

6

\*\*\*\*\*

Some dilemmas for Marxists, 1900-1914

\*\*\*\*\*

It will not be possible, until very much more research has been done, to produce a history of the marxist-socialist party in the period 1900-14. This pamphlet only deals with a very few aspects, namely, the attitude of the Party to the Labour Party, the attitude to Trade Unionism and Strikes, and the form of organisation of the Party. Without attempting a narrative, a picture is built up by quotations from contemporary sources.

A few guarding notes are necessary:

1) Concentration on a few aspects is bound to give only a one-sided, or even a distorted, view of the Party. It is obviously impossible, for example? to give a fair picture of the attitude to the Labour Party without going into the theoretical question of the role of Parliamentary struggle as seen by the marxists of this period; or to form any opinion about the advantages or otherwise of the form of organisation of the Party without relating it to practical activities.

No conclusions, therefore, about the theory and practice of the Party as a whole should be deduced from this pamphlet. The quotations are given merely as illustrations of the particular points to which they relate.

2) These quotations are? of course? only a small selection. Only a few of the possible sources have been used, and the main source? the weekly journal 'Justice'? has been looked at only in certain short periods. But so far as possible the significant periods have been examined - e.g. for the attitude to the Labour Party: the formation of the L.R.C., the General Election of 1906, the disillusionment in 1911-12, and the discussion around affiliation in 1913.

3) In focussing attention on these few aspects of the Party, very much less than justice is done to the devoted and inspired work of the membership in practical campaigns (e.g. for school meals or for maintenance of the Unemployed). The 'social programme' of the Liberal Government was very largely a concession to socialist agitation (I.L.P. as well as S.D.F.). The practical work of the S.D.F./B.S.P. in this period has scarcely been studied yet, and no history of the Labour movement has ever done it justice.

4) The same neglect has applied to the many socialists outside the marxist party: members of the I.L.P., supporters of the 'Clarion' and its organised activities? socialists of no party at all, and those who belonged to the all-embracing 'Socialist Societies' that existed in some places. . (This was a period of formal disunity coupled with practical and comradely unity in local campaigns.) Research into the activities of any of these Socialist groupings would be rewarding.

5) For general background to this pamphlet? the reader is advised to turn to one of various histories of the Labour movement, such as:

"A Short History of the British Working-class Movement" (G.D.H. Cole)

"The Common People" (Cole and Postgate)

"British Trade Unionism" (Allen Hutt)

"The British Labour Movement" (A.L. Morton and George Tate)

6) The marxist-socialist party had several different names in this period. Up to 1908 it was still called the Social-Democratic Federation (S.D.F.), because it had started in 1881 as a federation of radical clubs. (In 1884, adopting a definitely socialist programme, it became a genuine political party, though a very small one at first, but kept its old name.) In 1908 the name was changed to Social-Democratic Party (S.D.P.) In 1911 the S.D.P. joined with a few branches of the I.L.P. and some un-affiliated Socialist Societies to form the British Socialist Party (B.S.P.) which continued, after a split in 1916, until its assimilation into the new Communist Party in 1920.

Although this pamphlet is based on documentary evidence, it also owes a good deal to general discussion with several members of the pre-1914 marxist party, especially Frank Tanner (who has also done some research on this period), Frank Newell, Joe Vaughan, and Frank Jackson.

#### Attitude to the Labour Party

The Labour Representation Committee (later called the Labour Party) was formed in February 1900 to unite Trade Unions and socialist parties for election purposes. The S.D.F. was originally affiliated to the L.R.C., but disaffiliated in 1902. The question of whether this step was correct or not was the most controversial one in the Party up to 1914, when a Referendum of the membership gave a majority for re-affiliation.

But the problem in this period was very far from being the same as our own problem nowadays. There were then two important capitalist parties to contend with. The Labour Party was able to contest elections in only a few places, and had (from 1906) a small group of roughly forty members in Parliament. The Labour Party had no individual membership - it was in fact primarily a Parliamentary Group, with local organisations for the purpose of getting more 'independent Labour' men into Parliament. In its early days only a few Trade Unions were affiliated to it. It had no definitely socialist programme, and under Ramsay MacDonald's leadership it rejected the theory of class struggle and tended (especially after 1910) to become a mere appendage of the Liberal Party in Parliament.

What should be the relationship between a marxist-socialist party and such an organisation? The position was complicated by the existence of another socialist party - the I.L.P. - which was affiliated to the Labour Party. In the last years of this period the problem of 'Socialist Unity' with the I.L.P. forced the question of affiliation to the Labour Party to a conclusion.

N.B. It is important to remember that the word 'Social-Democracy' was the normal word used by marxists in this period to denote the ideas of true Socialism. The word had not yet acquired - by the betrayal in 1914, by the European leaders of the Social-Democratic parties, of the principles of internationalism - the overtones of scorn and contempt we find in Lenin's writings.

### The beginning of the Labour Party

In February 1900 the inaugural conference of the 'Labour Representation Committee' was called by the T.U.C. and socialist parties, including the S.D.F. A resolution moved by the S.D.F. which sought to commit the new organisation to a socialist policy, was defeated.

Harry Quelch, writing soon afterwards on "Trade Unionism, Social-Democracy and Labour Representation", expressed his disappointment that after ten years of Socialist declarations at the T.U.C.

"we find a conference, not consisting solely of trade unionists? but a conference of trade unionists and Socialists, declining to accept the principles of a class-conscious Socialism as its basis, lest, forsooth, the trade unionists, who have declared over and over again in their Congresses in favour of these principles? should be offended? and should decline to play on the ground that the Socialists were trying to force their views upon the conference....."

(After reviewing earlier efforts to form a working-class party independent of the capitalist parties, Quelch is doubtful about the new organisation)!

"The truth is that.....the Trade Unions do not exist as political organisations? and the Trade Union movement has no existence as a political entity. Trade unionists are anything - Liberal? Conservative? Radical? Home Rule? Socialist? Nothingarian (especially the latter); and while that is true there is little hope of combining them together for political action. When that is no longer true, we shall have a real working-class party, but that can only be when there is general agreement on basic principles..... Such a party will come in the future, when Social-Democracy has still further permeated the ranks of the trade unionists? and they clearly recognise the principles which necessarily underlie the working-class movement and the essential antagonisms of a class system of society. In the meantime we must work and wait....."

(Quelch then emphasises the need for a truly socialist party - the Social-Democratic party - "in the country and in the House of Commons"):

"That party is being slowly formed, it is the only party which represents the principles of working-class emancipation in antagonism to the principle of bourgeois domination. We shall not hasten the success of this party? nor accelerate its growth. by lowering our flag or abjuring our principles for the sake of scoring unity." ('Social-Democrat' Apl. 1900)

### Dissatisfaction with the Labour Representation Committee

1. H.W. Lee, secretary of the S.D.F., pointed out in 1902 that, as a result of the growing interest of Trade Unions in politics - due largely to the 'Taff Vale' legal decision -

"The Labour Representation Committee has now retrograded another step? and calls for the confining of the political 'independence' of the candidates upon whom it passes its blessing to purely 'labour' matters? leaving them free, if elected, to follow the crack of the Party whip into the lobbies of the House of Commons on all the crucial and important questions of the time."

(Lee concluded from this that socialist propaganda within the Trade Union movement was all the more necessary.)

(Article on 'Trade Unions and Political Action'? 'Social-Democrat' Mch. 1902)

2. Harry Quelch pointed out in the same year that the non-socialist character of the L.R.C. made unity with the I.L.P. more difficult. (The I.L.P. had recently rejected a proposal for fusion with the S.D.F.)

"Apart from questions of principle there is but one obstacle to amalgamation, and that is the relation of the two bodies to the Labour Representation Committee. Of course, if the I.L.P. prefers an alliance with non-Socialists or even anti-Socialists to Socialist unity, there is nothing more to be said. . . . Cooperation with the Trade Unions for any specific object no body of Socialists could possibly object to, but a permanent alliance with them or with any other non-Socialist bodies, must, unless the Socialist organisation is the predominant partner, be harmful to the Socialist organisation and to the Socialist movement. The I.L.P. will have to choose. . . . Either the I.L.P. will break away and help to form one Socialist party, or it will allow itself to be led further and further away from Socialism, and then the Socialists in the organisation will leave it, and combine with other Socialists. In the meantime those who are for unity have but to work and wait." ('Social-Democrat' May 1902)

3. The Annual Conference of the S.D.F. in 1903 uttered a warning:

"This Conference, while re-affirming the general S.D.F. attitude towards independent political action of the working class as the necessary counterpart of its trade union action, forming the only true means of its economic and social emancipation, warns the organised workers against the mistaken principles on which the movement for independent Labour representation is now being made to proceed.

"By merely binding the candidates to a formal sort of independence of action during elections and in Parliament, without basing that independence upon the clear recognition of the existing antagonisms between the classes and consequently, without deriving it from a general Labour, political and social programme not only independent of, but in its essentials antagonistic to, the programmes of the two parties, the present policy guiding the Labour Representation movement is merely calculated to deceive the expectations of the working class by imposing upon it, under the vague name of Labour men, persons in no way voicing its legitimate aspirations.

"The Conference accordingly expresses its conviction that the Independent Labour Representation movement, in order to be effective and to deserve its name must proceed on strictly defined class lines, and have for its ultimate object the conquest of political power by the working class, and the overthrow of the present capitalist order of society by the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange."

(E.C. Resolution passed by Annual Conference; 1903)

4. S.D.F. branches were urged to join local L.R.C.S3

"The general policy pursued by the Committee has been to recommend that branches of the S.D.F. should join those local Labour Representation Committees wherever there are possibilities for influencing such committees in a Socialist direction." (Secretary's Report to Annual Conference, 1904)

#### The movement for re-affiliation

The growing influence of the L.R.C. in industrial areas aroused a movement for re-affiliation within the S.D.F. At the Annual Conference of 1905, Lancashire delegates opened a discussion that would continue for another nine years:

Resolution (moved, by J. Moore, Rochdale, seconded by H. Greenwood, Blackburn)

"That the S.D.F. make application to rejoin the L.R.C."

Amendment: "Whereas the elected L.R.C. candidates have shown by their Parliamentary actions that they are in no way class conscious representatives of the proletariat this Conference reaffirms the present attitude of the S.D.F. towards the L.R.C."

J. Moore: "We in Lancashire have come to the conclusion that the L.R.C. is a living political force; it is obtaining an influence among the working classes in the great industrial centres. The S.D.F. has been the means in the past of shaping the workmen's thoughts and ideas in the direction of political independence; we have prepared the way, sown the seed, done the spade work, and then allowed others to get the credit of our work. Breaking away from Liberal and Tory associations means a very great step in advance - a revolution in ideas; and if we refuse to take part in the movement which resulted from our work, then we are going to be left behind."

