PATTERNS OF DISENCHANTMENT

The Position of the Liberal and Labour Party: 1910-1914

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To Amy and the Muskies
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INTRODUCTION

"The Transition"

Dying! In the streets of London, the last horse-bus clattered towards extinction. The aeroplane, that incongruous object, earthbound and wavering, still called forth exclamations of rapture and alarm. Country roads, with blind corners and precipitous inclines, took a last revenge upon the loud invading automobile. There was talk of wild young people in London, more wild and less witty than you would ever guess from the novels of Saki; of night clubs; of negroid dances. People gazed in horror at the paintings of Gauguin, and listened with a delighted alarm to the barbaric measures of Stravinsky. The old order, the old bland world was dying fast... ... (George Dangerfield. The Strange Death of Liberal England)

Lord George Rankin Askwith, the tireless sage of the Board of Trade, addressed a meeting of the Cavendish Club at Bristol in November of 1913. During his talk, Askwith observed that throughout his recent travels as an arbitrator of industrial strikes, he had noticed

... a spirit abroad of unrest, of movement, a spirit and a desire of improvement, of alteration. We are in, perhaps, as quick an age of transition as there has been for many generations past... We quicken day by day means of transport...trams, railways, motors...[The working-man has achieved] political equality [and] he is far more anxious to achieve a greater amount of economic equality... By newspapers, by magazines, by books, the workpeople are self-educating themselves far more than they ever did a score of years ago... That the present unrest will cease I do not believe for one moment; it will increase, and probably increase
Within six months, England and the rest of Europe had plummeted into World War I, the watershed of the modern world. This war dramatically altered the composition of European society. The pervasive influence that the Great War had on Europe was such that most people viewed the years leading up to 1914 as "La Belle Époque". Yet, the decade preceding the Great War was also tumultuous. Dangerfield and Askwith were both acutely aware of a new order being formed before the war. The years after 1900 in England were filled with imperceptible and subtle transitions; evolutionary changes; and the explosions of near-revolution which rocked Britain especially in the years 1910-14.

In the twenty-five years before the Great War, the life of the British worker underwent a series of important changes which gradually began to alter his view of the world. The startling growth of education, added leisure time, and the improvement in technology (especially in communications) had altered the worker's conception of the world, so that it no longer was confined to local and private interests. The strikes of 1889 and the beginning of an independent Labour movement in the early 1890s attest to the labourer's new view of himself and his place in society. This radically different view was slow to grow. Thus, the strength of Labour politically and industrially did not become truly evident until after 1906. However, after the Boer War, the economic prosperity

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and stability that the wage-earner had known was superseded by inflation and stationary wages. Expectations and desires, both products of education were further heightened by the more pronounced surface characteristics of the age.

England was a country of great wealth, and inequality had long been ingrained within the fabric of society. The growing consciousness of the worker was accentuated by the late Victorian and Edwardian affinity for great shows of wealth. The late nineteenth century was one of the most ostentatious and extravagant periods ever known. All the worker had to do was look around him to feel alienated from 'mainstream' England. In 1891, Lloyd George, then an obscure Welsh M.P. grasped the contradictions of English society in a speech in Bangor, S. Wales.

The most startling fact about our country is this—that you have men who have accumulated untold wealth living in gorgeous splendour in one street and a horde of miserable, poverty-stricken human beings huddled together in the most abject penury and squalor in the adjoining courts. Incalculable wealth and indescribable poverty dwell side by side.  

At the same time, the nineteenth century's ideological conception of the individual's place in society was changing. The powerful individualism of John Stuart Mill had been joined with a more ethical view of man. The connection was forged by the flowering of socialism, idealism, and the new evolutionary theories of society put forth by a more empirically oriented scientific community. The Victorian stigma of the Poor Laws was slowly giving way to the realization that society was also to blame for the individual's condition. Society

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had to take moral responsibility for its members for the good of the organic whole. Thus, a "New Liberalism" grew in intellectual circles after 1900 which was best illustrated in the writings of J.A. Hobson and L.T. Hobhouse.

This new intellectual Liberalism was translated into policy after 1908 under the great Liberal government of Henry Herbert Asquith, Lloyd George, and Winston Churchill. A gradual trend away from the more traditional Gladstonian issues of the late nineteenth century had been taking place since Harcourt's death duties of the 1890s. Nonconformity, Home Rule for Ireland, drink, and education were no longer the rallying cries of the Liberal Party after 1906. Yet, it should be noted that 1906 was unique as it brought together all of these traditional issues in one mammoth electoral victory. But this election was an anomaly and was mainly a reaction against an utterly equivocal Tory Party of the early 1900s. 1906 should be viewed as the last gasp of the party of Gladstone. In particular, after the budget of 1909, the electoral focus was on a more economic plane as the necessity to appeal to the people became evident. Though the battle over the Lords can be construed as an opportunity for revenge against Tory emasculation of Liberal legislation from 1906 to 1908, the struggle was primarily over Lloyd George's "socialistic" budget.

1910 was the cardinal point for a new revolutionary spirit in England. George Dangerfield based his book on a series of events which shook the roots of England from 1910 to 1914. Specifically, he focused on the industrial unrest, the suffra-
gette movement, and the Irish problem as symbolic of the end of an age of respectability and elitist control. In the Labour movement, Dangerfield examined the revolutionary syndicalist influence on the trade union movement. Spontaneity and disrespect for the older union leaders were symptomatic of these strikes. The W.S.P.U. (Women's Social and Political Union) by 1910 had taken up arson as a tactic. In Ireland, the Ulstermen under Carson were preparing for a Civil War aided and abetted by Bonar Law and the Conservative Party. The common denominator in all of these crises was the incompetence and inability of the Liberal Party to provide effective solutions to these new and different rebellions. Thus, Dangerfield concluded that not only was Liberal England (Liberal in the sense of Victorian England) in its death throes, but the Liberal Party, the symbol of nineteenth century England would be swept away along with its era. This assertion began the avalanche of literature addressed to the demise of the Liberal Party.

In 1906, the Liberal Party was victorious in the largest landslide in English political history. On the eve of World War I, the Liberals were in control of 261 seats in the Commons. By 1924, this total had fallen to 43; approximately the same number that the Labour Party had held in 1910. The Liberals were never again to be more than a third party in British politics. This remarkable phenomenon has fascinated scholars for some forty years.

In general, two interpretations have taken hold as explanations for the political catastrophe that befell the party of Lloyd George and Asquith. The so-called "inevitablist" school was inspired by Dangerfield's *The Strange Death of Liberal England* which argued that 1910 to 1914 saw the end of the Gilbertian age in England, socially, economically and politically. There was a spirit of revolt and the Liberal Party was not able to adjust to a new era in English history. The party was for all intents and purposes dead by 1914 and World War I served as Gabriel's horn. As the years have passed since *Strange Death*, a more sophisticated "inevitablist" argument has evolved, best represented by Ross McKibbin's *The Evolution of the Labour Party*. He argues that working class consciousness was growing before the war. McKibbin then examines the internal evolution of the structure of the Labour Party in the years 1910 to 1924. From these two points, he goes on to extrapolate from 1914 to the franchise bill of 1918, claiming the inevitability of the victory of Labour. In recent years the "inevitablist" position has been strongly discredited.

The so-called "accidentalists" have been in the vanguard of recent years in the debate. The major spokesmen for this interpretation are P.F. Clarke and Trevor Wilson. These historians look to World War I as the true cause of the Liberal's death. Clarke in particular focuses on the elections and by-elections of 1910 to 1914. He shows persuasively that the Liberal Party's support was not eroding. In fact, the Liberals had shed their middle-class ideology. A "New Liberalism" had
evolved during this period and the Liberals were very active in the area of social reform. In *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, Clarke argues that the Liberals had not only adapted ideologically to new pressures, but had indeed gained a new working class constituency in the Northwest. It seemed as if the party was healthier than ever. But then World War I intervened, splitting the party and thus killing it.

What is the purpose of writing a paper on a question which many scholars have considered solved? This topic’s most recent investigators have only had to elaborate on its substance and neaten its structure. The purpose of this paper is to reopen this Pandora’s Box of historians’ nightmares.

The truth of history does not lie in the insipid structure of election results which at best reveal the surface; yet never reach the depths of the essence. This paper proposes that history is not neat. It is a constant stream of contradictions especially in as transitional a period as 1910 to 1914.

A period of transition by definition entails the interaction of the old and new. Because there are new issues being discussed does not mean the old ones are unimportant and ignored. At times the old will fight the new. At other times the old will influence the new in such a way as to form a qualified new force. All of these combinations pervaded the period 1910 to 1914.

The years 1910 to 1914 have been isolated before in Dangerfield’s impressionistic interpretation. Yet, this seminal work only scratches the surface of a period teeming with
changes. Thus, the primary rationale for scrutinizing the period 1910 to 1914 is that it saw the culmination of many dramatic and rapid changes that had been brewing for over a decade. Our inquiry is the effect that this transition had on politics with an emphasis on the Liberal-Labour controversy. However, the lever used to gain access to this political system is not the typical angle of entry. It is crucial to understand that politics does not operate in a vacuum, but in a given social context. To truly understand the dynamics of a political situation, it is first necessary to examine all facets of the "political system". Thus, this paper takes a bottom-up view of antebellum England.

The first chapter deals with the underlying trends of the period. At first the material conditions of the first decade of the twentieth century will be assessed. What was the economic condition of the people? How was this position colored by the levels of relative deprivation, education, and leisure time that existed in Edwardian England? Once these basic areas have been examined, chapter one goes on to trace the development known as the "New Unionism" which began taking root after 1889 and really found its place after 1910. What was the nature of this unionism and what made it different from its predecessor? We will briefly look at the disputes of the period and their importance to a growing workers' consciousness. This topic of consciousness will then be viewed within the framework of the earlier part of this chapter. The final section will then make the bridge to politics as it briefly
examines the political ramifications of the "New Unionism".

Chapter two concentrates on the parliamentary Labour Party. In tracing the early development of Labour, emphasis will be placed on the multitude of constraints and liabilities that the party encountered from 1900 to 1914. Areas covered will include internal weaknesses, the relationship with trade unions, and external constraints (i.e. the Liberal Party, the constraints of the political system, etc.). The second part of the chapter will examine the growth of the Labour Party from 1910 to 1914. Not only will the evolution of the structure of the party be assessed but the general political picture from the perspective of Labour as of 1914 will be examined.

The last chapter will scrutinize the actual position of the Liberal Party in the years 1910 to 1914 with an emphasis on the oft-overlooked question of municipal elections. Some may ask after the author's earlier attempts at discrediting purely empirical studies why he ends up doing the same. The reason is to show how misleading electoral study can be. For at the national level, the Liberals will be seen to be strong while Labour appears inept and at bay. Municipal results reveal quite a different picture. After this section, a conclusion will attempt to draw this eclectic approach into a single cohesive statement of intent.

It is important to include a warning for the reader. There has been an immense amount of material written on this topic and it is impossible to ignore this vast corpus of scho-
larship in any examination of the area in question. Thus, when possible, many of the traditional questions and problems of the historiography will be addressed directly. In particular, P.F. Clarke's work will be reacted to.

This paper has purposely avoided discussing the foreign matters of the day. There is no doubt that these affairs were on peoples' minds. Yet, it is difficult to say what if any effect they had on the political system. The "German Problem" can of course be considered as another burden on the Liberal government. Along with the constitutional crises of the day, it constrained the actions of all political parties.

Another caution need be given and that is to beware the line and tone that this interpretation takes. Without looking at the body of this paper, one might surmise that a new "inevitabilist" argument is being put forth which has the Labour Party replacing the Liberals by 1914. This is not the thrust of this essay. The paper will be worded cautiously in order to prevent such an argument from coming forth. The purpose of the first three chapters is not to give easy answers to several difficult questions. The growth of trade unionism from 1910 to 1914 does not necessarily connote a proportional growth financially and spiritually in the Labour Party. Nor does the fracturing of Lib-Labism after 1910 mean that Ramsay MacDonald was not going to try and renegotiate an electoral pact with the Liberals for a possible 1915 General Election. Because Liberalism was weakening locally in areas where it had been strong for many years does not reveal an irreversible
trend. Thus, it must be said that the true aim of this paper is not to provide answers, but to stimulate new questions. A final definitive solution to the controversy over the Liberal Party will not be found within these pages. For a resolution, one will have to take the advice of the Right Honourable H.H. Asquith and simply "wait and see". The wait might last to eternity.
In 1910—a year of record trade-wages remained practically stationary. The cost of living increases, and the working people's desires rightly grow. But with stationary wages, the real condition of the workers is one of diminishing power to satisfy desires. This is one of the causes of the unrest in the Labour world. With the spread of education, with the display of wealth and luxury by the rich it is certain that the workers will not be content. If employers and politicians are so unwise as to ignore the demands of Labour, then what might be done by safe constitutional methods will, by great suffering and loss, be accomplished by industrial strife, and through social anarchy.

(Philip Viscount Snowden)

The most salient feature of British politics during the period 1886 to 1914 was the stunning rise to power of the working class. Before this time (1906 in particular), the proletariat had been only one (though an important one) of many interest groups in British politics. Though potentially preponderant in number, the British worker had been strangely absent from the political scene. Yet, after 1886, he suddenly

1886 is a traditional historical demarcation in British history. The Liberal Party split over Irish Home Rule and it was from about this date that working class movements began to enjoy more than parochial popularity.
awakened from a long and relatively tranquil slumber. Previously, the wage-earner had made occasional forays into the political arena, only to be mollified and returned to his proper place in society. But after 1886, he entered the political forum in such a way as to decisively and permanently alter the entire framework of the British electoral system. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe the sometimes subtle and sometimes cataclysmic process by which the working class established itself as the single most important force in British politics.

The "Quiet" Revolution

While on the campaign trail during the General Election of 1906, Lloyd George exclaimed:

I believe there is a new order coming from the people of this country. It is a quiet, but certain revolution as revolutions come in a constitutional country.  

Lloyd George's observation was quite correct. Indeed, there had been a quiet revolution occurring within the working class since 1886. The causes of this transformation were concisely stated in the epigraph to this chapter. This section of the chapter will seek to expand on Snowden's observations and provide documentation that will explain exactly why this revolution occurred.

