, Pioneering Days, pp.96-7

37. Macintyre, Proletarian Science, chs. 3 and 4. Macintyre's
sensitive reconstruction of this cultural formation delivers
some of the best sections in a very good book.

38. Both these pamphlets were reproduced in full in Proletarian 3
(Edinburgh, 1975).

39. Raymond Challinor, The Origins of British Bolshevism (Croom
Helm, 1977).

40. There was nothing in the purism of the SLP which came near to the Bolshevik concern for alliances, the unification of 'contradictory' political forces, struggles inside the representative apparatuses of the state, and the general democratic tasks for the marxist party. This list could be extended.

41. Neal Blewett, The Peers, The Parties and the People. The General Elections of 1910 (Macmillan, 1972), p.239

42. McKibbon, Evolution of the Labour Party, p.94.

43. ibid., p.237.

44. ibid., p.xv.

45. This is a bald summary of a complex process. See Barbara Drake, Women in the Engineering Trades (Fabian Research Department, 1917); Gail Braybon, Women Workers in the First World War (Croom Helm, 1981); Hinton, First Shop Stewards' Movement; and Charles More, Skill and the English Working Class 1870-1914 (Croom Helm, 1980).

46. This argument is developed at length and with subtlety by Hinton, ibid.

47. ibid., p.275.

48. According to Hinton, 'The "syndicalist socialism" of Connolly, Mann and The Miners' Next Step formed the ideological base from which this group approached the industrial problems of wartime', ibid., p.173

49. ibid., 'Conclusions', and James Hinton and Richard Hyman, Trade Unions and Revolution. The Industrial Politics of the Early British Communist Party (Pluto Press, 1975).

50. W. Gallacher and J. R. Campbell, Direct Action. An Outline of Workshop and Social Organisation (Pluto Press, 1975).

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52. ibid., 20 March 1920.

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54. Hinton, Shop Stewards' Movement, pp.321 and 302. He appears to have modified his position when he refers favourably to community and housewife organisation in 'Coventry Communism. A Study of Factory Politics in World War Two', History Workshop Journal 10 (1980), p.117.

55. Sheila Rowbotham, Hidden From History (Pluto Press, 1974), p.114.

56. This paragraph relies on John Foster, 'British Imperialism and the Labour Aristocracy', in J. Skelley (ed.), 1926. The General Strike (Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), pp.28-9. Differing figures

can be found in Alan Clinton, The Trade Union Rank and File:
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and Stephen White, Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution
(Macmillan, 1979).

57.   Hugo Dewar, Communist Politics in Britain. The CPGB from its
Origins to the Second World War (Pluto Press, 1976), p.16.

58.   16 September 1920.

59.   Macintyre, Proletarian Science, pp.41-6. And Stuart Macintyre,
Little Moscows (Croom Helm, 1980), pp.97-100.

60.   Labour Party Conference Report (1923), p.187.

61.   ibid., (1920), p.173.

62.   The Worker, 18 September 1920.

63.   Second Congress of the Communist International Minutes of the
Proceedings (New Park Publications, 1977), p.180.

64.   Comment, 17 September 1921; Forward 9 October 1920, 19 February
1921.

65.   Nan Milton, John MacLean (Pluto Press, 1973), p.230.

66.   The quotes in this passage are taken from Miliband, Parliamentary
Socialism, ch. 3. But see also, Noreen Branson, Poplarism
(Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), pp.54-7)

67.   Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald, p.793.

68.   Challinor, British Bolshevism, pp.203-4.

69.   William Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde (Lawrence and Wishart,
1936), pp.130 and 234.

70.   Brian Harrison, Separate Spheres (Croom Helm, 1978), p.220.

71.   Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald, pp.289 and 290.

72.   McKibbon, Evolution of the Labour Party, p.120.

73.   One of the most famous examples is still the most revealing.
J. C. C. Davidson was Chief Civil Commissioner in the 1923
Conservative administration, with responsibility for preparing
secret contingency plans for the threatened general strike. He
recorded in his diary the coming of the new Labour Government:
'I handed over as Chancellor to an old friend, Josh Wedgwood,
who had been a pacifist before the war, but who had fought most
gallantly in it. I told him that, whoever was in power, it was
his duty to protect the Constitution against a Bolshevik-
inspired General Strike.... I begged him not to destroy all
that I had done and not to inform his Cabinet of it. This did

not concern party but was a national matter. Josh said that he
could not continue to build my organisation, but he promised not
to interfere with the work we had done. On my return I found
that Josh had been as good as his word....', J. C. C. Davidson,
Memoirs of a Conservative (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p.180.

74. A. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks (Lawrence and Wishart, 1971),
p.220, emphasis added.

75. To see how this is reproduced in the historiography, see Robert
Skidelsky, Politicians and the Slump (Penguin, 1970).

76. A telling cameo is the confrontation between the two brothers-in-
law, Beveridge and Tawney, in their evidence to the Sankey Comm-
ission: Beveridge, representing the Board of Trade, stressed the
need for a statist collectivisation along nationalisation lines;
Tawney, representing the miners, for a strong injection of popular
controls.

77. Perhaps the clearest case was the conflict between George Lansbury
and the Poplar councillors, and Herbert Morrison. Morrison's
veiws on local government were unequivocal: 'A machine without
high principles is a machine of no real value. And high principles
without an efficient machine constitutes but a voice crying in the
wilderness. We have to make an efficient machine for a high moral
purpose' - a prime example, as it turned out, of an abstract faith
in 'collectivism'. Clement Attlee's response to Morrison over the
Poplar confrontation deserves note 'I have always been a
constitutionalist but the time has come when it is necessary to
kick', Branson, Poplarism, pp.56 and 80.

78. Macintyre, Little Moscows; Wal Hannington, Unemployed Struggles
(Lawrence and Wishart, 1977); and Branson, Poplarism.