H. Greenwood: "...The L.R.C. represents the beginning of the last and greatest struggle for the political machinery of the country, by the most intelligent and best organised of the workers. This does not seem to be appreciated by the S.D.F. any more than it is by many trade union leaders. The L.R.C. movement is a semi-conscious recognition of the conflict of interests between the proletariat and the master class; it is better in character than its leaders in the House of Commons and some of its candidates in constituencies. We want to make it a Socialist movement and must establish sympathetic relations with it."

Dan Irving (Burnley): "I could never see any reason for our leaving the L.R.C.....We should endeavour to carry the Red Flag right into the midst of these people....."

Harry Quelch: "Not a single new reason has been placed before us for adopting the course recommended.....The S.D.F. has withdrawn from the L.R.C. for specific reasons, not a single one of which has been weakened by later events, but has, on the contrary, been strengthened... If we rejoin the L.R.C. we shall have no voice in the selection of candidates, but will be called upon to support them no matter whom they are... Rejoining the L.R.C. has been urged as a means towards Socialist unity. It means no such thing...We cannot have Socialist unity under the L.R.C. which contains anti-Socialists."

H.M. Hyndman: "...If we rejoin the L.R.C. we would be bound by its constitution not to oppose Shackleton on the question of child labour - not even on the floor of the House of Commons.....I am in favour of coming to terms with everyone whenever possible, but not at the expense of Socialism. This is the last moment to consider whether we should go back on independent terms."

(N.B. D. Shackleton, a non-socialist L.R.C. candidate, "was allowed a walk-over at Clithcroo in 1902", according to the Webbs. He was a consistent opponent of the movement to release young children from work in the mills.)

After ten more delegates had spoken, the mover of the resolution-replied to discussion, asking the pregnant questions "Are we going to leave the moulding of the working-class movement to the leaders of the I.L.P.?"

The amendment was then carried by 52 votes to 18; and then passed as a substantive resolution by 55 to 11.

The Labour Party in the Parliament of 1906

The spectacular success of 29 of the L.R.C. candidates in the General Election of January 1906, which swept the Liberals to power on a programme of social reform, created a recognisable 'Labour Party' in the House of Commons. The reaction of the S.D.F. - which had itself had some near-successes in the Election - was swift and ungrudging appreciation of the new situation:

1. Editorial in 'Justice': "The New Fourth Party" (the 'third' party being the group of Irish nationalist M.P.s in the House of Commons)

"At last there has come into existence in this country an independent working-class political party. That is the one important salient fact of this General Election . . . . .

"For more than a generation efforts have been made to secure Labour representation, and some few 'Labour members' have been returned. But neither the efforts nor the members have been very successful, because those men who were returned were tied to the Liberal Party, any attempt at independence being denounced as a 'Tory dodge'. Even now the Liberal Party has sought, and is seeking, to annex to itself this latest movement for Labour representation . . . Nevertheless, the significant fact remains that in spite of all . . . . . a new party, a fourth party, has sprung into existence . . . . .

"We do not expect too much of the new party in the House of Commons, and must be prepared for mistakes and failures, but we are confident of its future. With the strong lead that the Socialist members are bound to give it, it will be impossible for it to go far astray without committing self-destruction . . . . .

"Looked at all round, the election demonstrates the phenomenal growth of Socialism and the actuality of an independent working-class party . . . . . in the constituencies there has been developed a new party, a fourth party, a party of the people, independent of and hostile to both capitalist parties? a party which, already Socialist in its tendency and sympathy, must become definitely Socialist in its aim, and will steadily march forward, conquering and to conquer." ('Justice', Jan. 27th, 1906)

2. The election of Keir Hardie by the new Labour M.P.s as their leader in the House of Commons was welcomed by 'Justice':

"We have never hesitated to criticise Keir Hardie when we have differed from him, nor to give him a word of encouragement when in agreement with him; but this, we think, will be conceded by all who believe in an independent working-class party in the House of Commons as an instrument of working-class emancipation - that Hardie has shown the way there. He has pursued a very difficult course with indomitable courage, with unswerving independence and steadfast fidelity." ('Justice' Feb. 17th

(Keir Hardie retired from this position in 1907 through ill health; his place was taken by J. Ramsay MacDonald, originally secretary of the Labour Representation Committee, now renamed the Labour Party.)

3. Hyndman, in an editorial in 'Justice' - 'The Labour Party: its dangers and its opportunities' - warns of the risk of corruption:

"The House of Commons is in the main an assembly of the well-educated and well-to-do . . . . . Its effect upon newcomers is very insidious and very

curious to watch. Nothing has been more depressing than to observe the manner in which, with the honorable exception of Keir Hardie - now the leader of the Parliamentary Group - and in a less degree, Steadman, the working-class members who enter the House of Commons become highly respectable, prosperous, and somewhat self-conscious bourgeois. Their dress, their appearance, their manners, and unfortunately their politics, accommodate themselves to their new surroundings very rapidly. . . . All the while the subtleties of flattery from men and from women who have brought the art of flattery to a science will be tried upon them . . . .

"Against the avowed Socialists of the Party, too, it may be contended . . . . that to 'split the party' would be ruinous and would destroy the effect which a solid vote might produce. . . . Already we see marked signs of 'moderation' among some of the newly-elected persons.

"On the other hand, and against all this, never in all the history of all Parliaments were such opportunities afforded as this Labour Party will have" (for social questions, such as free maintenance of children, unemployment, and housing, are urgent). "Socialism is the only way out from the maze of vested interests and class greeds in which we are wandering at the present time. . . . It is a grand chance to give a lead to Great Britain and Europe, and to the world. None will rejoice so heartily as we shall if it is taken full advantage of. . . . ." ('Justice', Feb. 17th, 1906)

4. Comment in 'Critical Chronicle' (a weekly feature in 'Justice'):

"We cannot but congratulate the Labour Party in the House of Commons on its work so far, which has completely justified our anticipations. It has forced the Government to make concessions which never would have been made but for the presence and pressure of an independent working-class party in the House, and its influence has been much greater than can be fully realised by merely reading the debates. . . ." ('Justice' Mch. 10th, 1906)

Interlude

On March 10th, 1906, 'Justice' criticised an article which appeared in 'The Independent Review' on the subject of 'The Labour Party and its Policy'. The article was written by Ramsay MacDonald, who was to become the evil genius of the Labour Party:

". . . . Judging from his writings, the object of such a party is primarily not one of economics but of ethics? its duty is not the expropriation of the capitalist class, but its moralisation. 'If, he tells us, the Labour Party 'narrows itself down to a class, movement, or a manual workers' movement; or if it imagines that, as a minority, it can, by playing one Party off against another, do much good; or if it attacks its problems superficially and does not aim at far-reaching changes in social structure - it will weaken and finally disappear.'

"It would be difficult to cram a greater confusion of ideas into fewer words. To talk of the Labour Party 'narrowing itself down' to a class movement, is to display an entire misconception of what constitutes a class movement; a misconception rendered all the more apparent by the appeal for 'far-reaching' structural changes. As if the class movement were not fundamental; indeed, the only movement which does aim at fundamental 'far-reaching changes in social structure' by expropriating the expropriators, abolishing class domination and classes altogether, by abolishing the class ownership of the means of production upon which class

domination and class divisions are based. It is this class movement - aiming at the subversion of the economic basis of class society - which is fundamental. The appeal to the moral sense of the master class is purely superficial. . . .the capitalist is not an oppressor and an exploiter because he is depraved, but because he is a capitalist."

### Disillusionment

Led by such a man as Ramsay MacDonald, the Parliamentary Labour Party was bound to disappoint socialists. As militancy developed in the working class, rising to the 'Great Unrest' of the strike wave of 1911, the gulf between industrial workers and their representatives in Parliament widened. MacDonald saw his role as mediating between Capital and Labour, smoothing down the class struggle. The S.D.F. was sharply critical of such a 'Labour' Party. The following quotations are taken from 'Justice' in the early part of 1912:

1. Comment in 'Justice' on the Annual Labour Party Conference, Jan. 1912

"The Labour Party Conference only afforded another evidence of the utter futility and hopelessness of the combination. Not only is the Party, as ever, without programme, principles or policy, but it is entirely devoid of ideals, objective or of any conception whatsoever of its future work or mission. Indeed, so far as it is possible to gather any idea from the speeches of the leaders, there\* is no mission or future work to which the Labour Party can aspire . . . . .

"The Labour Party would seem to have for its sole ambition to appear to be as much like the other parties as possible. There is not the slightest glimmering of an idea that the Party should be an instrument to further the interests - much less achieve the emancipation - of the working class.

"Its only function is to secure a place for itself in the Party machine, where its leaders and wirepullers and whips can take a hand in all the dirty dodges, chicanery, hypocrisy, bargaining and manoeuvring of the political game. Supremacy in that direction is the highest ambition of our Labour politicians. . . . .that such supremacy would mean for the people was strikingly exemplified in the conduct of the conference, where every attempt at criticising the leaders was astutely stifled or adroitly shelved in a manner which did credit to the aptitude of the leaders as 'politicians' but compared disagreeably and most unfavourably with the conduct of our own conferences, either at home or abroad, in which the fullest and freest criticism is permitted and indulged in."

('Justice', Feb. 3rd, 1912)

2. Trade union members of the B.S.P. criticised the failure of Labour M.P.s to stand up for victimised trade unionists:

"At the meeting of the Bristol Trades Council on Thursday last, cde. Widdicombe, B.S.P., moved and cde. Noakes, B.S.P., seconded, the following resolution:

"That this Council condemns the gross inactivity of the Labour Party in permitting the last Parliamentary session to close without raising the question of the biased and savage sentences passed upon Messrs. Hopla and John, the Welsh miners." (in the Cambrian strike - cd.) "It now calls upon the Party, as soon as Parliament opens, to make determined efforts in the House of Commons to obtain immediate release of these victims of judicial vindictiveness."



"Councillor Sennington, I.L.P., hotly opposed the Labour Party being condemned; but after a 'sledge-hammer' reply from cde. Widdicombe, the Council passed the resolution by a big majority." ('Justice' Feb.3rd. 1912)

3. J. Gribble, well-known B.S.P. member in Northampton and a leading member of the Boot & Shoe Operatives' Union, wrote in his Union journal about the 1911 strikes:

"But where, oh where, were the Labour M.P.s? According to Mr. Frank W. Goldstone's report" (Goldstone was a delegate from the Union to the Labour Party Conference - ed.) "our Chairman Ramsay MacDonald put in a plea for facilities to discuss the recent railway difficulty and the general Labour unrest'. Shades of Plimsoll! And workers were shot down in cold blood, murdered because they had the audacity to demand a minimum of a pound a week, and claimed the right to bargain collectively through their representatives for the sale of their labour-power. Put in a plea!