In 1899, Seebohm Rowntree in his famous study of York, wrote that forty per cent of all urban wage-earners and their

families were living in poverty. Poverty was defined as the inability to buy "the minimum of food, clothing, and shelter needful for maintenance of merely physical health." Rowntree went on to spell out what "merely physical efficiency" (the subsistence level) was.

A family living upon the scale allowed for in this estimate must never spend a penny on railway fare or omnibus. They must never go into the country unless they walk. They must never purchase a half-penny newspaper or spend a penny to buy a ticket for a popular concert. They must write no letters to absent children, for they cannot afford to pay the postage. They must never contribute anything to their church or chapel, or give any help to a neighbor which costs them money. They cannot save, nor can they join sick club or Trade Union, because they cannot pay the necessary subscriptions. The children must have no pocket money for dolls, marbles, or sweets. The father must smoke no tobacco, and must drink no beer. The mother must never buy any pretty clothes for herself or for her children. Should a child fall ill, it must be attended by the parish doctor; should it die, it must be buried by the parish. Finally, the wage-earner must never be absent from his work for a single day.

Rowntree's findings were not peculiar to York. Studies conducted by Charles Booth in London (1887-92) and Bowley and Burnett-Hurst in Northampton, Warrington, Stanley, and Reading (1912 and 1913) all closely agreed with Rowntree's pathetic conclusions. Poverty had long been ingrained within the fabric of British life. Yet, the surveys conducted by Rowntree and Booth in particular revealed for the first time in

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4Ibid.
5Ibid.
print what had been virtually ignored for hundreds of years. The realization by intellectuals of the depths of despair that the worker endured helped spur on an ideological revolution leading to both a "New Liberalism" and the growth of socialism. These developments will not be scrutinized here. Instead, our interest will focus on the worker. If conditions of squalor had existed for many years, why was it that it was only in the late-Victorian period that the worker finally became aware of his predicament?

Historically, English wage-earners had become aroused at certain times to correct specific wrongs. Certainly the heroic struggles of such groups as the Diggers, the Luddites, and the Chartists should not be overlooked. Yet, the common man of the late 1800s underwent a different process than his predecessors, thanks to the remarkable growth in education.

In 1870, an Act was passed which set up the School Boards to fill gaps between voluntary schools. Within six years, a million and a half new pupils were offered slots in school. Along with this numerical growth was the general improvement of teaching quality as the amount of teachers per student dramatically increased throughout the period. The Balfour Act of 1902 was directed at developing secondary education. Responsibility for these schools was placed squarely on the shoulders of the county councils and by 1907, the grant-aided secondary schools were required to give not less than a quarter of their spots to free place scholars from elementary schools. The effect of the 1870 Act on elementary schools and the 1902
Act on secondary schools is most vividly shown in the following figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These statistics are probably accurate for all of England. From 1891 to 1911, the number of people who had completed basic work in reading, writing, and arithmetic quantum-leaped an astounding 55%! The importance of this phenomenon cannot be overstated. More than any other development of this period, the growth in education and thus literacy marked the late-Victorian worker off from any of his predecessors. Before discussing the ramifications of this change, it is important to first examine several other critical developments and characteristics of this period.

The second major influence on the worker was the general reduction in the work week. A brief examination of four of the major industries will reveal a general trend towards a new and unheard of luxury for the working class; leisure time. In 1874, there was a general reduction of hours worked in the textile industry from sixty to fifty-six and a half. By 1902, another hour had been eliminated from the work week. Similarly,

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6 Brown, p. 45.

7 Ibid.
the Building industry saw a reduction in 1860 from sixty to fifty-six and a half hours worked a week. Four more hours had been removed from the work schedule by 1873 and in 1893, the work week stood at an even fifty hours. The Engineering trade received a reduction of six hours in 1871 from sixty to fifty-four hours worked per week. Finally, in the Coal industry, the miners were granted the eight hour day in 1909 by an Act of Parliament. Thus, by 1909, the miserable drudgery of industrial labour had been somewhat eased by a general reduction in the work week from about sixty hours to anywhere from forty-eight to fifty-five. The question that naturally arises is what the worker would do with this new and totally alien phenomenon of leisure time?

Yet another interesting feature of late-Victorian England was the culmination of several trends which all overlapped at the same time. In the areas of technology, education, ideology, and social habits (some of these were results of each other), certain developments which had been brewing for years all reached fruition at the same time and helped cause this "quiet" revolution. It was just during this period that many advances in technology were being felt by the common worker for the first time. The electric motor in particular began to make its presence felt in the factory. Electricity brought together many scattered small workrooms under one roof. This was a major reason for a 50% increase in the number of factories from 1895 to 1913. In addition, between 1870 and

1914, the amount of equipment per man doubled. Specialization in the different stages of making a product had been noted years before by Adam Smith. Yet, this mechanization and increasing alienation of the worker from the total product was intensifying throughout this period of constant innovation. The dehumanization caused by the modern factory was more and more evident during these years. The vivid descriptions by Marx in *Das Kapital* or the tragi-comic vision of a Charlie Chaplin in "Modern Times" are exemplary and poignant illustrations of the utter degradation that the worker in a modern industrial state suffered, as he became but a cog in a vast network of machinery. As George Askwith, the foremost arbitrator of the Board of Trade put it: "The workmen become numbers, grouped on processes, driven into pigeon-holes...".

One of the by-products of the growth of technology was the development in communication. In particular, newspapers were more easily accessible than ever before. The tremendous outpouring of propaganda by the newly imported Syndicalist movement and revamped socialist movements found its way into the workers' hands for the first time. Mann's *The Syndicalist*, *The Miner's Next Step*, Blatchford's *Clarion*, Champion's *Labour Elector*, Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader*, the *Workman's Times*, the *Cotton Factory Times*, the *Yorkshire Factory Times*, the S.D.F.'s periodical *Justice*, Money's *Riches and Poverty*, not

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9 Brown, p. 90.

10 Askwith, p. 16.
to mention Fabian tracts and Rowntree's and Booth's surveys all appeared in the years 1886 to 1900. Between 1900 and 1910, benefactions of Andrew Carnegie began, and led to the opening of some 900 municipal libraries. The worker was now not only able to read, but had the time and opportunity to do it. For the first time, the workingman was able to step back from his life and really look at it. Askwith understood this quiet revolution. He noted that:

Education and self-education had been going on more and more rapidly for years before. More and more young people were being turned out into the world with better knowledge of books and wider aspirations than their grandfathers had, but with no equal speed had a right to start or opportunities for advancement or any system giving them a return for their efforts been opened up. Can anyone be surprised that the various forms of propaganda find adherents? \(^{11}\)

Perhaps the most ironic trend of the era which colored this new worker's perception was the nature of the society around him. For one of the major aids in this process of a growing consciousness was the realization of the vast physical difference between himself and late-Victorian and Edwardian society. Despite the failure of the Boer War, England was at the apex of its colonial power. The country had never been more prosperous and inequality in the sharing of this wealth could be seen with the naked eye. The difference in dress was obvious. It is not an overstatement to say that most workers lived in ghettos. Yet, the extremity of this inequality was most evidenced by the actions of the rich. "Victorian

\(^{11}\)Askwith, p. 296.
reticence in the display of wealth had given way to conspicuous expenditure in restaurants, hotels and above all, in the country houses of the rich."\textsuperscript{12} The symbol of gaudiness was the King himself, Edward VII. Edward was the picture of opulence. In fact:

Edwardian society modelled itself to suit the King's personal demands. Everything was larger than lifesize. There was an avalanche of balls and dinners and country house parties. More money was spent on clothes, more food was consumed, more horses were raced, more infidelities were committed, more birds were shot, more yachts were commissioned, more late hours were kept, than ever before. It was, in short, the most ostentatious and extravagant decade that England had ever known.\textsuperscript{13}

If this quotation conveys an image of hedonism, it has served its purpose well. Though it is difficult to prove these generalizations, there is little doubt that people of the time viewed the rich in this manner. An examination of C.F.G. Masterman's (a minister in Asquith's cabinet) \textit{The Condition of England} will confirm this description of the rich.

While it is difficult to grapple with as ambiguous a concept as consciousness, the developments traced in the previous pages must necessarily lead one to the conclusion that a new awareness would grow on the part of the worker. The workingman who lived during the twenty-five years before World War I underwent a radical transformation in outlook. New aspirations were growing as the wage-earner became better educated. Yet these desires were bound to be frustrated. The

\textsuperscript{12}Cross, p. 137.

worker began to realize that he was in some sense socially different and that this was unjust. The opulence of the period confirmed the fact that his interests, desires, and life styles were peculiarly his own. Such outbursts as the strikes of 1889, the formation of the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party were the first signs of this new perception. However, the period this paper addresses is 1910 to 1914. For this reason it is important to examine how this new consciousness became visible after 1900. Thus, this new consciousness must be looked at against the background of the actual economic conditions of the period.

The Economy and the People*

From 1910 to 1914, England underwent the most tumultuous period of internal industrial rebellion it had ever known. The number of strikes and work days lost in these years was staggering. There had been periods of unrest before; but never to the extent or degree of the period in question. What made the strike wave of 1910-14 different from the one in 1889 or any other period of social upheaval in British history?

The first part of this chapter developed several reasons and causes for the rise of a new worker. Most of this argument dealt with broad trends and influences. With this in mind, it is important to deal with some of the constraints on

*This section is but an excerpt from a much larger and more detailed economic analysis found in Appendix A. It is strongly emphasized that those interested in termenology and methodology consult the Appendix before reading this section.
this new spirit before going on to the economic figures. Perhaps the most important was the historic nature of the British worker and in particular, his view towards his country. England had historically been the symbol of how the "system" could adapt to changes in the make-up of society. Since 1688, England had been a model of government by consent. There was a real pride in the unwritten constitution and in parliament. While the rest of Europe was undergoing the upheavals of the post-Napoleonic period and revolutions of 1848, the Parliament of England was passing the great Reform Bill of 1832. The British worker was proud of his country and the empire. Radical Englishmen were more influenced by the writings of John Stuart Mill than by those of Karl Marx. It is little wonder that such groups as the S.D.F. and other more utopian Marxist groups found few adherents in Britain. Instead, the new class consciousness engendered by the growth in education, reduction in the work week, and advances in technology must be understood against the background of a worker who was fiercely patriotic and adamantly opposed to revolution. Thus, this consciousness was focused on very specific and realistic demands. An examination of revolutionary Syndicalism or Marxism will not reveal the true causes of the unrest of this era.


15Although the S.D.F. exercised little national power, it was quite influential in London.

Before going on to discuss the economic conditions of England, it is important to clarify the intent of this section. A period of transition contains both aspects of the old and new. The economic trends about to be analyzed are not all new phenomena to the British scene. What makes them important is how they combined with some of the newer trends to heighten the sensitivity of the working class to its own condition. Thus, some of the traditional causes of worker unrest are as operative in the period 1910 to 1914 as they were at earlier times in British history (e.g., high employment and stagnant wages).

The most important aspect of the economic figures of the first decade of the twentieth century to consider is how they compared with those numbers of the years immediately previous. For the first time in some fifty years, nominal wages were lagging behind prices. To bring this phenomenon into perspective it is necessary to examine three measurements. The course of the nominal wage, the real wage, and the cost of living will therefore be scrutinized. Of course, these three measurements are dependent upon one another. But it is most convenient and helpful to examine them individually. From 1900 to 1910, the nominal wage (what the worker took home each week) hovered around the same average figure. In fact, it took ten years for the nominal wage to stabilize at the level it had reached in 1900, and then make steady improvement.
The figures from 1910 to 1914 showed a rise of eight points. The period has been generally characterized as one of wage stagnation. The Board of Trade described the period as one of a "slight upward movement in wages...[which] did not become at anytime marked."\textsuperscript{17} In fact, the largest jump between 1911 and 1912 was due almost solely to the Miners Minimum Wage Act of 1912.

The nominal wage alone only reveals that wages were not improving very much. It is even more revealing when this wage is compared with the cost of living (the cost of food, rent, clothing, fuel, etc.). For this figure gives the best insight into the workingman's economic condition. Basically, the cost of living can be tabulated by averaging the course of a budget of expenditure from year to year. By dividing the nominal wage by this figure, one will find the real wage. The real wage reveals what the buying power of the worker really was and is thus the best measurement available for figuring out the actual economic condition of the wage-earner.

\textsuperscript{17}Board of TradeLabour Gazette (January, 1911), p. 3.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nominal W</th>
<th>Cost of Living</th>
<th>Real Wage</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>102</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>101</td>
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<td>1903</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>99</td>
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<td>1904</td>
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<td>1909</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1914)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)=W.W. I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The real wage was very stationary throughout the period, and the 1913 figure was actually six points less than in 1900. Perhaps even more illuminating is the fact that the retail price of food jumped 15% between 1900 and 1913 as compared to a rise in wages of 8%.18

Another important statistic to examine is the unemployment figure. The greatest amount of union recruitment had always occurred during periods of high employment.19 1910 to 1914 was no exception to this rule.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Unemployed</th>
<th>Union Membership (000's)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2,477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 Board of Trade Labour Gazette (January, 1915), p. 4.
Table 3-Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Unemployed</th>
<th>Union Membership (000's)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4,145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Henry Pelling, Popular Politics, p. 149.

1910 to 1914 saw great union activity during a period of high employment. This was due to a worker who was more confident about his future and felt he could risk joining a union. The chance of scab labourers replacing union men was less during a period of high employment. Workers had greater leverage during periods when industry needed them. The other two most recent periods of union and strike activity came in 1888-91 and 1896-1901 which were also periods of high employment (though the latter period of activity was muted by patriotic fervor for the Boer War). A comparison with earlier numbers is also helpful in putting the real wage into perspective. For in the fifteen years before 1900, nominal wages had been consistently rising at a faster rate than the cost of living.

One final question to ask of the economic statistics is what was the wage-earner's share in the total GNP? For over forty years, the wage-earner who made up approximately 75-80% of the population was consistently earning about 40% of the GNP.
This table shows a declining percentage of the workforce earning a consistent percentage of the GNP. Thus, it would seem that the wage-earner was actually improving his position. But this is misleading. These are aggregative figures which obscure certain distributive anomalies (e.g. skilled and white-collar occupations were improving their position and they are classed as wage-earners) within the wage sector. The more obvious fact is that three-quarters of the population was earning only forty per cent of the GNP (i.e. twenty-five per cent of the population earns sixty per cent of the GNP). Thus, there was no significant improvement in the wage-earner's lot. Inequality was as pervasive during this period of unparalleled national prosperity as at any other time. 20

The most important influence on the figures examined so far was the Coal Industry. Like Table 4, the aggregate wage

---

20 From 1900 to 1913, the net national income of the United Kingdom jumped by over 500 million pounds or 30%. Industrial production increased by 16.5%. See David Butler and Jennie Freeman, *British Political Facts: 1200-1960* (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1963), p. 221.
Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Coal Nominal Wages</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Coal Nominal Wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>145</td>
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<td>1902</td>
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<td>146</td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1911</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>152</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The tragic story of the miners is eloquently told in these figures. It took fourteen years for wages to regain the level reached in 1900, and this was only accomplished by the Minimum Wage Act of 1912. A quick comparison with Table 1 will show the correlation between the fluctuations in the miner's wage and the aggregate wage. Appendix A provides the figures of other industries. These numbers were remarkably stagnant throughout the period revealing how significant the Coal Industry's figures were. It is critical to note that the most important catalysts in the growth of both union membership and the increase in trade disputes during the years 1910 to 1914 were the miners, railwaymen, and unskilled workers (especially transport workers). The miners' plight has been documented. The railway and transport figures are not included in the aggregate nominal wage table. Yet, it is fairly well known that in both of these industries, wages and work conditions were abominable. 21

21 See either Dangerfield or Askwith.
This section's purpose has been to establish that the period from 1900 to 1914 was at best, one of stagnation for the worker. Nominal wages struggled throughout the entire period to regain the levels of 1900. Meanwhile, prices were consistently rising faster than wages. That these phenomena were felt by the worker is apparent from almost all of the literature of the period. Considered in the framework established earlier of greater education, more leisure time, and innovations in technology, a causal relationship can be seen for the subsequent growth of trade unionism and the Labour Party. In particular, the plight of the worker in the three major industries involved in the unrest of 1910 to 1914 was most severe. All of these men (miners, railwaymen, and transport workers) were part of industries that were integrally connected with the British economy. Their efforts to enhance their positions were directly felt by the entire country and even further added to the growing class consciousness of the period.

How did all of these underlying trends become visible in the period under scrutiny? The rest of this chapter will attempt to answer this question. The peculiar growth of trade unionism will be traced. In particular, an emphasis will be placed on how unionism differed from the previous types of unionism, the nature of the disputes from 1910 to 1914, and


23 An examination of LRC and TUC Annual Reports is helpful in illustrating this perception.
the connection between trade unionism and politics. Thus, the groundwork has been laid for an understanding of the remarkable rise to power of the worker. He was now unfettered by the crippling disability of illiteracy. Technology had turned his world upside down. He worked hard and yet seemed to get little return for his herculean efforts. Yet, there was a "new spirit abroad of unrest". The only question that remained was how much longer the worker would remain quietly frustrated. Undoubtedly he was not going to wait forever. The timing and tactics used to accomplish his ends would rock the very foundations of British life.

Consolidation, Amalgamation, and Federation

Before 1889, the overriding characteristic of British trade unionism was sectionalism. The most common unit was the craft union. Communication with other crafts was rare and separatism was the watchword. Operatives who were not apprenticed, yet had acquired a skill in mills or the mine also formed separate unions early in the nineteenth century. However, the unskilled labourer was still as yet unorganized. This entire situation changed with the year 1889. There seemed to be a new spirit in this year as men such as John Burns and Tom Mann led the way in the formation of unions in the transport industry, municipal employment, and other unskilled labour. All of these kinds of labour joined a new type of union. The General Union was founded which cut across

occupational and industrial lines. This new type of union was motivated by a feeling of class solidarity. The spectacular strikes of 1889, best typified by the London Dockers all pointed to the end of sectionalism and the beginning of a "New Unionism".25

Yet, the 1890s saw a period of retrenchment by employers. The new unions of 1889, while still in existence, exerted little or no power and their influence was felt only through sporadic stoppages during the decade. Indeed, the 1890s were years of reaction and the Boer War helped make the "New Unionism" an unfilled promise. The impetus for another and more permanent growth in union membership came in 1901 from the courts in the famous Taff Vale Judgement. The House of Lords ruled that trade unions could be held responsible for monetary losses incurred during a strike. Taff Vale showed the necessity of a political struggle. Not only did this crippling decision reinvigorate trade unionism, but it also immeasurably aided the young and struggling Labour Representative Committee.

After 1889, and especially after Taff Vale, the most important development in industrial relations was the general consolidation of unionism. It is constructive to trace the most important types of centralization that occurred.26 For

25 By 1900, craft, operative, and the "new" unions accounted for more than 75% of all union membership. The rural areas and smaller industries such as fishing and farming were as yet very unorganized and sectional. But four-fifths of the population lived in urban areas. Therefore, this discussion is only pertinent to the urban worker who was by far the most preponderant.

26 This section is based on Sidney and Beatrice Webb's, History of British Trade Unionism (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920).
there is no doubt that it was a direct product of a growing class consciousness.

The most powerful union of the nineteenth century was that of the Cotton Operatives. Despite this strength, the union had been splintered into highly autonomous bodies of spinners, weavers, reelers, carders, blowers, etc. But by the turn of the century, these groups became united in first a federal body for each sector, and then a general body of the Textile Factory Worker’s Association.

The Building trades also saw a similar type of centralization grow after 1890 with such groups as the Amalgamated Society of Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators forming. Tom Mann, John Burns, and George Barnes all came from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Other metal trades, and in particular the Boilermakers, and Shipwrights were undergoing constant consolidation absorbing local associations throughout this period.

The most important development of 1889 was the formation of the General Workers Union. This union floundered in the '90s. But from 1910 to 1913, it grew from 5000 to 91,000 members. The most important development within the union was in the transport sector under the leadership of Mann. Seamen, lightermen, dock and wharf workers, coal porters, and carmen all joined together to form the National Transport Workers Federation in November of 1910. The NTWF was one of the major contributors to the unrest of 1911 to 1914. The importance of this group was seen in its partial success in
engendering sympathetic strikes from other industries it was connected to. The NTWF almost succeeded in bringing commercial life to a halt in the summer of 1911.

The largest numerical force in trade unionism during this period was the mining industry. In 1888, the Miners Federation of Great Britain formed out of six smaller unions. With the addition of the Northumberland and Durham miners in 1908, the MFGB reached the figure of 600,000 in membership. The national strike of 1912 paralyzed England and forced through the Minimum Wage Act. By this time, Robert Smillie of the ILP had become president of the MFGB. The affiliation of the MFGB to the Labour Party was a crucial step in the history of the workers' movement as Lib-Labism in the coalfields began to wane.

The last major area of consolidation was in the Railway industry. In the mid-1890s, railway unions were scattered. But with the reaction of the period against unionism, the "All Grades Movement" (cutting across all railway-type occupations) began and doubled union membership by 1897. The Railway industry was perhaps the most economically depressed trade at the opening of the twentieth century. This led to a very serious strike in 1907 which was only settled by the Conciliation Board scheme proposed by Lloyd George. This proved unsatisfactory and in 1913, three of the five major unions (General Workers, Pointsmen, and Signalmen) formed the National Union of Railwaymen.
Thus, by 1914, this process of consolidation had become the overwhelming trend in trade unionism. By 1914, five-sixths of all trade union membership was contained in only 100 unions. The Trades Union Congress which had been but a nominal organ for some thirty years after its founding in the mid-1860s, was now the major voice of the union world, providing both money and food for strikers and indispensable financial support for the Labour Party. The culmination of all of these trends came on April 23, 1914 when the NUR, MFGB, and NTWF formed the Triple Alliance. The Alliance was to be the mechanism by which each of these unions could come to each other's aid while one of them was striking. The Triple Alliance was potentially the tool that could be used to achieve the revolutionary Syndicalist dream of the General Strike.

Thus, the craft unionism that dominated England before 1889 had been all but destroyed by the outbreak of World War I.

The class consciousness which had been forged by a combination of frustration and aspiration began to exercise its new found strength under the auspices of the trade union movement.

The "Unquiet" Revolution: 1910-14

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Union Membership (000's)</th>
<th>No. of stoppages lost by stop-beginning in year</th>
<th>Total no. of working days pages (000's)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>2,513</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>2,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>2,485</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>10,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>2,477</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>2,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>2,565</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>9,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>3,139</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>10,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>3,416</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>40,890</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 6—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Union Membership (000's)</th>
<th>No. of stoppages beginning in year</th>
<th>Total no. of working days lost by stoppages (000's)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>4,135</td>
<td>1,459</td>
<td>9,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>4,145</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>9,880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Pelling, p. 149.

In the introduction to Ben Tillett's History of the Transport Worker's Strike of 1911, Harry Quelch tried to describe the difference between the Dockers strikes of 1889 and 1911.

...there seemed to be a greater spontaneity, a broader conception of the ultimate objectives of the working-class struggle...and a stronger feeling of solidarity and of all that solidarity implies than ever before. 27

Though Quelch's words are those of an intransigent Marxist, it is difficult not to be at least partially persuaded by his argument after examining the strike figures in table 6. Trade union membership leaped by 1.6 million in a mere four years. Those same four years saw more stoppages than at any time in British industrial history. Anyone who sees the strike wave to be but a temporary phenomenon subsiding by the War is belying the actual figures. 28 In fact, the number of dis-


28 A counter argument might be to note that the amount of days lost actually was lower in 1913 and 1914 than either 1909,1911, or 1912. The point I am making is that the number of strikes, and thus the willingness to strike was not diminishing. 1911 and 1912's figures are bloated due to the effect of the Dockers' and Miners' strikes on all industries. In fact, it is interesting to note that the amount of days lost in 1914 was only a half year figure because of the war. If one doubled it, it would be the second highest of the period.
putes in 1914 was the second highest ever recorded. Even more remarkable is that all of the strikes in 1914 occurred before the moratorium declared on disputes after the opening of the First World War in August of 1914. The frustration of the twenty-five years before 1910 finally exploded in an incredible wave of strikes which stunned all of England in the years 1910 to 1914. In order to show how the growing consciousness of this period was translated into action, it is necessary to examine the nature of these strikes.

It is not the purpose of this section to give a complete history of the strike wave of 1910 to 1914. A brief catalogue of the most important strikes of the period will give the reader a sense of the utter chaos that many viewed the period as representing. On September 1, 1910, the miners in the Rhondda Valley of S. Wales struck the Cambrian Combine demanding a minimum wage to circumvent the unfairness of piece-pay in abnormal places (bad seams). The miners became violent and were controlled only by Asquith sending General Macready and the police in to quiet the strikers. The miners were eventually starved into submission.

August 8, 1911 marked the beginning of the London Transport Workers attempt to get a minimum wage from Lord Devonport of the Port of London Authority. This was settled by the arbitration miracles of George Askwith and the threat of mili-

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29Askwith's is excellent and Dangerfield provides a colorful if not always accurate account of the period.
tary intervention by Winston Churchill. August 5 had seen the Liverpool Railwaymen strike only to be appeased by Lloyd George's plea for national unity during the Agadir Crisis. March 1, 1912 witnessed the most dangerous strike as the miners of the entire country went out demanding a minimum wage. This was eventually agreed to in principle (but not in the actual wage) by an Act of Parliament. The Dockers went out again in May of 1912. Five cabinet members tried to settle this strike and failed miserably. The most notable strike of 1913 was in Dublin led by the charismatic lunatic James Larkin. The Dublin Transport Workers struck demanding union recognition. The TUC sent funds, but the union was tragically starved into submission.

The most typical explanation of these strikes is to put them under the general title of Syndicalism. Syndicalism refers to the writings of Pelloutier and Sorel. These Frenchmen preached a gospel advocating a violent succession of continuous strikes, culminating in a "General Expropriatory Strike" in which the workers would seize the means of production and take control of industry. The producers were to control all industries and all services. Certainly many of the younger leaders of the "new unionism" (Mann, Gosling, Tillett) were influenced by Syndicalism. There was some evidence

30 There are different shades of Syndicalism. Sorel's brand was much more violent and revolutionary and was the most influential in England. There was also a more conservative shade which a Durkheim could approve of. This paper will only deal with Sorel's "revolutionary" Syndicalism.

31 Dangerfield, p. 232.
of this in the rail and dock strikes which were the most spectacular of the period. However, this argument is only partially true. The British worker was not generally supportive of such violence and class control. Indeed, there was a good deal more spontaneity in the strikes of the period. Yet, the lack of success by people such as Larkin and Mann in getting substantial support for sympathetic strikes reveals the limited influence of Syndicalism on the British worker. It is more correct to view revolutionary Syndicalism as one of the most notable forces of the period which helped crystallize the worker's view of his position in society.32

The great bulk of stoppages were caused by much more specific grievances which had nothing to do with the violent overthrow of the government. The major cause was of course a demand for a wage hike or even for a minimum wage. This desire for a national minimum was symptomatic of a new British class consciousness. Another major demand was for union recognition. Before 1910, most employers would not even deal with unions. Despite what many have argued (Dangerfield in particular), the British worker was still interested in working through established institutions and processes (i.e. trade unionism and a Labour "Party"). The other major cause of many strikes was related to this union issue. There was a growing trend among unionists to refuse to work with unaffiliated men. The Docker strike of May, 1912 was fought

32Dangerfield, pp. 231-232.
on this issue. Thus, the causes of the unrest of 1910 to 1914 lie more in the fundamental changes that occurred in the late nineteenth century and the material conditions of the period than in a desire for revolution.

It should be noted that in many cases, the actions of the government exacerbated the industrial situation of these years. In particular, the threat and use of force in settling some of these disputes helped unite the working class even more. The government appeared incompetent and unaware.