"This, then, comrades, is the sum total of the Labour Party's work during a time when the Government had placed the Army at the disposal of the railway companies to murder if necessary (and murder they did) men whom they and the Labour Party were sent to Parliament to defend. If they had done their duty they would have outraged the whole of the convention-alitics of the House. We know forty men out of 670 are not many; but forty determined men could have so manipulated matters that the whole country would have been aroused, and such a blow struck at the railway monopoly that it would not have recovered.

"What have the Labour Party done that forty other members of the House would not have done? What is the difference between the Labour Party today from the workers' point of view, and the position of Burt, Fenwick and the other Liberal-Labour men of the 'eighties? What is the difference between the Labour Party and the Liberals?"

(Gribble's article is quoted in 'Justice', Feb. 17th, 1912)

4. 'Justice' saw the Debate in the new Parliamentary session of 1912 as "A Sham Fight":

"The chief feature of the debate on the Labour Party's amendment to the Address was its unreality. No one could read Mr. MacDonald's speech without concluding that his heart was not in it. He was simply doing something which he had to do. His Party, by their subservience to the Liberals, their reluctance to take up the battle for the workers, and their eagerness for 'industrial peace' and to patch up fraudulent 'agreements' with the employers, have become a byword and a reproach among the workers, and have discouraged and disgusted their most devoted supporters...." (MacDonald has blamed the Osborne Judgment for the 'Labour Unrest')

"The causes of Labour unrest are economic not political, and if there has been any connection at all between politics and the recent and present Labour troubles it is due, not to despair over the Osborne judgment, but to disgust at the futility of the Labour Party, and its failure to 'make good'" ('Justice', Feb. 24th, 1912)

#### The affiliation controversy again

Since 1905 the supporters of re-affiliation to the Labour Party had continued to raise the question at Conferences, and occasionally in the correspondence column of 'Justice'. The question had become inextricably mixed up with the question of 'Socialist Unity' with the I.L.P.

In 1913 the International Socialist Bureau took a firm hand in the matter. At a conference held in London, delegates from the B.S.P., I.L.P., and Fabian Society met under the chairmanship of Vandervelde to discuss terms of amalgamation. Affiliation of the B.S.P. to the Labour Party was put as a necessary condition of socialist unity:

Huysmans (I.S.B.) "outlined the policy suggested by the Bureau. The B.S.P. must join the Labour Party, and the I.L.P. must join with the B.S.P. ...."

Keir Hardie (I.L.P.): "Is the B.S.P. prepared to accept the suggestion that it should join the Labour Party?"

Dan Irving (B.S.P.): "It is impossible for us to say whether the B.S.P. will accept the suggestion. Our position is that Socialist Unity should not be made dependent upon affiliation to the Labour Party."

Keir Hardie: "The two organisations at present affiliated to the Labour Party consider it essential that the B.S.P. should join the Labour Party."

Huysmans: "It is impossible to disconnect the two things; they must be taken jointly. If we secure Socialist Unity, affiliation to the Labour Party must be part of it...."

W.C. Anderson (I.L.P.): "If you have one section of the Socialist Party prepared to work in alliance with the Labour Party and another section which is not, there is no possibility of real unity...".

(After discussion, a joint statement was agreed to and the debate was adjourned to a further meeting to be organised by the I.S.B.)

(Report in 'Justice', Aug. 9th, 1913)

#### The Discussion in 'Justice'

As a result of the intervention of the I.S.B. a long debate took place in 'Justice' from July to October 1913:

1. J. Hunter Watts opened with an article "In the Prison of our own Past".

"....We rub shoulders with the multitude at election times, but as soon as we are cut of that hurly-burly, we gather our Marxian robe around us to escape contamination by contact with mere social reformers. And we do this because it was of the greatest importance a quarter of a century ago to differentiate ourselves most clearly not only from any and all bourgeois political parties, but to dissociate ourselves even more emphatically from the old school of Utopian socialists who imagined they could regenerate society by establishing a higher code of morality...."

(But now) "We must get out of the prison of sectarianism in order to play our part in the great proletarian movement on a wider stage than any we have yet trod. The International Socialist Bureau has called upon us anew to affiliate with the Labour Party. Invertebrate as that Party is, the fact stares us in the face, that it is the political expression of the working-class movement in this country, and while we stand aloof from it, it will remain invertebrate...."

"A little band of Socialist agitators induced the Trade Unionists to adopt political action, but the Socialist Party alone can teach them how to use the weapon we thrust into their hands....It is our duty to join hands with the organised workers, for we can guide them to socialism, though our feet can never be turned astray from it." ('Justice' July 19th, 1913)

2. Harry Quelch answers with an editorials "Shall we haul down our Flag.?"  
"....We have no objection to giving a show to all sides, even to those who appear to have got weary of standing for the right because wrong seems so much more successful; but 'Justice' itself is still the organ of Social-Democracy, and not of an invertebrate, incoherent and lymphatic Labourism .....

"We left the Labour Party because inside that combination we found ourselves, willy-nilly, supporting men and measures with whom and with which we did not agree... Had we remained in the Labour Party we should have found ourselves endorsing with it the general policy and legislation of the Liberal Government." ('Justice', July 26th, 1911)

3. F.H. Gorle asks "Shall we raise the Red Flag within the Labour Party?"

"Those personal forces that have done most to liberalise and destroy the independence of the Labour Party are the very forces that have striven to keep us out. These anti-revolutionary and opportunist members have done their worst, not only to keep us out but also to ban our influence in every section of the Labour movement....."

"The I.L.P. has remained in it without losing its identity, though it has lost power. But it has lost power because MacDonald has betrayed the trust the I.L.P. placed in him, because he has led the Labour Party back instead of forward. It would have been more difficult for him to do that if we were inside. That is why he wants us outside....."

(Pointing out that the I.S.B. is urging socialist unity) "Let no one of us put a bar against the achievement of a Socialist unity which both MacDonald and the capitalist class are afraid of." ('Justice' Aug. 2nd, 1913)

4. A long correspondence followed, under the heading: "Ought the B.S.P. to join the Labour Party?" The most forward-looking contribution came from Zelda Kahan-Coates of Hackney, wife of W.P. Coates:

"...We withdrew from the Labour Party because we foresaw that the official Labour Party would tend more and more in a direction towards Radicalism and we thought, I presume, that by remaining outside as a vigorous, independent Socialist body we should attract to ourselves the best elements of the Labour Movement, and thus we should more speedily be able to build up a real mass Socialist Labour Party.

"Unfortunately, if this has been our object, we must confess we have not succeeded; not because our principles are wrong, but because, being outside the Labour Movement, or what at any rate the most active trade unionists consider to be the Labour Movement, we are regarded with mistrust by the majority of the organised working-classes. In our attitude towards questions of the day, as in our attitude towards individuals of the Labour Party, they see not the candid friend, but the hostile body, the party which, it seems to them, always tries to pick faults in them, in terms not chosen with any undue care.

"Thus, with the best intentions in the world, we often repel the most hopeful and most forward of the younger generation of the trade union members... Inside the Labour Party our criticism would gain a far wider hearing. Being ourselves a part of it, our criticism of its faults would be none the less forcible, but still would lack the bitterness which too often characterises it now....."

'I do not for a moment anticipate that even when we come into 'close quarters' with the present officials of the Labour Party we shall succeed in converting them to more independent Socialist action. No, that will only come about when the rank and file trade unionists demand a more vigorous policy....But we can hope to strengthen considerably the Left wing within the Labour Party and by appearing as allies, as friends, as one of them, we shall have more influence on the rank and file; we shall have more opportunity of winning the latter over to our side; and then the leaders will soon enough alter their tune....

"I take it that none of us care to remain in the position of a small sect which, if it can fall back on nothing else, can always hug its own righteousness. We all desire to be in the forefront of the working-class movement. We desire our principles, our ideals, our activities, to be taken up by wide masses of the working classes. How, then, are we to attain this end? The Labour Party, with all its weakness, is an effort, however faltering, of the working class to take its destiny in its own hands, and as such should be encouraged and helped by us...."

('Justice', Oct. 4th, 1913)

#### Affiliation at last

In May 1914 the membership of the B.S.P. decided by a ballot vote to affiliate to the Labour Party. The Party issued a Manifesto, signed by Albert Inkpin as Secretary, and by nine other E.C. members:

"....In taking this step the British Socialist Party does not lose its identity or surrender its position in any way. It retains complete freedom of socialist action both in the propagandist and electoral fields. It is not committed to any compromise of principle or policy.

"The Labour Party in the country and its Parliamentary group must not be regarded as one and the same thing....The growing demand within the Labour Party itself for complete political independence will unquestionably be stimulated and strengthened by the addition of definite Socialist forces, determined to push forward Socialist principles and ideas with vigour and persistence. Within the Labour Party therefore, our criticism of the Parliamentary group, whilst aiming always at being helpful, must be no less forceful and pointed. We shall find that this necessary criticism will have much greater weight than hitherto now that we shall form a left wing of the Labour Party...."

"The Trade unionists constitute the best, the ablest and the most energetic of the British working class. There is no better field for the propaganda of our revolutionary doctrines. Our best work has been and must be done among them; and we shall do it much more successfully in the future within the Labour Party than hitherto outside...."

(The Manifesto emphasises the need for an uncompromisingly socialist party: "The British Socialist Party is that Party.")

"Let us then have faith in our principles and confidence in ourselves. Our ideal is the attainment of complete freedom for the human race, by the abolition of wage slavery, and the establishment of the Social-Democratic Commonwealth. With that ideal over in our minds, we need have not the slightest fear wherever we may go. Such fear would indicate that we doubt our ability, not only to most the forces opposed to us, but to influence those whom we have to convince...."

('Justice' May 28th, 1914)

(Owing to the outbreak of the World War in August 1914, actual affiliation of the B.S.P. was delayed until 1916)

## Attitude to Trade Unionism and Strikes

As there was no accepted theory in the Party on this subject, it was open to different members to put forward different points of view.

Hyndman's personal remoteness from Trade Unionism, and his dislike of strikes, lasted through his lifetime. But this never prevented other Party members from taking a very active part in the industrial struggle. The role of Tom Mann and John Burns in the Dock Strike of 1889, or of Will Thorne in creating the Gasworkers' Union in the same year, is well known. Not so well known is the role of Party members in the industrial struggles of 1911 - illustrated in this pamphlet.

Consistent and conscientious trade union work was done by many members during the period covered by this pamphlet. The most familiar names are those associated with the London Trades Council - James Macdonald, Duncan Carmichael, Fred Knee and others; while Ben Tillett combined his leadership of the Dockers' Union with membership of the E.C. of the B.S.P. Hundreds of rank and file members, whose names would have to be looked for in local records, seem to have taken part in their local Trades Councils as trade union or socialist delegates. The weekly Party journal 'Justice' supported all major industrial struggles and (at least during times of working-class militancy) gave regular reports of the Trade Union world. From time to time members of the Party active in their Trade Unions were called together for discussion of special problems (such as Lloyd George's Insurance Bill).

Yet, because there was no theory of day-to-day struggle combined with socialist explanation, or of the role of strikes in educating the working class, the Party - as a party - gives the impression of being faced with another dilemma: whether too much reliance on industrial activity would weaken the political struggle for socialism. Quelch - good trade unionist as he was - continually urged the Unions to turn to political action\*

It was only towards the end of this period that, as a result of the great industrial upheavals of 1911-12, attempts were made to analyse the role of industrial struggle in the movement for Socialism. (see pp. 22-23)

### Hyndman's view:

Hyndman's attitude appears in an early issue of 'Justice' in 1884, at a time of widespread militancy against wage cuts:

"From all parts of England and Scotland come reports of strikes... And so far as we can make out not one single movement on the part of the men has been successful, though great sufferings have been undergone in some cases, and in every instance injury has been done to both parties to the struggle. When will our English workers learn that this isolated action is hopeless, and that to strike at a period of depression is merely to play the game of the capitalists?..... A tenth of the funds and the sacrifices thrown away on useless strikes would have made the working classes masters of Great Britain socially and politically by this time."

( 'Justice', Jan. 19th, 1884)

On the other hand, a strike offered an opportunity for socialist propaganda. In February 1884 the party sent three members of its E.C. to investigate "the infamous behaviour of the masters" in a weavers' strike

at Blackburn, and to distribute Socialist literature:

"Whenever in future there are great strikes, we shall as often as possible take advantage of them to spread our opinions. A man or a woman thrown into poverty by the action of capitalists is apt to learn the principles of Justice very quickly." ('Justice', Feb. 9th, 1884)

These quotations from the early days of the Party illustrate a view of strikes that was maintained by Hyndman himself to the end of his days. In his 'Further Reminiscences' (published in 1912) he makes the following generalisations:

"Can anything be imagined more foolish, more harmful, more, in the widest sense of the word, unsocial, than a strike? . . . It is a desperate method of fighting. There is only one more unsocial act possible in our present society, and that is the lock-out. . . ." (page 427)

"I have never known what I should call a successful strike - a strike, that is to say, which, the men having gained, temporarily at least, what they strove for, compensated them in the long run for the sacrifices entailed by their action." (page 428)

"Strikes, unless organised on a revolutionary scale, are, indeed, a poor weapon of class warfare and, even when so organised, victory is none too certain." (page 447)

"Strikes, Syndicalism, Anarchy, are but varying forms of restless working-class ignorance, or despairing revolts against unendurable oppression." (page 459)

"I regard strikes as a very bad weapon for the workers to use. . ."

In the same book, Hyndman expresses his attitude towards Trade Unionism:

"Trade Unions, by admitting wages as the permanent basis of the industrial system, virtually condemn their members to continuous toil for the benefit of the profit-takers so long as that view obtains. The organisation of the Trade Unions is sometimes useful, their theory of society is hopeless." (page 459)

#### Quelch's view

Harry Quelch, respected member of the London Trades Council and editor of 'Justice' during our period, contributed a positive attitude towards Trade Unionism:

1. In an article written in September 1902 he quotes with approval the Resolution passed at the Annual Conference of the S.D.F. in the spring:

"This Conference urges upon all members of the S.D.F. the necessity of becoming, as far as it is within their power, active members of their Trade Unions, and of using their influence as far as possible to turn this political action" (i.e. the Labour Representation movement) "in a Socialist direction. . . ."

(While insisting that Socialism, via the Class War, is the only real solution) "This Conference reaffirms the friendly attitude of the S.D.F. towards Trade Unions and kindred organisations, recognising them as bodies of workers banded together against the capitalists in this struggle. . . ." (and while declining to belong any longer to the L.R.C.) "assures the

Unions of its sympathy with them in their struggles for better conditions for the workers, and of our hearty cooperation with them whenever they are prepared to take action on Socialist lines..."('Social-Democrat' Sept. 1902)

(N.B. This resolution was endorsed in 1904. The Party often acted in cooperation with the T.U. movement, especially the London Trades Council, in practical campaigns for social reforms.)

2. In a pamphlet of 1907 Quelch wrote:

"Holding that the economic, political and social emancipation of the working class must be accomplished by the organised effort of the working people themselves, the S.D.F., while representing the rallying point of the political organisation of the proletariat, has given active assistance in its economic organisation.

"Every struggle on the part of Trade Unions to improve the position of their members or in resisting the attacks of capitalism, has had the active support of the S.D.F. To that organisation the recognition of Trade Union rates and conditions by public bodies is largely due; and the development of Trade Unionism, by which it has been completely democratised, and now embraces every field of industry - as well as the formation of the new Unions of so-called 'unskilled' labour - was largely due to the work of members of the S.D.F." ('The S.D.F.: Its objects, its principles, and its work.')

3. In a pamphlet published in June 1919 at the beginning of the great strike wave of that year, Quelch begins by quoting a Resolution passed at the Annual Conference of the Party in 1910:

"This Conference requests all members of the S.D.P. who are eligible for membership of existing trade unions to join the Unions of their respective callings and, having joined, to carry on a vigorous campaign on behalf of Socialist principles, and also in favour of the ultimate amalgamation of all Unions on the basis of class and not craft."

Quelch goes on to give this Resolution a more positive content:

"There are three salient points...laid down in the Resolution:

(i) "That the Social-Democratic Party is not hostile but friendly to Trade Unions; is willing, therefore, to cooperate with them for any common object; and holds, moreover, that it is the duty of every Social-Democrat to be a member of a Trade Union.

(ii) "That the Trade union affords an excellent field for Socialist propaganda and that it is the duty of the Social-Democratic trade unionist to use every means - in his union, and by loyal service to that organisation - to show that Social-Democracy is, or should be, the end and object of all working-class movement and organisation, industrial or political.

(iii) "That the Party recognises the necessity of the industrial, as well as the political organisation of the working class as the instrument for the amelioration of present social conditions, as well as a means towards the complete emancipation of the proletariat; and that the Party, therefore, is prepared to do all in its power to assist in the development and extension of existing industrial organisations with a view to making them a more complete and effective instrument in the class struggle."

Quelch continues this pamphlet with an explanation of what is meant by Social-Democracy, stating that the working class "must conquer the political machinery of the country". For this purpose, a political party of the working class is essential, and "The S.D.P. is that party". He draws

a practical distinction between a political party and Trade Unionism:

"Trade Unionism on the other hand is not essentially revolutionary. Its chief and primary object is to secure the best conditions possible for the workers in existing circumstances. It does not aim at dispossessing the capitalist class and emancipating the workers from wage slavery. But it does aim at improving the conditions of wage slavery? of making those conditions more tolerable; at raising the standard of life of the workers; and at reducing the amount of exploitation of which they are the victims. Trade Unionism, the industrial organisation of the workers, is a practical admission of the class struggle, albeit too often an involuntary, unconscious admission."

Quelch maintains there is no antagonism between Social-Democracy and Trade Unionism; for the S.D.P. welcomes the efforts of the workers to improve their conditions!

"We do not despise even the least thing that will in any way improve their present lot. We are not of those who believe that the more wretched, poverty-stricken, miserable and slave-driven is the lot of the workers the more readily will they revolt against it. On the contrary, we know that the effect of persistent want, misery and privation is to starve all the pluck, vigour and energy out of a man; to bring about his physical, mental and moral deterioration; and to make him unfit to be anything but a slave."

(In the same pamphlet Quelch urges political action on the part of the Trade Union movement, pointing out that most trade unionists still vote for their masters at Elections. He dismisses the alternative to political action - i.e. 'direct action', which could be armed insurrection or a general strike - and disapproves of the current new proposals for industrial organisation, i.e. 'Industrial Unionism'.)

('Social-Democracy and Industrial Organisation' 1911)

4. In an article on the Miners' strike of 1912, Quelch wrote:

"We Socialists have never advocated strikes. We have always maintained that the working class should jealously guard the right and the power to strike; that they should refuse to be shackled by any sort of compulsory arbitration, or any other restriction on their right to withhold their labour, and we have always given every possible support to any body of workers who have been on strike. But we recognise that the power to strike is generally more efficacious than the strike itself, and that the latter is, at best, but a cumbrous and a two-edged weapon...."

"Industrial organisation, by all means; industrial action, certainly, in order to defend what you may have, or to win some better conditions - but let your political organisation and political action keep pace with and reflect your industrial organisation and action; for without that the latter must be largely ineffectual and futile. There is no essential antagonism between industrial action and political. But a strike costs much in sacrifice and privation, whereas it costs nothing at all to vote. And if one is prepared to strike against the masters, one should, at least, be prepared to vote against them." ('British Socialist', Mch. 1912, p.100)

#### Attitude of rank and file socialists towards Trade Unions

Three views of rank and file members on the relations of the local branches of the Party with local Trade Unionism are given below:



a) "The Party encouraged its members to work in their Trade Unions, but had no organised policy inside the Trade Union movement. Party branches were organised on a territorial basis; there was no conception of organising branches 'at the point of production', in industry itself."

b) "All local work centred around the Trades Council. We used to say; 'The Trades Council is going to take the place of the Borough Council, and we are going to run the place through the Trades Council.'"

c) "At our branch meetings we invited speakers from outside. We also sent our members to speak as Socialists at Trade Union branches. The main function of our Party was propaganda for Socialism. At branch level, our main work was done inside the Trade Unions. This gave the Party a Trade Union outlook as well as a political outlook....In my Borough, in the Council elections of 1906; we and the I.L.P. put up three candidates each, in cooperation with each other, against the candidates put up by the Trades Council, who were not Socialists."

(Contributions to a discussion organised in May 1956 by the Historians' Group of the Communist Party, attended by several members of the SDF/BSP)

### Syndicalism and Industrial Unionism

General opinion in the S.D.P./B.S.P. was against this new movement. (Tom Mann left the Party in 1911, but Ben Tillett, a member of the E.C. of the Party in this period, continued to work closely with Tom Mann in the Transport Workers' Federation.)

1. In May 1912 the monthly 'British Socialist' published an article by Gaylord Wilshire in favour of Syndicalism. (An editorial comment on this referred to Syndicalism as "This latest phase of Anarchist anti-Socialism") The following month the same journal published a reply by Fred Knee, member of the Party and leading member of the London Trades Council:

"I have three objections to Syndicalism: (1) it is impossible of achievement; (2) it would not be worth having; and (3) it is not revolutionary, but reactionary."