So far as the Government was concerned, Ministers were immersed in constitutional struggles. They had little or no labour policy. The Members of the Government were strangely outside and ignorant of the labour movements in the country; or of any personal knowledge of the principal labour leaders.33

This statement came from a man within the government; the Board of Trade's own George Askwith. Yet, it must be said that the government was beleaguered by its battle with the Lords, impending Irish Civil War, and the Suffragettes. These preoccupations confirmed a need for the working class to bind closer together to safeguard its interests. Many even felt that the government had little interest in them and that the social legislation of 1906 to 1914 was not very substantial. Askwith himself contended that:

The Trade Disputes Act was carried on grounds of political expediency...the Coal Mines Regulation of 1908 would never have got through if the Parliamentary representatives of labour in the House of Commons had been a negligible quantity. The Old Age Pensions Act and the Children's Act were long overdue. The National Health Insurance Act of 1911

33Askwith, p. 352.
was almost entirely due to the work of Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith.\textsuperscript{34}

If someone within the government could feel this way about the Liberals, there is little doubt that others felt the same.

The nature of the strikes of the period was such that the entire working class was profoundly influenced by the disputes. The stoppages of the NTWF, NUR, and the MFGB were felt by everyone. Thus, by 1914 the worker had become acutely sensitive to his distinctive position in society. The growth of education, the reduction in the work week, and the advances in technology coupled with the events of 1910 to 1914 all pointed to this fact. The growth in trade union membership and the centralization of the union world as a whole showed that the worker did indeed feel a need to unite with his fellow wage-earner. Revolutionary Syndicalism and the actions of the government all helped crystallize this new consciousness. Thus, the years 1910 to 1914 saw the greatest potential for change that the political system of England had had to face in hundreds of years. The worker would no doubt attempt to achieve his aspirations through the political system. But this would now occur on his own terms and through his own channels (trade unionism).

"Political Unionism"

Attempting to link trade unionism to political action is a difficult task. One cannot hope to establish that a

\textsuperscript{34}Askwith, p. 353.
large growth in unionism was directly translated into an equal growth in the political Labour movement. Strong family traditions of voting Conservative or Liberal would not be abrogated in a short space of time. A large political Labour movement was a new phenomenon and there was more of a probability that a Labour-Liberal coalition would form (as witnessed by the Lib-Lab tradition in the coal-fields) than a strong independent political party. Yet, because of a string of external events which tended to conspire against Labour, the new consciousness of the worker was almost forced to take refuge in an independent Labour movement. While tracing these events, it is productive to examine the transformation of class consciousness into political consciousness. A brief study of TUC conferences from the early 1890s through 1914 in conjunction with an examination of the external pressures of the period will actually show the evolution of this "political" unionism.

In 1892, the TUC passed a resolution supporting the establishment of the Independent Labour Party (ILP).\textsuperscript{35} There had been earlier attempts at building a "Labour" party uniting all wings of the British left. The decisive factor was the disillusionment that had set in after the failure of the "new unionism" to expand after 1889. By 1893, the TUC alone (there were many unions not yet in the TUC) could boast a membership of 900,000.\textsuperscript{36} Another major external development which spurred

\textsuperscript{35}TUC Annual Conference Report (1892).
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., (1893).
the trade union movement on to more active and autonomous political action was disappointment with the Liberal Government under Rosebery.\textsuperscript{37} The Liberal Party had been fairly oblivious to the plight of the workingman \textit{(Marxistle's "Death Duties" being an exception)}. One of the results of this Liberal apathy can be seen in the increasingly "socialistic" resolutions of the TUC. Perhaps the most remarkable example of this tendency was the passage of Keir Hardie's sweeping resolution strongly stating:

\begin{quote}
That in the opinion of this Congress it is essential to the maintenance of British industries to nationalize the land and the whole means of production, distribution, and exchange.\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

This resolution won an impressive 219-61 vote of approval. The spirit of this proclamation reflected a new political consciousness on the part of trade unionism and at the same time was a product of disenchantment. Many more radical TUC motions, though less sweeping in scope, were continually passed throughout the decade.

The Taff Vale Judgement of 1901 did more to wed trade unionism to politics than any other single force of the pre-war period. The unions were forced to support an independent labour movement more strongly than ever before. The establishment of the Labour Representative Committee in 1900 was not universally acclaimed in the Labour world. But after Taff Vale, this situation dramatically changed as the first truly

effective parliamentary fund was set up in 1902. By 1904, the TUC's membership had reached 1.5 million. That same year, the TUC passed a resolution in favor of Old Age Pensions. The effect of political unionism was powerfully felt in the election of 1906. With the increasing strength of the LRC, the Liberal Party had acquiesced (for its own benefit as well as the LRC's) in the entry of twenty-nine Labour M.P.'s to parliament. The importance of political unionism was then seen in practical terms through the passage of the Trade Disputes Act of 1906 overturning Taff Vale.

Though the trade union movement was the major vehicle for working class consciousness of the period, it was by no means the only one. Although they were the base of the Labour Party, the unions were not able to wrest control of the LRC from Ramsay MacDonald and Keir Hardie. After these early attempts at control, the union movement began to work with the LRC as a separate yet fraternal body. The history of political unionism from 1906 to 1914 is largely the story of a growing cooperation between two distinct groups for common ends. One group was industrial and one group was political. There of course was not complete harmony. But the term political unionism begins to take on a different meaning as we reach the War. For as the Labour Party became politically stronger, it was able to effectively assert its operational


40 See Tillett's Is the Parliamentary Labour Party a Failure?
independence from the trade union movement.\textsuperscript{41}

In 1909, the TUC had grown to 1.7 million members. That same year, it passed the following amendment:

This Congress is of the opinion that the establishment of a recognised minimum wage in all industries is essential to the welfare of the nation, and urges the Labour Party in Parliament to introduce (such) a measure.\textsuperscript{42}

This declaration shows a specific interest in crossing trade lines to aid the labour movement as a whole. The trade union movement had certainly come a long way from the separatism which had marked the craft unions of the nineteenth century.

In 1910, there was yet another blow to political unionism with the Osborne Judgement making it illegal to use union funds to support political activities. This judgement would be the true test of whether or not the TUC was committed to an independent political Labour movement. The TUC rose to the occasion by strongly denouncing the Osborne Judgement in 1910, 1911, and 1912. In 1911, the TUC went on to unanimously pass resolutions calling for the nationalization of the railways. It also passed a resolution congratulating the strikers of that year.\textsuperscript{43}

In 1913, the last year before the Great War, political

\textsuperscript{41}The major proof for this was the change in status of the trade councils after 1910. These industrial groups had formerly been the points of local contact for the LRC. But after 1910, the trend had been towards these groups giving up their affiliation in favor of solely political bodies. Chapter 2 provides more detail on this development.

\textsuperscript{42}TUC Report (1909).

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., (1911).
unionism reached its zenith. The executive of the TUC triumphantly announced that there were now 2,232 million members. The second major accomplishment of the conference was the successful fusion of the TUC, Labour Party, and General Federation of Trade Unions which had first been discussed in 1911. This meant that these three bodies would house their offices in the same building. A Joint Board would be set up to establish political rules for trade unions to insure closer cooperation and at the same time maintain the separation between the industrial and political wings of the movement. But by far the most important development was the TUC's reaction to the Trade Unions Act of 1913. After four years of constant pressure, the Liberal Government had finally overturned the Osborne Judgement, but with one condition. Each union would have to hold a vote to determine whether or not it would set up a parliamentary fund. Those individuals who voted no could in effect "contract out" of paying a levy supporting the Labour Party. The challenge had been made and the future of the Labour Party now hung in the balance. The TUC laid to rest any question of where it stood. In an overwhelming vote of confidence, the Congress passed a resolution strongly insisting on the establishment of a parliamentary fund. Later that year, most unions voted to set up the individual funds.

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44 By 1913, the influence of revolutionary Syndicalism was diminishing. See Dangerfield, pp. 314-330.
45 TUC Report (1913).
Between 1886 and 1914, the working class movement in Great Britain had indeed come a long way. Created by a variety of revolutionary changes during the 1870s and '80s, the Labour movement was transformed from a nebulous new spirit to a very tangible and distinctly British political consciousness by 1914. Certain external events served as catalysts in causing the political unionism of the early 1900s. This consciousness then crystallized in the form of trade unionism and a separate and independent political movement. It is now natural to turn to the Labour Party. For its history is the history of that very peculiar British working class consciousness which took shape in these years. The Labour Party's story was filled with the same types of contradictions, constraints, and excitement that were the essence of the new working class.
CHAPTER II

ASQUITH’S FLUNKIES

Suddenly politicians of all parties realise that a new factor in politics has appeared; that organised labour as a political force is already a menace to the easygoing gentlemen of the old school.

(LRC Annual Conference-1906)

The General Election of 1906 proved to be the greatest landslide in the history of British politics. The Liberal Party sent no less than 400 M.P.s to parliament and could count on the support of an additional 113 M.P.s. Perhaps the most startling result of the election was the appearance of twenty-nine M.P.s from the young Labour Party. In six short years, the Labour Representative Committee had become a force to be reckoned with. Thus, a major question which arose after 1906 was whether or not this Labour Party would continue its march forward and become the successor to the Liberal Party? The purpose of this chapter is to answer this tantalizing question. Did the Labour Party after 1906 pose a real threat to Campbell-Bannerman’s party?

1Mitchell and Freeman, British Political Facts, p. 122.
Early History

On February 27, 1900, 129 men crowded into Memorial Hall in London and passed the following resolution:

A Resolution in favor of establishing a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, who should have their own Whips and agree upon their policy which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party, which for the time being may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of Labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency.2

The L.R.C. had been born. Yet, from its inception, the party's fortunes were fraught with difficulty. For "The Labour Party (was) a Federation consisting of Trade Unions, Trade Councils, Socialist Societies, and Local Labour Parties."3 Included in this federation were the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, and the Independent Labour Party. These groups spanned the entire spectrum of British working class ideology.

Since the early 1880s, the left in England had been badly splintered over how the working class's interests could best be served. The S.D.F. of Hyndman and Quelch was a strong group of intransigent Marxists who openly preached class warfare. Shaw, Pease, and the Webbs of the Fabian society were middle class intellectuals who favored social reform within the constraints of the parliamentary system. Keir Hardie's I.L.P. was founded in 1893 as a result of the disillusionment


that accompanied the limited success of the "new Unionism" of 1889. The I.L.P. was primarily a socialist and working class party but possessed neither the intransigence of the S.D.F. nor the intellectual snobbery of the Fabians. Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald were pragmatists who throughout the 1890s searched for practical solutions to working class problems. It was the I.L.P. which was able to join these other groups together. With the blessing of the Trades Union Congress, Hardie was finally able to fuse working class interests into a united political movement. It is important to realize that most trade unions were traditionally Liberal. It was only after the disappointment of Rosebery's government that serious thought was given to distinct Labour representation. Thus, the uneasy alliance which had been forged in Memorial Hall was more a product of disenchantment than a result of a common political consciousness.

As a result of the disparate nature of the L.R.C., two major problems presented themselves immediately to the National Executive Committee. R.T. McKenzie has defined these difficulties as "problems of coherence and control". Naturally, it was expected that a "Labour Party" would put forth a specific programme of action. Yet, because of the vast ideological differences between the S.D.F., the Fabians, the Unions, and the I.L.P., it was impossible to take any strong line of action. It is true that most members of the L.R.C. were

socialists, but of different degrees and types. Thus, in order to maintain their fragile alliance, Hardie and the I.L.P. took it upon themselves to steer a delicate course between the more extreme S.D.F. and the more conservative trade unionists. The S.D.F. attempted to turn the L.R.C. into an avowedly Marxist organization. In a resolution, they felt that the new party should be:

... based upon the recognition of the class war, and having for its ultimate object the socialization of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.5

This proposal was soundly defeated. Hardie maintained that "the propaganda of the class hatred is not one which can ever take root in this country...Mankind in the mass is not moved by hatred but by love of what is right. If we could have socialism on the S.D.F. lines nothing would be changed-save for the worse."6 Hardie and MacDonald had to be very careful not to alienate the trade unionists who made up two-thirds of the L.R.C. Thus MacDonald would insist that "Socialism has to be adapted to the organisation of the state."7 The precarious balance of the L.R.C was maintained only by deliberately keeping the programme ideologically ambiguous. Therefore, the L.R.C. was at first little more than an interest group whose aim was to alleviate certain specific legal and social disabilities of the working class.

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6Poirier, p. 143.

7Ibid., p. 92.
A more serious difficulty which was to plague the Labour Party throughout its first eighteen years was the problem of control. The L.R.C. was more or less "thrust" upon the political scene by a variety of groups. The question of who would exert control over the party was fundamental for the first five years. The S.D.F. attempted to impose a socialist test on all L.R.C. candidates. But a party made up primarily of trade unionists was not ready to accept such control from as small a group as Hyndman's. The S.D.F. subsequently left the L.R.C. in August of 1901. Despite their small numbers, the socialists did supply much of the inspiration for the party. A much more serious threat to the N.E.C. came from the unionists. This challenge was embodied in Ben Tillett's 1905 resolution insisting:

That it be an instruction to the Executive of the L.R.C. to enforce the hearty adoption by L.R.C. candidates of all legislative proposals emanating from the Trades Union Congress. In view of the refusal of candidates, that it be the pre-emptory duty of the Executive to refuse or discontinue support financially and morally to said candidate or candidates. ⁸

This resolution was resoundingly defeated 537 to 245. ⁹ Yet, it raised in its clearest form the problem of an independent party. It is essential to understand that more than anything else, independence, both from within and without of the party, was the most important goal of the leaders of the L.R.C. The founding resolution in Memorial Hall was the essence of this

⁸Mckenzie, p. 389.
⁹Ibid., p. 390.
How was it possible for a party such as the L.R.C. to be truly independent? This dilemma came to the forefront at the 1903 conference in Newcastle. The chairman of the L.R.C. at this time was one Richard Bell. The president of the Amalgamated Railway Servants Union, Bell had always been a strong Lib-Lab advocate. The problem was that Bell as chairman had constantly compromised the position of the LRC by appearing on Liberal platforms and supporting Liberal candidates against L.R.C. men. In reaction to Bell and the general tendency to stray from the Labour fold, the so-called "Newcastle Resolution" was adopted which fundamentally revised the object of the LRC.