"You cannot get very far by mere 'industrial action'. So long as the Capitalist state remains, with its army, navy and police, and its hand on the machine of administration, so long will it be possible for that capitalist State, when thoroughly awake to any danger, to throttle any strike, however big, and to render it abortive...."

"Of prospect of getting rid of capitalists and landlords by this method there is none. Syndicalism is a cul de sac, a stereotyping of existing conditions, producing a state of 'arrested development', and it also offers a fearful temptation to make corrupt arrangements with the employers as against the community...."

"All the twaddle about Syndicalism having no respect for property must mean, if it means anything at all, mere sabotage and destruction. I think it is foolish to destroy what may easily be our own. At any rate, Syndicalism proposes to perpetuate for many generations private property in land and capital, and for that reason I reject it... We Socialists are out to secure the supremacy of the working class, to place that class as a whole in possession of the means of life, and so to obliterate all class distinctions."

('British Socialist', June 1912)

2. The difference of opinion between leading marxists and Syndicalists is neatly summed up in two remarks made at public meetings in this period:

Harry Quelch, in Hyde Park: "... Syndicalism, Industrial Unionism, Direct Action, and all that sort of nonsense....."

Tom Mann, as a guest speaker at a B.S.P. meeting; "You get on with your politics, and we'll get on with the real work."

(information from Frank Tanner, member of S.D.P. from 1908)

### The 'Great Unrest'

The great wave of militancy in the period 1910-14 had a very big influence on the Party. The best evidence for this is the large amount of space given in 'Justice' to reports from localities of strikes and Trade Union recruiting. The role of members of the S.D.P./B.S.P. in this great industrial movement has been grossly underestimated in the history books. Only a few brief extracts can be given below:

#### 1. The Cambrian miners' strike, 1910-11:

During the year that this strike lasted, 'Justice' appealed for funds and also urged national action by other coalfields. When at last the strikers were defeated, one of them wrote to 'Justice':

"We are extremely obliged and deeply grateful to our comrades of the S.D.P. for their efforts and kindnesses on our behalf, not only in contributions to our Strike Fund but also for their warm sympathy and assistance and advice to our delegates when from home either soliciting funds or advocating national action for a minimum wage for miners. Noah Rees."  
( 'Justice', Aug. 26th, 1911)

#### 2. The Seamen's Strike, June 1911;

'Justice' gave very full reports from Southampton and South Shields, where the S.D.P. branches were actively supporting the seamen. The situation in other ports was reported more impersonally, but still adequately.

a) Southampton: "Our Southampton comrades have taken advantage of the present unrest at the docks, described elsewhere, to hold dinner-hour and evening meetings. Among those who have taken a most active part in these meetings is, naturally, T. Lewis. His position as Socialist member of the Town Council renders his services particularly valuable in a period of agitation such as is now prevailing in Southampton." ('Justice' June 17th)

"War was declared by the seamen and firemen at a mass meeting on Kingsland Square on Tuesday the 13th, at which T. Lewis presided; and by that meeting it seemed that the men really meant business, as events have turned out."  
( 'Justice' June 24th)

"It would seem that at last our 20 years of incessant propaganda in this port is beginning to take effect. The amount of Socialistic feeling displayed in Southampton during the past fortnight has been surprisingly great. The solidarity of the strikers has been magnificent, their conscious class feeling has been most marked... Needless to say, the local S.D.P. has not been idle. Our own propaganda meetings have been large and successful, and our members have been well to the fore in aiding the strikers. Harry Quelch... addressed with great effect an audience of the strikers numbering nearly 3,000 men. Our comrade Cllr. Lewis, who is chairman of the local branch of the Seamen's Union, has acted as strike leader during the past fortnight with conspicuous success, whilst our comrades J. Palmer and W.T. Kemvard and R. Taplin have rendered useful services as speakers."  
( 'Justice' July 1st)

A. Cannon, District Secretary of the Seamen's Union, in an interview with Ralph Morley of the Southampton S.D.P., replied to the question "To what do you attribute the success of the strike in Southampton?":

"To the splendid enthusiasm and solidarity of the men, and the capital leadership of Cllr. Lewis. I cannot", said Mr. Cannon, speaking with great emphasis, 'speak too highly of the work done by Lewis. His energy, his zeal and his tact have been invaluable assets to us throughout the whole of the conflict." ('Justice', July 1st)

The report of the seamen's victory at Southampton is sent in by A. Cannon, who adds!

"The members also ask me to convey to you their heartiest thanks for the splendid reports of the seamen's movement given in 'Justice' during the past few weeks." ('Justice', July 8th)

b) South Shields: "On Sunday June 11th, the South Shields branch S.D.P. ran a mooting off the same platform that had been used by an official of the Seamen's Union - in fact the Seamen's Union and the S.D.P. hired a waggonette between them - our speaker, G.W. Lacey of Newcastle-on-Tyne, following the Seamen's Union official. . . ."

When the proposal to strike for a wage increase was made to "one of the largest crowds over assembled in Shields Market Place",

"The acclamations and forest of hands that went up in support of this resolution would have aroused the most phlegmatic amongst us, and the attention and reception given to our comrade Lacey as he expounded the doctrine of Socialism to these seamen shows clearly that again we have an opportunity for propaganda which must be seized with both hands." ('Justice' June 24th)

J.C. Little reports a meeting addressed by Mr. Cathery, local secretary of the Seamen's Union, and himself!

"Despite the rain which had fallen incessantly during the day a huge crowd had gathered in the Market Place. Mr. Cathery, in opening, paid a fine tribute to the Shields branch (S.D.P.) for the assistance they had rendered the Seamen's Union during the present dispute, and I felt quite proud of our fellows. . . . Then it was my turn. What a huge cosmopolitan crowd - Blacks, Yellowmen, Mulattos, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, Creoles - every nation under the sun was represented here, and they listened for over an hour to what was being said." ('Justice', July 1st)

A mooting of 4?000 was held by the Seamen's Union, with "Councillor Dunlop of the S.D.P." in the chair:

"Cllr. Dunlop earnestly pointed the need for no surrender, and a successful issue for the sailors and dockers in this present crisis, ably showing that the ultimate lesson of all industrial misery and unrest was the need for a class-conscious Social-Democratic Party." (After the Union leader had spoken) "Great enthusiasm was manifested, large collections were taken for the strike, and a second one for the S.D.P. Many 'Justices' were sold by Cllr. Dunlop to close an especially fine meeting." ('Justice' July 15th)

The London Dock Strike, August 1911:

This was fully supported by 'Justice'.

a) The E.C. of the Party passed a resolution after the victory, congratulating the transport workers on "the magnificent spirit of solidarity they have all displayed" and praising "the splendid generalship,

democratic spirit, vigour and ability of our comrade Ben Tillett, a member of this Executive Council, and the able support and cooperation he received from other members of our Party who have been actively engaged in conducting the campaign." ('Justice', Aug. 19th)

b) Ben Tillett wrote in 'Justice':

"One of the most remarkable features about this dispute is the part played by the Socialists in general, and the S.D.P. in particular. The more revolutionary, the more effective the propaganda. It would be almost invidious to mention names. I am very proud to associate myself with my S.D.P. comrades in this big fight... We thank our comrades for their encouraging assistance..." ('Justice', Aug. 19th)

The Liverpool Transport Strike and the Railway Strike, of August 1911 were fully reported, but no claim was made that the S.D.P. played any special part in these. (But see foot of p. 21) Strong protests were made by the E.C. of the Party against the use of troops against the strikers, and especially against the shootings in Liverpool and Llanelly.

Recruiting of unorganised workers went on at the height of the strikes.

a) "Arising out of the strike movement in the metropolis, two new Unions have been formed - one for market porters, cold storage men and the provision trades, another for window-cleaners.

"In connection with the first, our comrade Cllr. C. Taylor (Shoreditch) has been appointed organiser, and in less than two days he has enrolled between two and three hundred members.

"The employees of the International Window Cleaning Company - over 400 men - came out on strike on Saturday. A mass meeting was held at mid-day at Fox's Court, Holborn, addressed by Fred Knee (Asst. Sec of the London Trades Council) and others. By Monday morning ten other firms had been struck, and in the afternoon a Union was successfully launched of which our comrade Rose is the Secretary. Meetings are being held daily on Clerk-on-wcll Green, and this very low-paid grade of worker eagerly listens to the gospel of revolt." ('Justice', Aug. 19th)

b) In Poplar, the Gasworkers' & General Labourers' Union was recruiting:

"Right across the main street, blocking all traffic for two hours, the mass of men and girls stood solidly in the broiling sunshine. Cdes. Sumner, Palmer and Geeson of the I.L.P. and E. Cruse and A.A. Watts of the S.D.P. rubbed in the Socialist moral. Hundreds of the workers, men and lads, women and girls, are being horribly sweated in the local industries. They are now eager in their revolt. It is another instance of our past work, seemingly hopeless, bearing fruit...." ('Justice' Aug. 19th)

Comments on the general implications of this strike movement are varied:

1. Hyndman: (in an appeal in 'Justice' for Party funds)

"Never was the persistent teaching of Socialism more indispensable than it is today. Even the bitter strikes which have of late alarmed the dominant classes have not secured the workers permanent advantage in comparison with the sacrifices made and risks run.

"The same energy and determination, if steadily applied in achieving Socialism, would bring about the great Cooperative Commonwealth within the lifetime of the young men now discontented...." ('Justice' Aug. 26th)

2. Quelch: (In an unsigned editorial in 'Justice': 'Socialism and Strikes'

"We Social-Democrats stand by the workers in any conflict in which they may be engaged. We do not advocate strikes, although we support them; but we must never cease to insist upon the truth that, whatever they may gain by a strike, the emancipation of the working class will never be achieved save by the conquest by that class of political power."

('Justice' Aug. 12th, 1911)

3. H.W. Lee, Secretary of the Party: (referring to the seamen's strike)

"It is to be regretted that our members do not everywhere keep in touch with the actual proletarian life of their localities as is done in Southampton, Newcastle and other places. Practical work and sympathy are worth a ton of mere theoretical exposition of an alleged Marxism which is more Marxist than Marx; for the spread of Socialist principles and the making of members."

('Justice' June 17th, 1911)

4. Geo. C. Swanson (In a leading article on the strikes)

"It is gratifying to us to note that so many of our men of the Social-Democratic Party have taken such a prominent part in the various strike movements. We hope to continue to supply men and women in the forefront of the battles of Labour, doing credit to themselves and to our cause, working for the emancipation of mankind."

('Justice', Aug. 26th, 1911)

5. G.A. Newman of Southport, in a long letter covering the whole of the front page of 'Justice'! "The Revolt of the Railway Slaves":

(This letter is quoted more fully because it scorns to capture the spirit of the rank and file socialists who took part in the great industrial struggles of 1911)

He first describes the worsening conditions on the railways. News comes of the strikes in Liverpool and Manchester. Then a telegram arrives calling for a railway strike:

"The word passed round: 'Meeting on the shore at midnight'.

"A dark cloudy night, a few scattered gaslamps throwing a faint light on the ribbed sea-sand, and behind us the murmur of the eternal sea, moaning and sobbing as if lamenting over the long-drawn tragedy of the workers' lives.

"For some minutes, which seemed hours, very few turned up, but at last, with a howl of scorn and derision at a Union driver who had decided to stand 'loyal' and desert his mates, the late shift came down in masses, accompanied by many day-shift men, who had left their beds and made their way as if by instinct to the Socialist pitch."

Then comes a description of the meeting, the decision to strike, and the remarkable unity of all grades of railway-worker:

"Old, case-hardened Liberals and Lib-Labs, wringing Socialist hands and exclaiming: 'Lad, I have called thee fool and liar in the past, but you are in the right, and I am with your lot for the future.'"

Then comes an account of the organising of the strike, and its calling off by the Union leaders in favour of arbitration. He concludes with an appeal to his fellow-members of the S.D.P.:

"Now, comrades, including you, armchair cynics, and you also, the wobblers.....Has nothing boon achieved for the Cause during these stirring days? Has the struggle been entirely futile?....."

"Take up your Branch Directory, and then look at the Press telegrams, Notice where the strike has failed and where succeeded, and you will see if our work in the past has been an utter failure....."

"Let me tell what, in my opinion, has been gained: The class consciousness of the railway slave, his feelings of solidarity and sympathy, have advanced a big stage forward. Can you deny it? He has learnt his power to bring the profits of the capitalist class to a stand-still and the capitalist to his knees. He has learnt to despise and distrust the Liberal Party and its leaders. He has learnt to hate and disbelieve the capitalist Press. Can you deny this also?.....

"Your task, my brothers, is to make the workers class-conscious of their position, to show them, without bitter sarcasm or insults, the only path by which they can secure their emancipation; to point out inside the Unions and outside, that all arbitration, Conciliation Boards and agreements of any description are futile and useless in the presence of that great central fact of capitalist society, the class war.

"To the transport workers has, I believe, been allotted a great and important part in the approaching consummation of that struggle. We inside the Transport Workers' Union are organising and preparing for that struggle. As men struggling from darkness to light, we need the sympathy and help of all our fellow-Socialists, and as comrades we have a right to demand it.

-Yours in the class struggle: G.A. Newman"  
(*'Justice'*, Sept. 9th, 1911)

\* \* \* \*

This section on Trade Unionism and Strikes can well conclude with some extracts from a long article on 'The Strike and Political Action', by E.C. Fairchild, London organiser of the B.S.P., written after the Miners' national strike of March 1912:

(The negotiations, and then the strike) "provoke the discussion by Socialists of the use of the strike, its effect upon general opinion, its value as a means of uniting the working class, and that larger question, the utility of industrial organisation....."

He warns against confusing industrial action with revolutionary action:

"The bubble of incoherent discontent must not be mistaken for well-defined opinion alive to the need for revolutionary change. To throw down one's tools is not the necessary precedent to the idea that the tools should be owned in common. On the other hand, without the opposition to the master class implied by a strike movement there can be no foothold for Socialism, no state of working-class opinion that the Socialist can guide towards the ending of the capitalist system. Let us see things in right proportion and at all cost state only what can be seen. Do not confound the claim for sixpence or a shilling a day with an intention to exercise the constructive powers of the strike in the rebuilding of society....."

He asks: "When and how can direct action by the unarmed, undisciplined, propertyless workman lead to the formation of common opinion so that armed force, the law, and the rights of property are thrown down?", and warns against localised strikes that merely weaken the movement for common ownership.

He then discusses the special feature of strikes in the whole period before 1914, (a feature that is perhaps at the back of Hyndman's attitude towards strikes) - the intense poverty of great sections of the working class:

"It is possible for the workers to be so poor that their natural instinct to help to raise the wages of all workers cannot operate. With

every increase in the price of coal the condemnation of the miners by the low-wage worker increases also. The fact is not explained away by referring to the manufactured ignorance of the ill-paid, or the poison supplied in daily doses by a corrupt press. The fact is there, and account must be taken of it by the Socialist tacticians. The longer a strike lasts the greater the disintegration it must cause in the ranks of the workers unless there is public control of the food supply...With food and shelter supplied by the municipality for the maintenance of national stamina, the utility of strikes, and their value as aids to the development of Socialist opinion, would undergo an entire change...." (But) "Owing to the structure of our economic system and its premium on plunder, he (the striker) is party to causing untold suffering to those who can never share his gains, if gain there be."

He points to the tactical difficulties of organising a strike, and especially to the new feature of Government intervention with troops:

"the resources of the capitalist State in every country are now so manipulated that once begun the strike shall be protracted. Those who declare for the general strike, or for a succession of experimental strikes, take too small an account of the governmental power to come to the aid of property and persons affected by the dispute. The use of soldiers in the conflict of Labour and Capital is now more common than their use in the conflict of nations...."

The main value of industrial organisation is "intellectual, not economic":

"By association, the concept of solidarity comes to be held, and the way is prepared for the realisation of the workers' subjection to capital. On that condition of mind the Socialist operates, and gradually awakens a perception of the dependence of economic privilege upon the possession of political power."

He poses the question! "Shall the work of the industrial organisations be left entirely to their members, or shall the British Socialist Party advise the course to be taken in any particular dispute?", and urges the Party not to interfere in Union matters:

"The man or body that urges a strike incurs a responsibility that no political party can carry. Under the most favourable circumstances the advice if adopted depletes the funds of the society that engages in war; if the strike is continued the political party that advised its commencement is bound to provide funds for the mitigation of the misery borne by the dependants of the strikers and the non-combatants in the strike area; if the strike results in the closing down of works dependent upon certain supplies, the political party that calls on miners to strike must explain its action to the mill-hands of Lancashire... A political party that placed itself in the necessity of so pacifying its potential supporters would be torn limb from limb."

The purpose of Socialists is to animate the Trade Unions with the spirit of Socialism. This is possible

"when Socialists go into them, accepting the responsibilities of the industrial side of our necessary organisation, directing them as unionists, not as members of the British Socialist Party, studying when they can strike or act effectively, and doing so as workmen, not at the suggestion or bidding of a body that is propagandist and political. That is the only policy that will secure a good understanding between ourselves and the industrial organisations of wage-earners." ('Justice' March 9th, 1912)

Party Organisation - Democracy or Centralism, or both?

There was nothing unusual about the form of organisation of the S.D.F. or B.S.P., which was very similar to that of the I.L.P. There was, of course no theory of 'Democratic Centralism' - Lenin's writings being quite unknown. As in most organisations of the Labour movement, there was some democracy and some centralism. The problem or dilemma, then - when it bothered the members at all - was seen as one of balance between the two. Rather naturally, it was the elected leaders who pointed to the advantages of a central-  
-iscd authority for a party which hoped to have national influence; just as naturally, it was the rank and file members who put most stress on democracy.

As compared with the later Communist Party, the S.D.F./B.S.P. seems to have laid rather more emphasis on democracy, rather less on centralism. The rules seem to have restricted the E.C. to carrying out decisions of the annual conference of the Party, though in practice they often took decisions themselves during the year. Annual Conferences were the scene of many a controversial discussion - sometimes very heated. 'Justice' always gave space for correspondence, and there seems to have been no ban on raising controversial subjects publicly here - though the editor kept a firm hand on policy.

All the evidence shows that differences of opinion were tolerated, and even expected, within the Party. It is equally clear that after votes taken at Annual Conference, the minority was expected to remain inside the Party and abide by the decision - though apparently with the possibility of dis-  
-cussing the matter openly during the year and raising it again next time. This feature was not only due to the predominance of 'democracy' over 'centralism'; it was also due to theoretical immaturity, resulting in political problems appearing as dilemmas in which some members could advocate one course and some members another course.

The criticism often made nowadays of the Party of this period - that it was too decentralised, and did not function as a national organisation - cannot be clearly disproved in this pamphlet, for lack of space to show the Party at work. But it is the opinion of this writer, based on much browsing through the Party journal, that branches and individual members in fact took part in national campaigns organised centrally, and at other times used their initiative within certain accepted broad principles common to the whole party (e.g. in local government affairs). In this, the S.D.F./B.S.P. can scarcely be distinguished from the I.L.P. 'Directives' arrived from the E.C. in the form of correspondence to branches; whether they were ever regarded as binding is a moot point - perhaps an unpopular directive was quietly ignored, as in any other organisation?

The Rules of the S.D.F.

These are to be found with the Report of the Annual Conference of 1900. With some amendments, the form of organisation remained basically unchanged throughout the periods

a) Branch management

"Branches shall elect their own officers, and draw up such rules as they deem proper for their own management, provided that they are in accord with the principles of the Federation...." (Rule 5)



"Where several branches exist in the same town or district, they may form themselves into Local Central Committees, consisting of delegates from the various branches, for local business...." (Rule 6)

(N.B. In 1912 various "District Councils" were formed by groups of local branches - e.g. for London, Scotland, Liverpool)

b) Annual Conference

"Every branch shall be entitled to send to the Annual Conference one delegate" (with provision for additional delegates from larger branches). "Only delegates shall be entitled to vote, and no discussion shall be allowed on any matter upon which the branches had had an opportunity of instructing their delegates....." (Rule 8)

"The Annual Conference shall decide the general policy for the ensuing year, and make rules and regulations for carrying out the objects of the S.D.F. All resolutions affecting the management of the organisation, which have been round to the branches and passed by the General Council, shall be placed on the agenda for the succeeding Conference to be reaffirmed or rejected...." (Rule 8)

c) Pre-Conference discussion

"Notice of intended amendments to the Programme, Rules and General Policy must be sent to the General Secretary at least two months before the Annual Conference, such amendments to be sent round to the branches. If thought necessary, the branches may then send amendments to those at first sent round at least one month previous to the Conference. The first list of amendments, together with the amendments thereto, shall then be sent to the branches at least fourteen days before the Annual Conference." (Rule 12)

d) The General Council (a delegate body)

"The General Council shall constitute the central body, and shall be composed exclusively of delegates appointed by the branches of the Federation... A branch shall have power to recall its delegate at any time by appointing another delegate...The delegates shall vote as empowered by the branches on all questions specified by the Agenda Paper....Questions not on the Agenda Paper may be discussed and voted upon if urgency be voted by a three-fourths majority, but shall be sent round to the branches for confirmation or rejection." (Rule 14)

"The Secretary shall, as soon as possible after each meeting of the General Council, draw up and send round to all the branches a statement of the resolutions passed at such meeting, and an Agenda Paper of the business of the following meeting...." (Rule 14)

e) The Executive Council (nominated from branches, elected at Annual Conference)

"...shall be held responsible to and report to each meeting of the General Council"....."shall be composed of twenty-four members, twelve of whom shall be provincial members." (Rule 15)

(Amended in 1904 to twelve members, of whom "The six London members shall be a sub-Executive and shall meet fortnightly in London.")