To secure, by united action, the election to Parliament of candidates promoted, in the first instance, by an Affiliated Society or Societies in the constituency, who undertake to form or join a distinct group in Parliament, with its own whips and its own policy on Labour questions, to abstain strictly from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative Parties, and not to oppose any other candidate recognized by this committee. All such candidates shall pledge themselves to accept this constitution, to abide by the decisions of the Group in carrying out the aims of this constitution or resign, and to appear before their constituencies under the title Labour candidates only. 10

This amendment reveals both the weaknesses and tenacity of the young L.R.C. The party was forced to reaffirm its original position and to spell out in black and white a policy which would not have been necessary in a stronger party. Though the resignation clause was removed in 1904, the "Newcastle Resolution" became the cornerstone of the I.L.P.'s efforts

10 Mckenzie, p. 387.
to keep the L.R.C. on an independent course.

The founding of the L.R.C. was a triumph for Hardie and MacDonald. Though there were serious difficulties in the nature of the Labour Alliance, the combination which the I.L.P. had striven for throughout the 1890s was finally a reality.

Early Organization

Ramsay MacDonald wrote in later years that "For six years the party was allowed to grow in obscurity." Though this observation was a bit romantic, it does convey the relative serenity of the early years. The L.R.C. slowly evolved an organization which was able to make modest in-roads on the Liberal Party until 1906. From one perspective, this organization proved stifling and created much internal strife. Yet, on the whole, a fairly effective machine was assembled.

The L.R.C. of 1900 had a membership of 353,070. Many unions (most conspicuously the miners) were as yet not affiliated. The major impetus for membership came from the courts in 1901 with the Taff Vale decision making unions liable for monetary losses incurred from strikes. The unions were forced to support political action in order to have this crippling decision repealed. By 1902, the number of affiliated unions had risen from forty-one to sixty-five and the membership was up to 455,450. In 1903, there were 127 unions with 847,315 members.\(^\text{12}\) Two of the largest unions, the engineers and the

\(^{11}\)Cole, p. 165.

\(^{12}\)Poirier, p. 141.
cotton-spinners had finally joined the L.R.C. in 1903. By July 1902, a Parliamentary fund had been set up and was in full operation to pay M.P.s. Along with this numerical growth were several stunning political successes. In 1901 no M.P.s other than Hardie and Bell represented the L.R.C. But in late 1902, David Shackleton won an important by-election in Clitheroe. An even more astounding victory was Will Crook's win at Woolwich in early 1903. The addition of Arthur Henderson at Barnard Castle in 1903 gave the L.R.C. a new-found respect and made the party a force that had to be taken into account.

The organizations that ran the campaigns for Shackleton, Crooks, and Henderson were a motley collection of local I.L.P. branches, Trade Councils, and local L.R.C.s. Because the L.R.C. was originally founded as a working class federation, candidatures were left up to affiliated groups who would make nominations and pay for election expenses. Most trade unions collected a levy of one pence a year from each member for the purpose of politics. Yet, there was not "as yet any uniform system or organization for the whole of the country." Approved societies would simply send in nominations to the N.E.C. and most of these were then approved. By 1906, approximately one hundred local L.R.C.s were in existence. Yet, the problem of local jealousies haunted these groups. Several attempts were made to allow local L.R.C.s to directly affiliate with the national party. But the trade councils, those in-

13Mckenzie, p. 467.
congruous industrial bodies which represented all trades of an area, refused to give up their political power though they were primarily industrial groups. Those local L.R.C.s which grew in areas not covered by the trade councils were allowed to affiliate. Even at the local level, the delicate alliance of socialists and unionists had to be treated with the utmost caution.

An even more unusual problem was that only exceptionally, as at Woolwich, Poplar, and Barnard Castle, were individuals allowed to join the L.R.C. directly. Otherwise, one could become a member only by joining an affiliated body. It was difficult to call the L.R.C. a party by 1906. MacDonald admitted that the L.R.C. still had "the limited mind of a Committee". Yet a parliamentary party had been called into being. It was a heterogeneous organization which revealed the tensions and ambiguities of the Memorial Hall Conference. It was at this stage that the political genius of Ramsay MacDonald propelled the L.R.C. out of its "obscurity" and into the national limelight.

The hallmark of the Labour Party's early successes was pragmatism. The I.L.P. had been able to found the L.R.C. only because it was aware of the realities of such an alliance. The Labour Party won twenty-nine seats in 1906 only because MacDonald realized the necessity of making a deal with the Liberals. In a series of secret meetings throughout 1903 between MacDonald, Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal Chief Whip, 

14Mckenzie, p. 469.
and his assistant, Jesse Herbert, the L.R.C. was given a free run in thirty seats. Hardie knew of these meetings and approved of the compact as a political necessity. The result was astounding, giving the L.R.C. 37% of the vote in the fifty seats they contested in 1906. However, this electoral bonanza concealed a much more fundamental result of the 1906 election for both the Liberal and what was now the Labour Party.

"Lib-Labism"

The Labour Party's relationship with the Liberal Party before 1914 is one of the most important factors that must be taken into consideration when assessing the political situation of this period. In attempting to ascertain whether or not the pre-war Labour Party was already a challenge to the Liberals, it becomes essential to distinguish the two groups from each other. There are three areas in particular which are useful in putting Lib-Labism into perspective: ideological comparisons, political relationships, and rank and file comparisons.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the Liberal Party had come to support and become identified with religious Nonconformity, Irish Home Rule, and Free Trade. The ministries of Gladstone had thrived on these issues throughout the period. However, towards the end of the century, a subtle shift began within the Liberal Party to meet the growing demand for solutions to unemployment, sickness, and economic inequality. Harcourt's "Death Duties" were an early example.
of this "New Liberalism". The major ideological revolution occurred at the turn of the century with the works of Hobson and Hobhouse in particular. A comprehensive view was put forth synthesizing the older Liberal ideals and the new theories of Socialism, Idealism, and Darwinism. Society was to take responsibility for the individual. The reasons for this were varied. The collectivists (e.g. T.H. Green) held a view of society which stressed the moral necessity of helping the individual and the empirical reality of man as a social creature. The "Millian" notion developed by Hobson and emphasizing the economic benefits that would accrue to the society as a whole by keeping the worker employed, informed this "New Liberalism" with a more traditional individualistic flavor that had been connected with the older influences on Liberalism (e.g. Christian Socialism and Nonconformity). The final impetus to this new ideology was derived from the evolutionary theories of Darwin and Spencer which argued that society had developed as an organic whole. Thus the new Liberals could argue that helping an individual (or a part of the total society) was in essence only helping society as a whole. Sir William Harcourt was quite right when he said as early as the late 1880s that "We are all socialists now".

After 1906, the radicals of the Liberal Party openly espoused this new ideology and attempted to put it into prac-

15Freeden gives an excellent account of this entire phenomenon in The New Liberalism.

16Freeden, p. 25.
tice. The budget of 1909, the National Health Insurance Act, and all of the other landmark measures of social reform enacted by the Liberals from 1906 to 1914 should be seen within the framework of this new political theory. The entire Liberal Party did not of course openly embrace this "New Liberalism". Many have argued that these policies alienated large segments of the Liberal Party. In particular, the wealthier free-traders who held the purse-strings were not enamored of Lloyd George and his radical cronies. Some historians have gone so far as to argue that with the decline of Nonconformity in England, the Liberal Party had lost the catalyst which had sustained it as a viable party.17

The Labour Party of 1906 was still a group without a programme. Their major goal was the repeal of Taff Vale which was accomplished that very year in the Trades Disputes Act. The other major policies pursued were the Right to Work Bill and Old Age Pensions. Ideologically, the MacDonald wing of the party was congruous to the political thought of the "New Liberals". The Labour Party heartily supported Lloyd George's budget and most of the Liberal legislation. Thus, it is very difficult to distinguish the ideological thrust of the bulk of the Labour Party from the increasingly influential radical wing of the Liberal Party.

At the political level, Lib-Labism is a less tidy matter to deal with. The Gladstone-MacDonald entente held great

potential for both parties. From the perspective of 1903, the pact seemed attractive to both sides. For the Liberals: "The gain to the party through a working agreement would be great, and can be measured best by a comparison of 'no arrangement' with those [results] of 'an arrangement.'"¹⁸ Indeed Labour had begun to lay important foundations for electoral support in the North. Much of the working class in Lancashire and Yorkshire was traditionally Tory. With men such as 'Shackleton drawing Conservative support to the Labour Party in Clitheroe, an electoral deal was certainly beneficial to the Liberals. But if the Liberals made no pact, Jesse Herbert pointed out that "the Liberal Party would suffer defeat not only in those constituencies where L.R.C. candidates fought, but also in almost every borough, and in many divisions, of Lancashire and Yorkshire. This would be the inevitable result of unfriendly action towards the L.R.C....[The L.R.C.] They would be defeated, but so also would [the Liberals] be defeated."¹⁹ The benefits of such an agreement to the Labour Party were even greater. With a still primitive organization, Labour could not hope to compete equally with the vast resources of the established Liberal Party. Free runs in agreed locales would save much money for both parties. More importantly, the pact would provide Labour with a bridgehead to enter the political arena on a large scale for the first time.

¹⁸Poirier, p. 189.

¹⁹Ibid.
The immediate advantages of the pact to the Liberal Party tended to obscure the long-range effect of such an agreement. The most obvious result was to allow Labour an independent political existence. Many Liberals felt that allowing Labour a free run in Tory areas was compromising the party's position. Philip Stanhope, Shackleton's opponent at Clitheroe, worried about the effects of accommodation and claimed that "If the Liberal Party can only be made strong by giving away its strongest positions, all I can say is that its day of usefulness is gone." The traditional Liberals (middle-class free traders) best typified by Alfred Illingworth of Bradford actually left the party over this policy. By allowing Labour free runs, the momentum that had been begun by Taff Vale and fueled by the by-election victories at Clitheroe, Woolwich, and Barnard Castle was translated practically to the organizational level. The surprising nature of these early victories was now structuralized and was given a realistic chance of enduring. Thus, a Labour Party had now been institutionalized by the Gladstone-MacDonald parley.

Yet, the underlying contradictions posed by Lib-Labism for the Labour Party were great. The "Newcastle Resolution" was a real stumbling block for MacDonald. Independence had been crucial to the perpetuation of the party and this seemed to be deflated by the accord with the Liberals. This was a major reason why the Gladstone negotiations were held in

utmost secrecy. Though at a practical level, the pact provided and sustained independence, from a more fundamental vantage point the entente tended to water-down the working class nature of the Labour Alliance. Would Lib-Labism be the force that would eventually absorb the Labour Party into the Liberal Party? It was only through MacDonald's firm insistence on the specific agreements with the Liberals that prevented the party from losing its existence. In fact, we shall see that after 1910, the Liberal Party did break some of the agreements in several constituencies which served to help unify the Labour Party before 1914. The most important problem caused by Lib-Labism for the Labour Party was its effect on the rank and file.

One of the major reasons that the I.L.P. had been formed in the 1890s was the general lack of working class candidates in either major party. There had been a growing antipathy towards the Liberal Party as it had continually rejected working class candidates and had the annoying habit of introducing its own men where L.R.C. men were already standing. The most blatant examples of this were in 1903 when Liberals were selected at Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland, and most notably Barnard Castle against Henderson. With the Gladstone-MacDonald pact and the subsequent deals for 1906, disillusionment with the parliamentary party began to grow. This was exacerbated by the seemingly moderate stances of the party in the Commons. A militant socialist movement began to grow at this time and the entire issue came to a head in 1907 at the by-election
for Colne Valley.

Victor Grayson, a young socialist was selected as the candidate for Colne Valley by the local I.L.P. The N.E.C. turned down his nomination because the local branches that nominated him were not affiliated with the national party. In a "passionate and tumultuous" campaign, Grayson won without official Labour support. His victory became symbolic of the growing discord within the party. At the I.L.P. conference in 1908, these tensions came out in the open. Jim Larkin of Ireland said he "would not sink his socialism in the Labour Party" and exclaimed "socialists for Grayson, the remainder for yourselves." 21 This type of sentiment became characteristic of the Labour Party after this period. The National Executive was constantly and effectively being attacked by the militant wing of the party. The most eloquent critic was of course the omnipresent wizard of the NFTW Ben Tillett, who described the N.E.C. as "Press flunkeys to Asquith" and as "sheer hypocrites". Tillett went on to claim that MacDonald and Henderson would "for ten and five guineas a time... lie with the best". The N.E.C. was "softly feline in their purring to Ministers and their patronage... repaying with gross betrayal the class that willingly supports them." 22

The culmination of this attitude came in the September, 1908 by-election at Newcastle. Newcastle was one of the

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22 McKenzie, p. 395.
constituencies covered by MacDonald's entente with Gladstone. When the Liberal seat fell vacant and a Labour man was nominated, MacDonald was quick to force his withdrawal. When this occurred, the Social Democratic Party put up a candidate and the Newcastle I.L.P. supported him. The S.D.P. candidate was badly defeated. Yet, this rebellion began a trend which MacDonald and Henderson had to constantly try to check after 1908.

The Executive was in most cases able to assert its authority effectively and maintain cordial relations with the Liberal Party. There was real rank and file dissatisfaction. Yet, it must be remembered that the Labour Party was overwhelmingly dominated by trade unionists, both in numbers and funds. The socialists were occasionally pacified by the acceptance of more leftist resolutions at national conferences. However, the N.E.C. was growing stronger every year. The control problem that plagued the party in its early years was no longer as severe as it once was. The salient feature of the first ten years of the Labour Party was its opportunism and its ability to consolidate each gain.

Though called into existence by external socio-economic forces and the dissatisfaction of the time, the Labour Party was an institution very much shaped and defined by the traditions and constraints of the British electoral system. The first major impetus for the party's growth came from the system in the form of the Taff Vale Judgement. The difficulties posed by a political system that was not favorable towards
third parties was somewhat avoided by the Gladstone-MacDonald pact. Yet, perhaps even more important to the early years of Labour's existence was the pragmatism and political acumen of its leaders. The contradictions inherently part of the Memorial Hall Conference were glossed over in such a way as to actually benefit the party. Yet, the Grayson revolt was the first sign of trouble brewing in the rank and file. This challenge along with the tumult of years 1910 to 1914 presented the party with an entirely new set of problems. Thus, the last four years before the war were critical for the survival of Labour. The ways in which these problems and challenges were met and solved laid the foundation for the future of a Labour Party that would survive the Liberal Party and the upheavals of the greater portion of the twentieth century.