"The Executive Council shall in no way go against the Constitution and General policy of the S.D.F. as laid down by the Annual Conference. The Executive Council shall attend to the carrying out of all resolutions and decisions passed by the General Council." (Rule 15)

f) Paid officials and Committees

"The officers of the General Council shall be appointed by the General Council and shall consist of the following:

General Secretary; Assistant Secretary; Political Secretary; Treasurer; Auditors; Lecture Secretary.

"At the expiration of the term of office of all paid officials, the branches shall be asked for nominations for the post." (Rule 14)

"The Executive Council shall appoint and define the duties and powers of the following committees: Finance, Literary, Parliamentary, and International. All Committees shall present a report of their work during their term of office to the Annual Conference. Members of these committees need not be members of the Executive Council..." (Rule 18)

g) Tests for speakers and candidates

"A Board of Examination shall...examine and question candidates for the central lecture list on the principles of Social-Democracy" (Rule 22)

"All members of the S.D.F., before being run as parliamentary candidates, shall be required to pass an examination in Socialist economics." (Rule 24)

h) Control over members elected to public bodies

("Before a member of the S.D.F. is nominated for election to any legislative or administrative body, he or she shall sign a declaration of willingness to remain under the guidance of his or her branch, and to withdraw from such body should not less than two-thirds of the branch decide upon it... Before being nominated, every member must place in the hands of the General Secretary a Letter resigning any public position to which he or she might be elected, such letter of resignation to be undated and to be addressed to the Chairman or other official of the public body... Such resignation shall not be enforced until 21 days after the special branch meeting has been held in order to give the member whose conduct is impugned time to appeal to the General Council". (Rule 26)

(Under special rules annexed to the general rules, members were forbidden to participate in local elections without permission of their branch, or in Parliamentary elections without consent of the E.C. Every candidate must stand as "a definitely avowed Social-Democrat".

i) Power of expulsion

"The General Council has power to dissolve any branch or expel any member of the Federation, provided that not less than two-thirds of the General Council, acting on instructions from the branches they represent, deem the action of such branch or member to be opposed to the interests and principles of the Federation." (Rule 25) (Power of expulsion or suspension was specifically given to the General Council in case of candidates who had infringed the special regulations relating to elections.

j) Ballot vote

"The Executive Council may take a poll of the organisation at any time or at the request of not less than six branches....The result of such poll shall have the same effect as a resolution of the Annual Conference"(Rule 16)

(N.B. the important decision to re-affiliate to the Labour Party was taken by poll vote in May 1914)

Controversial discussion at Annual Conference

The main controversy which continually cropped up at Conference was the dilemma posed by the Labour Party - to affiliate or not to affiliate.

Apart from this, and also the dilemma of whether to vote Liberal or Tory or neither, there were some heated arguments at Conference at the beginning of the century over the activities of certain members who had developed a theory of out-and-out class struggle (labelled 'Impossibilism') and rejected the S.D.F. programme of 'palliatives' (social reforms) to be fought for under capitalism. Discussion at Conference centred around their activities, not the difference in theory. The members were appealing against their expulsion by the E.C. In the case of Percy Friedberg, who had published a letter critical of George Lansbury, a fellow-member, in the 'New York People' (after refusal by Quelch to publish it in 'Justice'); the seconder of a resolution asking for Friedberg's reinstatement in the Party said;

"The charges brought by Friedberg in the 'People' are true. It seems to me that Friedberg has been expelled because he is a prominent man representing that portion of the Social-Democracy who are in favour of fighting on straightforward revolutionary lines. If the E.C. is to expel a man like Friedberg for an honest criticism, what about a man like Lansbury who tells us to ally ourselves with the capitalist Liberal Party?.... If the policy Friedberg laid down is an impossible one, we had better get rid of the theory that we are based on the class war. Better get rid of the class war theory than retain it as a phrase to mouth out now that it has ceased to be a principle to guide us."

J. Hunter Watts (for the E.C.): "Friedberg has been expelled for the part he has taken in a campaign of malign and slanderous misrepresentation carried on against the E.C. Personally the E.C. might be indifferent, but when it is said that the men whom the S.D.F. elect to carry on its business for twelve months are trimmers, time-servers, or liars, it is the S.D.F. which is attacked."

"As to Friedberg's complaint that Quelch would not allow his letter to appear in 'Justice', that paper does not exist in order that the S.D.F. may be insulted and assailed. 'The People' to which he sent the letter is a paper which for months before had been slandering and abusing the S.D.F." (Watts then read the letter to the Conference) "It is because of this, and not on any question of revolutionary tactics v. revisionism that Friedberg has been expelled...."

Quelch spoke next; then "the discussion was continued at great length" (but is not reported). "Eventually the reinstatement was refused by 55 to 9." Then the Finsbury Park branch, which had supported its member Friedberg, appealed against their dissolution by the E.C. "This again, produced a warm discussion, but was also rejected by a large majority - 40 to 11".

The section of the E.C. Report dealing with this episode (presented after the discussion had taken place) says!

"It is in the power of the organisation to alter its policy whenever a majority of members think fit to do so. The discussion of that policy can be carried on in a friendly and fraternal manner by those who genuinely hold differences of opinion as to what should be our tactics in the field of politics."

"We may honestly believe that the tactics which have become known as 'impossibilist' are calculated to lessen our influence in every direction,

to diminish the number of our members, and to reduce us to a state of political impotence; while on the other hand there are those who may honestly hold that the adoption of the 'impossibilist' tactics is the only safeguard for the political purity of the S.D.F. Those divergences of views, we say, can be threshed out in a perfectly comrade-like manner.

"What we have set our faces against is the association with belief in 'impossibilist' tactics of sneers, jibes, insinuations, and malevolent aspersions which, though they undoubtedly recoil upon those who make use of them, nevertheless injure our organisation and cause many to slacken their work for the movement in disgust at what they see going on...."

(Report of Annual Conference 1903)

#### Factionalism and Party Discipline

The Secretary's Report to the Annual Conference of 1904 contained the following:

"A considerable portion of the time of the Executive Council has unfortunately been taken up with matters arising out of the decision of the last Conference with regard to 'impossibilism'. The reference to 'impossibilism' here is meant to allude not merely to what many may feel to be an impossible political attitude, but that form of it which is closely allied with vehement abuse and vilification of the S.D.F. and those particularly and prominently associated with it.

"The last Conference gave plenary powers to the Executive Council to deal with the form of political disease which was hampering the work of the S.D.F. in every quarter where it manifested itself; and, in accordance with those plenary powers, certain branches were dissolved and certain members were expelled. The decision of the Conference was keenly resented by a minority who saw no difference between the knife of the surgeon used to relieve a patient of a cancerous growth, and the knife of the murderer used to relieve a healthy body of its existence, and eventually? on the demand of the necessary minimum number of six branches, a poll of the organisation was taken on the decision of the Conference. The result of the poll was the upholding of that decision by an overwhelming majority.

"But the mischief still exists. There is still a small minority in the S.D.F. who, though careful to avoid a distinct course of conduct which would bring them under the resolution of the last Conference, are nevertheless pursuing tactics which can only result in a general weakening and paralysis of the body in its Socialist work. Apparently convinced that in an impossible state of political perfection alone lies the salvation of the working class, they negatively criticise and generally pull to pieces everything said or done by anyone else. And some of them do not always stop there. Enough correspondence on this matter has been inflicted upon the branches to convince all unprejudiced minds that a good deal of insinuation and imputation of bad motives, based upon most misleading and inaccurate statements, lies behind some of the 'clear cut' and 'straight' propaganda going on inside the organisation.

"The growth of this kind of thing forced the full meeting of the Executive Council held on October 25th to decide that, with regard to the Central West Ham branch, if that branch continued to send out misleading statements to the branches, it would be dissolved in the interest of the organisation. No more such letters have since been sent out."

A member of the Central West Ham branch then criticised this section of the Report as "mere assumption and assertion, and contained insinuations and vilifications against members who were quite as good as others."

After discussion, in which ten delegates spoke, Herbert Burrows moved a resolution which was passed by 58 to 10 (and then, on a division, by 56 to 6, with 11 abstentions):

"That this Annual Conference of the S.D.F. most strongly, emphatically and unequivocally condemns the conduct of those members who have carried on a campaign of calumny and intrigue against the Executive Council, and therefore against the whole organisation by which it was elected, and believing that such actions are thoroughly injurious to the S.D.F. and to the propaganda of Social-Democracy, hereby calls upon those members at once to apologise to the Conference and to pledge themselves without any reservations whatever to cease such conduct in the future."

The six delegates who voted against this were then called on to make their explanations, after which two were expelled (by 58 to 8, with 8 abstentions). By a resolution passed by 54 to 5, the Executive Council was given plenary powers to expel without appeal "any member, members or branches who in the slightest degree countenance or support any such conduct as the Conference by its votes has emphatically condemned."

(Report of Annual Conference 1904)

(These plenary powers were withdrawn the following year, by 36 to 33 votes, the internal dissension having been settled by the resignation of a number of supporters of 'Impossibilism')

#### Some opinions on Party discipline

a) E. Belfort Bax, criticising those who left the Party after the defeat of the famous 'Hackney Resolution' (against Hyndman's anti-German armament policy) at the Annual Conference of 1911:

"Is it then necessary, because we think that our comrade Hyndman and others, even were they for the moment in the majority, err on this one question of national defence - is it necessary, I ask, to break up the Party? Is it not far better to remain in the party and fight out our differences there?" ('Justice', July 22nd, 1911)

(By the time Bax wrote, the Conference decision had just been reversed by a ballot vote of the membership.)

b) letter from J. Watson on 'Party Discipline':

"....I would like to point out the evil of too much discipline. It is all very well for some people to say we must have discipline, and by that to mean the Party to follow their lead. I think we have seen what this Party discipline moans in the I.L.P., and rather than have such discipline I prefer a Party of free-lances.