The Evolution of the Labour Party: 1910-14

(a)-Constraints

"The year upon which we have just entered is likely to be a momentous one for Labour... Labour has become aggressive, and is not merely opposing attack, but is determined upon advances."\(^23\) And so Philip Snowden greeted the year 1910. 1910 was indeed to be an important year; not just for the Labour Party but for the country as well. 1910 was to open a new chapter in British history. The next four years were to be tumultuous and full of uncertainty. For the Labour Party, those four years were to present the N.E.C. with an

\(^{23}\)Askwith, p. 175.
entirely new set of challenges. Yet some of the old ubiquitous problems of the party were still influential in these years. It is therefore important to first examine some of the traditional constraints of the British political system and how they affected the fortunes of the Labour Party. These constraints were products of both the external political situation of the period and the internal obstacles engendered by the nature of the party machine and the political system. The second half of this section will trace the variety of new stimuli which began to mold Labour into a party after 1910. By the time World War I broke out, the Labour Party had reached a critical juncture in its development. The purpose of this section is to understand what that juncture was.

The year 1910 marked the beginning of the constitutional struggle over the House of Lords. The fight over the Parliament Act led to the reopening of the question of Irish Home Rule and the possibility of impending civil war. These crises were the most time-consuming and important matters of the day. Their effect on the Labour Party was direct and crippling. At the party conference at Newport in 1910, it was strongly stated that:

The grave constitutional issues which are at stake will now have to be fought to a finish. The Liberal Party will hardly be able to draw back, and the House of Lords will have to be dealt with before any Party can make substantial progress with social reform.\(^{24}\)

This remark illustrates the difficulty the party found itself

\(^{24}\textbf{Labour Party Conference Report (1910), p.2.}\)
Certainly Labour did support the Liberals in their efforts to reform the House of Lords and pass Lloyd George's budget. But to relegate "Labour" issues to a secondary position seemed to compromise the purpose of the party. With the probability of one or more General Elections on the horizon, Labour was caught in a bind. Philip Snowden years later would admit that:

It must be said in justice that the position of the Labour Party in that Parliament (1909-10) was very difficult. They had really to choose between a Liberal and a Tory Government. There was nothing to be hoped for from a Tory Government but reaction. The Liberal Government in the main was going slowly in our way.25

Could the Labour Party take the responsibility for bringing the Liberals down? There was no doubt that such a strategy would do immeasurable harm to the future of the party. The Labour Party held most of its seats by the grace of the Liberal Party. The Liberal chief whip, J.A. Pease warned the Labour leaders that "if an aggressive attitude was persisted in by the Labour Party, Labour could not expect official Liberalism to stand on one side." In a list of threats, Pease went on to say that "Liberal legislation has not been in the past, nor in the future is likely to be, much influenced by members who claim no loyalty to the Government... That the issues of the next General Election are such that all Liberal, Radical, and Labour members can whole-heartedly unite in supporting."26


Not only would the Liberal Party react sharply to any meddling by the Labour Party at a time of utmost political delicacy, but in a larger sense, they would not allow any further expansion of Labour into new seats. Pease said "That if they (Labour) now press L.R.C. candidates for seats which were won by Liberals, or Labour members who have not signed the constitution (Lib-Labs) they must expect retaliatory attacks on their own candidates standing for those seats which they now hold."27 A pragmatist such as a MacDonald could accept this situation. But how would the rank and file react to such a show of weakness and dependence on the part of the leaders of their party?

The entire question of dependence was of course raised after MacDonald's deal with the Liberals in 1903. But after 1909, the problem of political dependence was superseded by an even more dangerous possibility. "By pressing labour and social legislation on the Liberal Government the Labour Party was enhancing the prestige of the Liberals as a social reform party, and weakening the case for independent Labour representation... The Labour Party lost no opportunity of claiming credit for the Liberal social legislation, but I doubt if that argument carried conviction."28 Snowden's assessment of the situation was quite correct. The effect was to exacerbate the divisions within the party that had begun at Colne Valley.

With the National Health Insurance Act in 1911, the socialists

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28Snowden, p. 217.
in the party had yet another reason for disgruntlement. For the Act's major feature (which the N.E.C. had gone along with) was that the worker would have to contribute out of his pay check for his own insurance. J. Bromley of the Enginemen's Federation vocalized the feelings of many when he said his union had "become disgusted by this Liberal-Labour representation; and we have been unable to shut our eyes to the fact that our party has tied itself most closely to the Liberal Party."29 At the 1910 I.L.P. conference, Hardie himself claimed that the Labour Party had "ceased to count".30

The results of the January, 1910 election confirmed the belief that Labour was strongly dependent on the Liberal Party.31 Of seventy-eight candidates who stood, fifty-one ran for seats held by Labour at sometime since 1906. Of these fifty-one, only three faced Liberal opposition. Twenty-four new seats were contested, and only three were won; all three being unopposed by the Liberals. Thus, as Neal Blewett contends, Labour had indeed been "contained". The effect of this blow to Labour expansion was to reduce the number of seats fought in the December election to the bare minimum. Only fifty-six were fought and only those in which the party had a good chance of winning. Thus, by the end of 1910, Labour nationally appeared to be in very bad shape. The party's

29 TUC Annual Report (1913).
30 Marquand, p. 127.
hands were tied by both the fear of turning the Liberals out of the government and the fear of turning themselves out of the Commons.

Several institutional constraints served to entrench Labour in its sad predicament. The British electoral system was not normally a helpful vehicle for the realignment of parties. The British voter was very influenced by the traditional voting habits of his family. 32 The prospects for a third party's chances were indeed bleak during this period. Naturally, the question of the extent of the franchise arises when one talks of the political system. Only 60% of all adult males were qualified to vote. Yet, because of the complexity of the registration process and the 12-month residency requirement (to say nothing of plural voting), a "roughly representative" system did in fact conspire against the working class and the Labour Party (though whether MacDonald would have challenged more seats even with universal suffrage is highly debatable). 33 All of these impediments were certainly problematic for the Labour Party. But perhaps the most debilitating obstacle came from the courts.

The financial basis for the Labour Party had of course come from the unions. The legality of trade union contributions for political representation had never been questioned.


But in the Osborne Judgement of late 1909, the courts ruled that this practice was illegal. The effect of the judgement was not as bad as had been expected. But it certainly hampered possible electoral growth. The party got around it only by reducing its candidatures for the 1910 elections. The loss to Labour was at least 20,000 pounds and it caused an immediate loss in membership and created tensions with some unions.\(^3^4\) The Osborne Judgement did add to Liberal-Labour antipathy as the decision was not reversed until 1913. But it finally forced the Liberals to allow the payment of M.P.s in 1911. Thus, the problems of the young Labour Party of 1910 were great. The possibility of superseding the Liberal Party within a short space of time was all but impossible. Yet, the period from 1910 to 1914 did see the beginning of a slow evolution in the organization of the party which presented the Liberal Party with severe challenges.

\(\text{(b)-Stimuli}\)

In 1906 the Labour Party had almost 1,000,000 members out of an electorate of about 7.2 million.\(^3^5\) By 1912, this number had risen to almost 1.9 million (out of about 7.5 million) and the number of affiliated constituency and central parties had jumped from eighty-three to 146.\(^3^6\) In the January 1910 election, Labour was able to spend 881 pounds per can-

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\(^3^4\)McKibbin, pp. 20-21.
\(^3^5\)Butler and Freeman, p. 122.
\(^3^6\)Ibid., p. 98.
didate compared to 1,075 pounds by the Liberals. In the December election, 736 pounds was spent compared to the Liberal's 882 pounds per candidate. By 1910, the annual conference could boast of sales of over 5.8 million pieces of political propaganda. By 1909, the miners had finally voted to affiliate with the party. Despite all of these seemingly healthy signs of growth, Keir Hardie was forced to admit that:

... we have not yet evolved either the organization or the espirit de corps which would enable us to cope successfully with our opponents.

Labour's poor 36.6% of the vote in contested seats was chalked up to the Osborne Judgement and the out of date register. The N.E.C. had a major task in reorganization to make the party mechanically sound. MacDonald's goal was to solve three major problems. There were still local peculiarities within regional parties which led to autonomy and some rebellion from the rank and file. Affiliated bodies were not taking their responsibilities seriously. Finally, the miners had to be reminded that they were now members of the Labour Party. The next four years were to be crucial in the evolution of the party.

In 1911, Arthur Henderson became the secretary of the

37Blewett, p. 290.
38Labour Party Conference (1910).
39Ibid., p. 55. 40Ibid.
41McKibbin, p. 19.
Labour Party. With his arrival, organization was given an important jolt and MacDonald's three goals after the elections of 1910 were largely achieved. The problem of strengthening local parties and making them more uniform was accomplished in several ways. Additional agents and national organizers were appointed from 1910 to 1914 to canvass local parties and insure more efficiency and control. This was made possible by the decision to give aid from the Head Office to local parties. MacDonald and Henderson were able to insure this in 1912 by linking the giving of aid to greater efficiency by requiring that applications for financial assistance "be accompanied by a complete statement showing the affiliated local party's composition and details of its organization." 42 This gave the N.E.C. more control over local parties and cut back on local autonomy. Another important development in securing uniformity occurred with the founding of central parties in both London and Glasgow by 1914. This greatly eased the task of organization in these areas.

The affiliation of the miners in 1909 was of course a major achievement. But the miners had been traditional Lib-Labers and their membership was more nominal than real. They refused to work through Labour machinery and were a cause for much consternation at Head Office. After 1911, Henderson decided it was time to take direct action in forging true cooperation with the miners. The results and experiences at

42McKibbin, p. 33.
the by-elections of 1910 to 1914 (Hanley in particular) proved the decisive catalysts in moving the miners towards Labour. The Liberals refused to accept mining candidates and this along with the changing composition of the MFGB leadership (Smillie, an I.L.P.er became the leader in 1911), insured the miners’ support for independent Labour representation. As yet, this support was patchy, but certainly evident in N. Staffordshire, Ashton, Durham, and Mid-Derbyshire.43

The last area of organizational growth dealt with trade councils. These industrial groups had not taken their political duties seriously before 1910. MacDonald’s assistant J.S. Middleton verbalized a new view of these bodies shared by the N.E.C. when he commented that “we at the Head Office realise to the full what excellent service the Councils were able to render us in the early years. As the political side of the movement has developed however, it is extremely desirable that these bodies [Local L.R.C.s] should be our points of local contact.”44 Thus, affiliation was in large part transferred from the trade councils to purely political organs. By 1914, affiliation was held by political parties in London, Glasgow, Manchester, and Leeds. In 1910, none of these areas had had affiliated parties. By 1914, there had indeed been a great deal of improvement within the Labour machine. With this in mind, it is important to examine the state of the

43McKibbin, pp. 26-27.
44Ibid., p. 33.
relationship between the Liberal and Labour Parties.

From 1910 to 1914, the Labour Party lost four seats at by-elections. In addition, P.F. Clarke has noted that in fourteen three-cornered by-elections, Labour finished third.45 Pease's threat to prevent any Labour growth seems to have been realized in these results. Yet, the result of these electoral losses actually helped the Labour Party. For this Liberal antagonism seriously dampened their relationship with Labour. Though MacDonald was successful in maintaining cordial relations nationally with the Liberals, the rank and file was slowly beginning to gain a stronger consciousness of being part of the Labour Party. The question of tracing this consciousness to the growth of the worker discussed in chapter one is difficult, but was certainly important. For the purposes of this chapter, it will be sufficient to examine the accidental causes of this consciousness.

The four by-election losses suffered by Labour before the war were all actually quite peculiar. Other than Bow and Bromley (where George Lansbury fought the entire campaign as an Independent on the votes for women question), all of the losses occurred in mining constituencies in the Midlands and served not only to alienate the traditionally Liberal miners from the Liberal Party but also to confirm the belief of much of the rank and file that an alliance with the Liberals

was not desirable. Even after the first General Election of 1910, it was bluntly stated that "The treatment meted out to our candidates by the Liberals during the recent contest was not of a kind to predispose us towards any undue friendly relationships."46

In June of 1912, Enoch Edwards, the president of the Miner's Federation and the Labour M.P. at Hanley died. Though he was at heart a Liberal, Edwards had maintained a cordial relationship with Labour. With his death, the Liberals put up their own candidate shocking the entire Labour Party. At the same time, the Liberal M.P. at Crewe died, and in revenge the Labour Party decided to fight that seat as well. Labour, as expected fared poorly at Hanley and the Liberals barely won. But the Labour intervention at Crewe lost the Liberals an important seat. After the by-elections were over, The Times hoped that "it may be in the growing intractability of the Labour Party we are witnessing the beginning of the end of the coalition."47 And the Labour Leader gleefully exclaimed that Hanley "means the death-blow of Liberal-Labourism as a national force."48 Though these analyses were extreme, it did seem as if Hanley was symbolic of a growing disgust with accommodation. The results of the by-elections at Chesterfield and N.E. Derbyshire exacerbated this feeling and killed Lib-Labism in many people's minds by World War I.

46Labour Party Conference (1910).
47McKibbin, p. 56.
48Ibid.
The "Kenyon Affair" at Chesterfield dealt a serious blow to Lib-Labism. Barnet Kenyon was a traditional Lib-Laber who was put forward by the Derbyshire miners as the Labour candidate for Chesterfield in August, 1913. When Kenyon refused to sign the party constitution, MacDonald and the MFGB refused to endorse his candidacy. Kenyon was elected and actually agreed to accept the Labour whip. However, in January, 1914, Kenyon suddenly resigned from the Labour Party and was roundly condemned. The Derbyshire miners, who had supported Kenyon throughout his escapades, promised that the entire affair would not be repeated.