"Let us by all means have a programme and a policy - one that is so worded that no amount of word-juggling can twist its meaning - but for the love of heaven, let us retain our individuality...."

"Look at the controversy that went on in 'Justice' on voting Tory! The British Socialist Party at the next election may advise us to remain neutral, and as a consequence cease to take part in politics just when we ought to be in the thick of it, or it may - though heaven forbid - advise us to vote Liberal. Under these circumstances - and I merely

mention these as examples - what would my position be if I rebelled and tried my best to get others in my branch to rebel? Would you cry out we must have Party discipline or clear out?

"If we are agreed on our policy there is no need to talk of discipline. . . . But so long as we have persons inside the Party who differ on policy, so long shall we have failed in unity." ('Justice', Jan. 5th, 1912)

c) William Hudson answers this letter!

"If the Party is not going to follow the Party's lead, whose lead are they going to follow? Is not the Annual Conference the Party's lead? In my opinion the Party has no other lead. There will always be differences of opinion as regards the policy of the Party. But what does that matter so long as we are all Socialists?

"Cde. Watson seems to view the British Socialist Party as he views the Liberal and Tory parties - that is, that the Executive controls the Party instead of the Party controlling- the Executive. We of the British Socialist Party, as individuals, are democrats, and therefore the Party, as a Party, must be a democratic Party." ('Justice' Jan. 13th, 1912)

d) Tom Kennedy, national organiser of the Party, in an article in 'Justice':

"...By 'discipline' I mean a cultivation of the spirit of solidarity and Party loyalty...."

"A branch of the B.S.P. is not an autonomous independent body. It is part of a national organisation. ...Within certain limits of course, a branch has, and must have, freedom of action. But the exercise of that freedom must never be allowed to interfere with the movement or policy of the main body - the National Party. Members must never lose sight of their connection with the Party, however much they may value their local associations and personal relations...\*."

"We do not elect a National Executive Committee in order to provide a target for 'rebel' sharpshooters and disgruntled critics. Nor do we appoint officials, expecting them to do the work that can only be done by the cooperative action of the Party as a whole. National Committees and officers are not self-elected. They are appointed to carry out the instructions of the Party, and to look after the general line of national organisation, as distinct from local organisation. They represent the national Party, and while I am quite ready to admit that individually and collectively the responsible committees and officers of the B.S.P. are not infallible, I do assert that they are entitled to, if they do not always get, the goodwill and support and cooperation of the people who elect them." ('Justice' June 25th' 1914)

#### Freedom of discussion in the Party Press

Editorial note at head of Correspondence section in 'Justice' which varied from half a column to two columns:

"Correspondents are requested to be brief. It is impossible to insert a tithe of the letters we receive, and long letters, unless of special importance, are less likely to receive attention. As we, so far as possible, allow every side to be presented, we cannot be held in any way responsible for the views of correspondents."

(The best evidence for the freedom of discussion in 'Justice' is, of course, the fact that it is in the pages of 'Justice' that historians can now find the arguments that were used in the controversies of the time.)

Some comments on the pamphlet 'The Struggle for Educational Opportunity'

1) A reader makes the following points:

a) Ho suggests the story really begins with the London Corresponding Society? since "the claim for education can be found there in association with the conception of independent working-class politics." He quotes from 'The Voice of Truth against the Corruption in Church and State' (1794):

"Instruction is the want of all. The Society ought to favour with all its powers the progress of public reason, and to place instruction within the reach of every citizen."

b) He emphasises "the importance, in terms of public policy", of the struggle for workers' control of the Mechanics' Institutes, quoting the Reformer, Major Cartwright, in a letter to Birkbeck in 1823 about the projected London Mechanics Institute:

"Although I shall esteem it an honour to be a member, yet as not being an operative mechanic, I shall not think myself entitled to have any voice in the framing of its laws or any claim to partake in its management, which, agreeing with those who have given like opinions, I am convinced must remain exclusively in the hands of the operatives alone, for ensuring prosperity to the institution or good to the public."

c) "Possibly the Universities are more central to the educational system than the brochure might seem to indicate. It is their influence which shapes the curriculum of higher education, and they are the great source of teaching supply. The question of the place of the university in society and the place of the working class in relation to the university are important. There is an extraordinary contrast in the later nineteenth century between the idea of the gates of the university being opened by free competition and the strong feeling of working-class frustration. It is a situation which might be repeated, if the technological requirements of a managerial society are allowed to dominate the universities."

2) Another reader puts in a claim for Glasgow University for its promotion of scientific research (see page 2) and for Dr. John Anderson (1729-96), founder of the Andersonian evening institute, who admitted artisans to his University lectures in Glasgow, and openly supported the French Revolution.

Ho points out too that Literary and Philosophical Societies were found in the South also (see page 2); "The oldest of these societies was the Spitalfields Mathematical Society, founded in 1717, which is especially noteworthy for the support which it received from hand-loom silk-weavers."

He quotes the "Mechanics' Magazine" of Nov. 15th, 1823, for a reference to "a School of Naturalists in the humble walks of life at Norwich in the last century, to whom the study of Natural History was considerably indebted. Some of them were weavers, or journeymen in other branches of trade, and were not less remarkable for their general good conduct, than for their zeal for the acquirement and promotion of knowledge."

This pamphlet is the fourth quarterly number of "Our History" published by the Historians' Group of the Communist Party. The next number will deal with 'Labour-Communist relations' in the period 1920-39 (source material).

Please note that the subscription is now 4/- p. a. (post-free). Single copies can still be obtained at 1/- each. Orders for six or more copies can be supplied at 8d. each.

Subs. and enquiries to: Mrs. Betty Grant, 78 Twyford Avenue, London W.3.

--- OUR HISTORY ---

Produced by the History Group of the Communist Party,  
this series of pamphlets contains work of a consistently  
high standard covering a wide range of historical topics.

Pamphlet No.	TITLE	AUTHOR	DATE
1	The Class Struggle In Local Affairs.		1956
2	Luddism 1779 -1830		
3	The Struggle For Educational Opportunity		
4	Some Dilemmas For Marxists 1900 - 1914		
5	Labour - Communist Relations 1920 - 1939		1957
6	The Tradition of Civil Liberties in Britain		
7	Enclosure and Population Change		
8	Land Nationalisation in Britain		
9	Cromwell in the English Revolution (Tercentenary)		1958
10	Social conditions in the Early 19th Century		
11	Town Privileges and Politics in Tudor and Stuart England		
12	The Working Week		
13	The Historical Novel. Jack Lindsay & Diana	St. John	1959
14	Africa in World History		
15	Party Politics in the 19th Century - " Namierism "		
16	Johh Burns' Library. Yvonne Kapp		
17	Chartist Literature. Y.V. Kovalev		1960
18	Sheffield Shop Stewards 1916 - 1918	Bill Moore	
19	An S.D.F. Branch 1903-1906. Andrew Roththstein		
20	The Common People 1688-1800.		
21	Diary of Ernest Jones 1839 - 47. (Chartism)		1961
22	The General Strike In The North - East. R.P. Arnot et al.		
23	Pages From a Worker's Life 1916 - 26. Bob Davies		
24	The Lancashire Cotton Famine 1861 - 65.		
25	Thomas Bewick 1753-1828; Artist, Naturalist, Radical		1962
26/27	Tom Mann 1890-92. Dona Torr and E.P. Thompson		
28	The Lesser Fabians. E.J. Hobsbawm		
29	Transition From Feudalism to Capitalism. Maurice Dobb		1963
30	Songs of the Labour Movement. John Millar		
31	Chartism and The Trade Unions.		
32	The World Of Homer. R.F. Willetts		
33	Shakespeare's Idea of History. A.L. Morton		1964
34	Houses of The People. E. Mercer		
35	Slave Society : Some Problems R. Browning		
36/37	Prints of the Labour Movement. (From the James Klugman collection)		



Pamphlet No.	TITLE	AUTHOR	DATE
36	Tom Mann in Australasia 1902 - 1909.	Dona Torr	
39.	The Organisation of Science - Science as social activity.		
40.	Chartism in the Black Country 1850 - 1860.	G.Baisasby	
41.	Problems of The German Anti-Fascist Resistance.	A.Merson	1966
42.	Class and Ideology in Bath 1800-1850.	R.S.Neale	
43.	The Easter Rising as History.	C.Desmond	Gareaveas
44/45.	History and Social Structure on the East African Plateau.		
46.	A Contemporary View of the Napoleonic Wars.	Frida Knight	
47.	The Second Reform Bill.		1967
48.	Alexander Macdonald and the Miners.	Raymond Challinor	
49/50	The Revolt in the Fields in East Anglia.	Alf Peacock	1968
51.	Leveller Democracy- Fact or Myth ?	A.L. Mortan	
52.	German Imperialism and its Influence in GB.	A.Rothatein	
53.	The Nations of Britain: The Making of the Union.	B. Ruheman .	1970
54.	Since the Ind. Revolution.	A.Jenkin.	
55.	Social Control in the 19C Black Country.	G.Barnsby	1972
56.	Europe's 17th Century crisis - A Marxist Review.	D.Parker	1973
57.	Nazis and Monopoly Capital.	Allan Merson	
58.	The Miners of Kilsyth and 1926.	Paul and Carol Carter	1974
59.	The S.D.F, and the Boer War.	Bill Baker	
60.	Time and Motion Strike, Manchester 1934-7.	Mick Jenkins	
61.	Middle Class Opinion and the 1889 Dock Strike.	G.Cronje	1975
62.	1945 - Year Of Victory.	George Barnsby	
63.	On the Origins of Capitalism.	Alexander Chistozvonov	
64.	Imperialism and the British Labour Movement. (1920's)	S.Macintyre	
65.	Tye 1926 General Strike in Lanarkshire.	J.McLean	1976
66.	Feudalism, Capitalism, and the Absolutist State. Reviews of Perry Anderson by E.J.Hobsbawm and Douglas Bourn.		
67.	Spain Against Fascism 1936 - 1939.	N.Green and A.M.Elliot	
68.	Worker's Newsreels in the 1920's and 30's.	Bert Hogenkamp	
69.	Rank and File Building Workers Movements 1910-20.	P.Latham	
70.	The Struggle against Fascism and War in Britain.	Mike Power	
71.	From Radicalism to Socialism - Paisley Engineers 1890-1920.	J.Brown	
72	People's Theatre in Bristol' 1930 - 1945.	Angela Tuckett	
73.	T.A. Jackson - A Centenary appreciation.	Vivien Morton & S.Macintyre	
74.	The National Question in Cornwall.	Royston Green	
75.	The 1842 General Strike in South Wales.	Heather Jordan	
76.	Armed Resistance and Insurrection: Early Chartism.	J.Baxter	
77.	A p p e a s e m e n t .	B i l l Moore	