The by-election in May, 1914 at N.E. Derbyshire was the final blow to Derbyshire Lib-Labism. When the Lib-Lab M.P. died, leaving a vacancy, the miners nominated a new man, James Martin. He was in reality a Liberal, but since the Kenyon affair, he had been a loyal Labour supporter. The Liberals refused to support him and put up their own man. The result was to give the Conservatives the seat. Along with the effects of the coal strikes of 1912, the by-elections served to unify the miners and bind them more closely with the Labour Party. Perhaps the most telling statement on the nature of Lib-Labism came in the midst of the N.E. Derbyshire by-election from MacDonald himself. He said that the Liberals:

... did it at Hanley and won. It is the most expensive victory Liberalism has had within this generation. They have lost five or six seats as a result of their actions (actually four)... What impertinence!... We have the seat. The Labour Party is going to grow. It is not going to accept its present strength as its final strength. It is going
MacDonald's strong oratory was of course in the heat of an election campaign and should not be considered to represent a drastic turn-around in N.E.C. strategy. Yet, it does show the tensions that were beginning to surface during this period. In other mining constituencies, the N.E.C. tried to maintain Lib-Lab agreements. Yet, the general rank and file was beginning to tire of cooperation and strongly fought to challenge accommodation. The two examples of this were at the Leicester and Keighley by-elections of 1913.

Leicester was particularly sensitive because it was a double constituency where MacDonald had one seat and the Liberals the other. When the Liberal died, the local Labour Party decided to fight for the seat. After much intrigue and questionable tactics, MacDonald was able to secure the removal of the Labour man. Yet, the Executive's active interference sent shock waves through the local Leicester organization and the entire episode showed that a future pact with the Liberals would be difficult to impose on the rank and file. The difficulty of reconciling national politics with the wishes of the rank and file was a serious problem. MacDonald's comments during the N.E. Derbyshire by-election revealed that even he was beginning to have his doubts primarily because of Liberal intransigence.

In late 1913, Keighley came up for a by-election and

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49McKibbin, pp. 61-62.
again the rank and file demanded a Labour candidate. Henderson went to Keighley and was persuaded that the majority of the members were strongly in support of this candidature. Subsequently, the N.E.C. did give its approval. The reasons for this endorsement ranged from the desire to avoid another Leicester and more importantly, as Clynes put it, to give "proof of the independence and self-contained position of the Party both in the House of Commons and the country."50 Thus, by the outbreak of World War I, the self-restraint which had characterized Lib-Labism before 1910 seemed to be on the wane. Whether or not the alliance itself had broken down is doubtful. Yet, the Liberal loyalties of much of the rank and file had been seriously questioned. As Ross McKibbin has put it:

... the growing intractability of Labour was (not) primarily ideological or even connected with specifically objectionable policies of the Liberal government. It is possible, though difficult to prove, that the industrial disturbances of 1911-13 contributed to militancy in the rank and file which, in turn, made local parties less willing to stand aside for Liberal candidates. Yet this was perhaps less fundamental than a growing feeling in the country that the Liberal Party was no longer the party of the working classes, but that ... the Labour Party was.51

Conclusion

The period between the Memorial Hall Conference and Sarajevo saw the growth of the Labour Party from childhood to

50McKibbin, p. 69.
51Ibid., pp. 71.
adolescence. The childhood can be construed as occurring from 1900 to 1910 and the adolescence from 1910 to 1914. The problems of the early Labour Party, coherence, control, and independence had for the most part reached a critical juncture by 1914. The problem of coherence was solved by not facing the issue of ideology at all. As the trade unions numerically exerted more and more influence on the party, the N.E.C. was able to transcend the difficulties of the alliance forged in 1900 through the tactic of ambiguity.

The problem of control had been acute before 1910 most clearly illustrated in Ben Tillett's resolution of 1905 and the challenge of Victor Grayson. The N.E.C. was able to solve these problems through shrewd manipulation and the general consolidation of its power through the use of aid for local parties, the transferral of affiliation from trade councils to local L.R.C.s, the establishment of central parties in Glasgow and London, and the setting up of regional organization in Scotland. Though Leicester was an example of continual dissatisfaction with the N.E.C., there is no doubt that MacDonald and Henderson were able to wield effective control after 1910. The militant socialist element in the party was in the minority and the heterogeneous nature of trade unionism enabled the N.E.C. to keep most factions off balance and to thus control the party and its direction.

With regard to independence, it was evident that the rank and file, spurred on by the militancy of the period, was far more eager to break its ties with the Liberal Party than
was the Executive. The experiences at by-elections, "the action of the Government over the railway strike and the miners' strike", the delay in the reversal of the Osborne Judgement, and the general antipathy towards the Liberals after 1910 all served to demonstrate the need for independent Labour representation. Lib-Labism as it had been known in the coal-fields and other prominent working class areas was close to completely rupturing. The N.E.C. reacted to this growing disillusionment by trying to temper and control the speed of such a fracture for politically expedient reasons. An immediate break off would certainly deal a serious blow to the party's fortunes. Thus, the N.E.C. was certainly moving more towards the rank and file, but was not ready to completely abandon cooperation.

The position of the Labour Party by 1914 has been seen by most commentators as one of weakness. Clarke has examined the by-elections of 1910 to 1914 to show the abysmal condition of Labour at the national polls. It is helpful to note McKibbin's rebuttal to this argument. Taking into account the fact that the party was but ten years old and still operating under many handicaps, McKibbin has argued that the best way to look at Labour's performance is not to compare the results too closely with the other parties. Instead it is more helpful to compare the by-election results where possible with the 1910 General Election totals. In these

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52McKibbin, p. 65.
five seats (N.E. Lanarkshire, Holmfirth, Crewe, Keighley, and Leith), Labour improved its total in all the constituencies. Labour's entry cost the Liberal's seats in Crewe and Leith, and their poll in Holmfirth and Keighley was almost equal to that of the Conservatives. This argument at best only suggests that though Labour did finish last, they were not doing abysmally. In the seven seats contested for the first time in by-elections, Labour's showing at Oldham, Midlothian, and S. Lanark was good enough to give the Conservatives the gain. Labour's poll at N.W. Durham, Houghton-le-Spring, and Keighley was remarkably good. The Keighley by-election of 1913 showed a Labour improvement from 1911. Though these results do not reveal the triumph of Labour, they do suggest some severe Liberal difficulty because of Labour. 53

From the standpoint of organization growth, George Askwith noted that in the Labour Party, a "sense of greater strength came, too, by the vast increase of membership in the unions especially dealing with the semi-skilled and unskilled workpeople, as a result due partly to the systematic organisation, partly to the requirement of the National Insurance Act that wage-earners should belong to an approved society." 54 In addition, the payment of M.P.'s and the Trades Union Act of 1913 greatly reduced the financial burden on the party which was reflected in the appointment of national organizers, the

53 McKibbin, p. 29.
54 Askwith, p. 355.
extension of the Head Office, and the beginning of financial aid to local parties. The relationship between the TUC and the party generally improved in the period as well. In 1913, a Joint Board was established so that the TUC, the General Federation of Trade Unions, and the Labour Party would meet in the same building to better coordinate united political action. 55 Also in 1913, the TUC passed with only three dissents, a resolution in favor of financial aid for the Labour Party in response to the requirements of the Trades Union Act which allowed a union to "contract-out" if it wished. The effects of the mining by-elections aided union support. The MFGB under Smillie became one of the party's loyalist and strongest supporters. Perhaps even more helpful in establishing a greater rapport between the unions and the party was the effect of the industrial disturbances of the period.

In his history of Industrial Problems and Disputes, Lord Askwith noted "the interference of politicians in Labour disputes, much as many of them hankered to come in, was deleterious, and could be exposed far more strongly than I have suggested." 56 This comment was in particular referring to the London Dock strike of 1912 when five cabinet ministers attempted to settle the dispute and ended up antagonizing both sides. In one of the many transport strikes of the period, Lloyd George successfully appealed to the Agadir imbroglio as a reason for unity to end the strike, alienating

55 TUC Annual Report (1913).
56 Askwith, p. 353.
many workers. In response to the miner’s Minimum Wage Act of 1912, Asquith tersely referred to the Act as "A provisional and, to some extent, as an experimental measure to meet a special emergency in regard to a particular class of workers working under peculiar conditions in one great industry."57 This was certainly not the statement of a "New Liberal". The most inflammatory gesture was the government’s use and threat of police and military in the industrial disputes. In referring to Churchill and the government’s actions during the S. Wales Miner’s Strike and the London Transport Worker’s Strike, Ben Tillett called Churchill a "modern Nero". He went on to say that the "suppression by violence of our good fellows in all of the port fights...[is] terrible enough as a handicap for even a Tory Government; but for one who is a Liberal... it is indeed an impeachment to recall the miserable episodes of the fight where Labour had the millstone of capitalist repression about its neck."58 Even MacDonald condemned the government for threatening military action in the summer of 1911.59 Thus, by 1914, because of greater organization, the actions of the government, and a growing working class consciousness, it is safe to say that the relationship between the unions and the Labour Party, though not ideal, was becoming increasingly closer and harmonious.

57The Times, 3 November 1913.
58Tillett, p. 34.
59Hansard, August, 1911.
The last area to examine is where Lib-Labism stood by 1914. Since early 1910, the Liberals (the Master of Elibank in particular) had approached MacDonald many times to discuss the possibility of forming a coalition. Typical of these gestures was a letter from Lloyd George to MacDonald on March 3, 1913.

My dear Ramsay,

I want to have a serious talk with you about the relations of Liberalism and Labour. If we go on as we have been doing during the last couple of years more especially, both your Party and ours will meet with the worst disaster which has befallen us.60

In 1912, Elibank asked MacDonald if he would "not join the cabinet"? MacDonald's reply was "that it was out of the question for two reasons. 1. I was not prepared to support the Govt. through thick and thin. 2. It would do great evil to the Labour Party."61 It is difficult to go too far in estimating the finality of MacDonald's intentions. Yet, his speech during the N.E. Derbyshire by-election was quite strong and after Labour had revenged their loss by fighting at Ipswich (causing a Conservative gain), he noted on May 29th that:

The Conservatives will ... continue their attempts to get a Parliamentary majority on minority votes, and if the Liberals ask us to prevent that by giving them every seat they want, the Conservatives will succeed, for we will agree to no such proposal. If the Liberals run candidates against us they can do so, and when that policy of stupidity has ended in devastation we will ask them how it pleases them. If that should come we shall begin to build up again with the knowledge that we shall be in a far better position than the Liberals themselves to make good.

60Marquand, p. 159.

61Ibid., 151.
our losses, and that in this country, as on the continent, the fight... will then be between a great Labour Party and a strong reactionary party, with a small Liberal Party standing between, cut off from every source of inspiration and opportunity of growth.62

Thus, at the Executive level, the question of continued cooperation was seriously being questioned. MacDonald and Henderson were the most open of the N.E.C. towards a renewal of a pact. But even MacDonald seems to be speaking with more confidence and militancy by the outbreak of the Great War. While it is difficult to make any national prognosis, it is easy to see a general disaffection at the local level. For a variety of reasons which will be seen in the next chapter, the rank and file would not react favorably to any further accommodation.

Thus, the Labour Party throughout the period continued to gain momentum. When it was a lesser force before 1910, it was naturally easier to gain concessions from the Liberal Party. Yet, as the party grew in numbers and power through 1914, opposition stiffened. The amazing results of 1906 were not duplicated or built on before the war. But it should not be expected that a young party which was growing as a threat to the Liberals should be allowed to expand. Considering this, the electoral results after 1910 should not be viewed as poor showings. Rather, it was remarkable that Labour fared as well as it did. The institutionalization of the Labour Party in 1903 (revealed in 1906) became more

62Marquand, p. 162.
and more ingrained within the workingman's mind. Habits began to form in areas where the party was allowed to grow and the events of 1910 to 1914 served to reinforce these trends with an added vigor. By 1914 it was impossible to say whether or not Labour would succeed Liberalism. However, it is possible to say, from the result of the by-elections alone, that Labour had become a real threat to the Liberals. Though the Liberal and Labour Parties did not differ ideologically, their membership and motives were radically different. The growing disenchantment of the working class and their own conservative rank and file would prove to be the Liberal's greatest challenge. How they would handle it is unfortunately unknown, for after August 1914, came the deluge; swamping Europe and drowning the Liberal Party.
CHAPTER III

Patterns of Disenchantment

To reduce the Liberal Party to a definition would be like attempting to reduce the glandular contours of a circus Fat Lady by simply talking her thin. It was an irrational mixture of whig aristocrats, industrialists, dissenters, reformers, trade unionists, quacks and Mr. Lloyd George.

(George Dangerfield, Strange Death, p. 72)

The National Picture

After their victory in the December election of 1910, the Liberals became the only party in English history to win three successive General Elections. The position of the Conservative Party was indeed bleak. After the December election, the Unionists were badly split. At Albert Hall, the leader of the Conservative Party Arthur Balfour ruptured the fragile unity that had only been maintained by party-wide opposition to the "People's Budget". By coming out strongly for Tariff Reform, it was "no longer possible or desirable to ignore the gravity of the situation which the Unionist Party has drifted in the past fortnight."\(^1\) The leadership was discredited and after losing a third consecutive General Election, the Liberal leadership felt that the position

\(^1\)Blewett, p. 203.
of the Tories had never been worse.\textsuperscript{2} Thus, from the perspective of 1910, it was the Conservative and not the Liberal Party which appeared to be on its deathbed.

After the passage of the Parliament Act in 1911, the Liberal Party was forced to repay the Irish Nationalists for their strong support throughout 1909 and 1910. Irish Home Rule, the issue that had consumed the Liberal Party in the last part of the nineteenth century once again raised its menacing head after the summer of 1911. The Nationalists held eighty-four seats in the Parliament of 1911. With the Liberals holding 272 seats to the Unionists 271, the importance of the Nationalists becomes apparent. It was critical not to alienate the Irish during this period of utmost importance in constitutional and social history. For this reason, Home Rule was proceeded with leading to many unsettling events. In Ireland, Carson's Ulstermen threatened Civil War. To a badly divided Unionist Party, the Irish imbroglio offered an issue. Yet, the actions of F.E. Smith and Bonar Law seemed seditious and split the Conservatives even further. The Liberal Party was in a quandary. Could war in Ireland be risked or should some type of compromise be attempted which might anger Redmond and topple the government?

The period 1910 to 1914 must be viewed in this context. The position of both the Conservatives and Nationalists was much more doubtful and elicited far more concern than the position of the Labour Party. To most informed observers of

\textsuperscript{2}Blewett, p. 201.
the day, the containment of Labour in 1910 and the pressing constitutional issues of the day seemed to suggest the probability of further Labour cooperation. Though the Liberal Party was indeed dependent on Labour and Irish support, the threat posed by Labour was not considered to be serious. In fact, the Liberal Party seemed to have quelled the rising tide of working class consciousness by absorbing it. With this background in mind, it is necessary to examine the specific condition of the Liberal Party from 1910 to 1914. For it will be argued, that the immediate crises of the day were far less significant for the future of the Liberal Party than the potentially catastrophic possibilities engendered by continually deteriorating relations with the Labour Party.

From 1910 to 1914, the Liberal Party suffered fifteen by-election losses to the Conservative Party. Of those fifteen losses, eight can be attributed to the intervention of the Labour Party and another to the Liberal-Labour split. An examination of several of these by-elections will help illuminate the condition of the Liberal Party during these years.

The Liberal losses of Cheltenham and S. Somerset in early 1911, while not critical in themselves, did reveal the deficiencies of Liberal organization in rural areas. Though these constituencies had been marginal mainly because of the free trade issue, they seemed to be representative of the 

3See P.F. Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism.
decay of the Liberal machine in the south.\textsuperscript{4} The loss of Oldham in 1911 was one of the most troubling signs of Liberal-Labour problems. In a town which was fought for the first time by Labour, the result saw 12,255 votes cast for the Unionists, 10,623 for the Liberals, and an astounding 7,448 for the Labour Party.\textsuperscript{5} MacDonald noted in his diary that the "Liberals (were) very angry about Oldham. Long interview with Elibank who says Premier very much upset."\textsuperscript{6}

The losses of Manchester South and Manchester Northwest within a few months of each other in 1912 were primarily due to the reaction against the National Health Insurance Act of 1911. These losses were indeed ominous as Manchester as of 1910 had appeared to be the center of the revival of Liberalism in the Northwest.\textsuperscript{7} Both of these constituencies were mainly middle-class and business oriented, and their loss was symbolic of the growing discontent of the traditional adherents of Liberalism. The Liberals lost Crewe in July of 1912 as "the Labour revolt let in the Unionist."\textsuperscript{8} Crewe, which was normally a safe Liberal seat, was beginning to typify the destructive results of local intransigence to both Liberal

\textsuperscript{4}Blewett, p. 282.
\textsuperscript{5}The Times, 14 November 1911.
\textsuperscript{6}Marquand, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{8}The Annual Register (1912), p. 192.
and Labour Parties. Perhaps even more damaging was the loss of Edinburgh to the Conservatives. A traditional home of the Liberals, the Midlothian stronghold had not been lost in thirty-eight years. The entrance of Labour certainly hurt the Liberals as the vote went 6,021 cast for the Unionists, 5,989 for the Liberals, and 2,400 for Labour. The Annual Register sheds further light on this contest. Mr. Outhwaite, the new Liberal M.P. from Hanley, "declared that landowners should be taxed out of existence and the Whigs expelled from the Liberal Party." This comment reveals a clear potential for a cleavage between the 'new' Liberals and the traditional wealthy contributors to the party.

The loss of Reading on November 8, 1913 came in the midst of extreme tensions over Home Rule. The lunatic Larkin was being prosecuted at the time. At the Linlithgow by-election which occurred simultaneously, Labour leaders advised working-men to vote Conservative. The result was a reduction of over 1,000 votes from the General Election and a hair-thin win by the Liberals. This slim victory was made even more remarkable by the presence of a large Irish Nationalist vote. The Socialist intervention at Reading cost the Liberals the seat and is a clear example of the growing willingness of Labour

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9Pelling, Geography, p. 282.
10The Times, 10 September 1912.
rank and file to defeat the government. The appearance for the first time of a Labour candidate in S. Lanarkshire saw a surprisingly strong performance and caused a Liberal loss.\(^{13}\)

With the defection of Bethnal Green in London to the Conservative ranks in February of 1914, the severity of the Liberal-Labour split became evident. Masterman, who had just entered the cabinet, was defeated by twenty-four votes because of Labour infiltration.\(^{14}\) Bethnal Green was one of the last boroughs in London which had remained Liberal during a disastrous decay in the capital. Leith Burgs, a constituency which had "been faithful to Liberalism since the passing of the Reform Act of 1832 and [was] regarded by the Government as safe" followed suit in the continuing Liberal-Labour split.\(^{15}\) The vote showed 5,159 for the Unionists, 5,143 for the Liberals, and 3,346 for Labour. Not only had Labour cost the government another seat, but the campaign had been marked by strong anti-Labour speeches by the Liberal candidate.

The N.E. Derbyshire by-election of May 20, 1914 has already been discussed. The final turnover came three days later at Ipswich when Masterman was again defeated because of Labour intervention. The peak of acrimony that had been reached by this date has been documented in MacDonald's strong oratory.\(^{16}\) Thus, this rapid overview of by-elections has revealed three

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\(^{13}\) The Times, February, 1914.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 25 February 1914.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., Feb., 1914.

\(^{16}\) See chapter II, p. 81.
fundamental challenges to the future of the Liberal Party. These three problems can be stated in the following terms.

1) The decay of the Liberal machinery in certain parts of the United Kingdom.

2) The difficulty of retaining middle-class support while at the same time appealing to working class voters.

3) The increasingly dire condition of the so-called "progressive coalition" between the Liberal and Labour Party by the outbreak of World War I.

Before examining these three propositions, several clarifications are in order. The alleged problems in Liberal organization were by no means new. Many of the difficulties that will be discussed had plagued the party well before the turn of the century. In fact, there had been many attempts to remedy these deficiencies. The difficulty of retaining middle-class backing was also not new. The Liberal Party had been willing to shed its right wing before (1886). Lloyd George's desire to rid the party of its more conservative adherents was not peculiar to the period in question. What was new was the increasingly deteriorating relationship between the Liberal and Labour Party. The reason for examining the first two problems is that they both tended to exacerbate Lib-Lab relations. Yet, the disintegration in progressivism also affected the problems with organization and maintaining traditional Liberal supporters. All three areas must be critically examined in order to properly evaluate the actual political position of the Liberal Party as of 1914.

Finally, by-elections are not General Elections. Though they are helpful in isolating certain trends, by-elections do not
present the same circumstances as General Elections. The two are fought in a different climate and have different rules of the game. Yet, by-elections do provide some insight into certain trends which are important and not hidden by the expediencies of General Elections.

The first proposition is at best tenuous, and at worst impossible to prove because of the difficulty of the hypothesizing connected with ignoring the Great War. Whether or not these deficiencies had become permanent prior to 1914 is impossible to say. Yet, it can be established, from three regional studies, that there were some concrete problems within the Liberal machine. The most obvious example was in London and the Southeast in general. This area had been lost to the Liberals since before 1900. Though the decay in the capital was an old story, it did reveal some of the problems the party had not solved before the war. Paul Thompson's Socialists, Liberals, and Labour clearly reveals the dilapidated condition of constituency organization. Other than in the more well-to-do suburban areas, there was little money for active canvassing for registration. In fact, most canvassers had to be brought in from out of the constituencies to do the work as most working class areas were unable to provide enough workers at elections. The results were obvious. Except for 1906, an anomalous election, the results in London and the Southeast proved disastrous. Most Liberal voting in

1910 seems to have come from the middle-class and not working-men. Thus, Thompson claims that the Liberals in London amounted to little more than a party of interests without a creed and lacking the firm support of the working class in a period when politics were becoming more and more class-oriented.18

According to Kenneth O. Morgan, the situation in Wales was as potentially serious as in London. Morgan claims that Wales remained Liberal until the war solely because of the strong pull of its traditional radical past. Party machinery at the constituency level was crumbling. The major examples of this occurred in Merthyr, Rhondda, and Glamorgan.19 The I.L.P. began slowly to penetrate Wales before the war. As religion began to decline as a focal point and economic issues became increasingly pressing, the political situation in Wales was slowly transformed.20 Thus, the challenge to Liberalism was to reinvigorate a political machine which was successful only because of its historic grip on the region and not because of its efficiency.

Though it is difficult to go very much further in this study of organization, it is necessary to point out a few other problems. The financial backing of the Liberal Party had historically come from middle-class Nonconformists and

18Thompson, p. 176.


free traders. Before 1906, one of the major prerequisites for a potential candidate was his ability to foot most of his own expenses. In *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, P.F. Clarke asserts that this situation began to change as the Liberal Party became more dependent on working class votes. The burden of electoral expenses began to fall even more heavily on the Chief Whip. The Liberals had attempted a national fund drive for many small subscriptions (c. 1901) which had failed. A few large donors had always been easier to depend on. The *Manchester Guardian* asked "what would be the state of the Liberal Party chest if it depended on the voluntary subscriptions of the rank and file?" Loreburn felt that the organization was "kept going solely by the sale of honours."  

Between 1908 and 1911, the NLF (National Liberal Federation) reorganized its national organization to meet the needs of the new political situation. Regional Districts were established to insure greater centralization and cohesion. In areas such as Manchester and Oldham, this strategy paid off as these locales became supportive of the national policy of progressivism. Yet, before 1914, these two towns were more the exception than the rule. Cecil Beck, a Liberal organizer claimed that the party lacked "co-ordination and planning." There was an enormous amount of friction be-

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21 Clarke, *Lancashire*, p. 216. 22 Ibid.

tween the constituencies and whips. The Liberal Party had adapted ideologically and structurally to a new situation. Yet, the party itself had changed little. The continued reliance on a few large donors evidenced the fact that old practices were continuing. In comparison, the Labour Party's organization was becoming more and more based on the trade unions. Fabian and I.L.P. influence had been greatly diminished by 1914. This held no small importance for the future. The working class was directly responsible for the running of its party and local and national coordination, while not perfect, was steadily improving through 1914. Meanwhile, the "New Liberal Party" which was to appeal to working class votes for a new base of support, gave little control to its new constituency.

The second proposition naturally follows from the first. If a "new Liberalism" was evolving, how would the more conservative wing of the party react? There is little doubt that several conservative members left the party after 1909. After the election of 1910, Lewis Harcourt "found all over the country that all Lloyd George's speeches and Winston's earlier ones... had done us much harm with advanced men of the lower middle-class... and probably account for the heavy losses in the south."24 Herbert Samuel summed up the true challenge.

The debacle in the Home Counties and in so many agricultural divisions is lamentable. It is the abiding problem of Liberal statesmanship to rouse the enthusiasm of the working classes without frigh-
tening the middle classes. It can be done but it has not been done this time.25

There was a significant turnover of the more "whiggish" element in the party.26 Though until 1914 the actual degree of division was minimal, there was a hard-core group of conservative Liberals who consistently abstained on the major social issues of the day.27 The relative lack of dissent can be accounted for when one realizes the precarious position the government was in from 1910 to 1914. Dependence on the Irish and Labour has been noted and voting against the government could conceivably bring it down. In a sense, both the Labour Party and the conservative Liberals were in a similar predicament as they both shared the fate of having their hands tied. Though this was true at the parliamentary level, it was not necessarily valid locally. The classic example of this was in the West Riding in Yorkshire where Liberalism and Nonconformity happened to be the outlook of the large employers of labour.28 The most obvious case was at Bradford where Alfred Illingworth tenaciously clung to his local power. The results of this were seen in the remarkable growth of the

25 Emy, p. 236.

26 The loss of middle-class support however does not dictate a loss in money. Wealthy donors could continue to seek honours and contribute to the party coffers regardless of actual ideology or faith in the party. See Lloyd George's slush fund and the state of Liberal finances after 1920.


I.L.P. after 1890.\(^{29}\)

The third proposition was the most serious challenge to the future of Liberalism. The relationship with the Labour Party had been defined by the nature of the 1903 pact. Liberalism was able to steer much of the new working class consciousness into its camp through this pact.\(^{30}\) From the perspective of 1910, it can be as easily argued that the pact helped the Liberals more than it helped the Labour Party as compared to the opposite and usual interpretation. We have already viewed the condition of Lib-Labism from the Labour vantage point. From the Liberal perspective, the experiences with Labour from 1910 to 1914 were more ominous than most contemporaries acknowledged. The loss of parliamentary seats because of Labour intervention and their remarkably strong poll in many of these areas was quite alarming. In the months immediately before the war, the Liberal leadership finally began to vocalize some concern over the breakdown of the progressive coalition. On April 4, 1914, Asquith admitted that all of the government's losses at by-elections in the previous two years (except for Reading—which was lost because of Socialist intervention and not by official N.E.C. instructions) were due to the "split in the forces of progressivism." It was indeed a pity that the "democratic army (was) split assunder in the face of the common enemy."\(^{31}\) In June, Lloyd George


\(^{30}\)Thompson, p. 295.
stated that the "disunion in our own ranks (alluding to Lib-Lab relations)" was "the great rock in front of us (Liberals)." 3

Of course a word should be said for progressivism. P.F. Clarke has identified certain important attitudes that many "New Liberals" held. C.P. Scott and the Guardian attempted to forge a progressive coalition in Manchester. This was successful in the General Election of 1910. Wigan and Oldham were two other examples of successful Lancashire progressivism. However, Clarke's conclusions are for the most part gross generalizations which are more true for radical leaders than the Liberal Party as a whole. Just because a "New Liberalism" was espoused did not mean it would be accepted.

The national condition of the Liberal Party in 1914 was at best questionable. The first two problems could be remedied and from the perspective of Westminster seemed trivial in view of the upheavals of the period and compared with the apparent difficulties of the Unionist camp. The last proposition was far more serious and yet, once again from a national standpoint, appeared less dangerous than it actually was. The problems that have been isolated are of course magnified at the local level. Not only were tensions in organization, composition, and cooperation obvious, but these problems were actually translated into the electoral situation. Thus, it becomes necessary to turn our attention to the difficult, elusive, and for the most part untouched topic of local politics.

The Local Situation

The area of Municipal Elections presents an intriguing challenge to the political historian. These elections gave the Labour Party an opportunity to contest areas free from the constraints of parliamentary contests. For this reason, these elections were taken very seriously and gave local organs the chance to put their machines to the test. Since the power of Head Office was not normally able to reach this level of politics, constituency organizations were more eager to nominate candidates. 32

Before examining some results, it is imperative to make certain explanations and essential qualifications about the nature of local politics. Municipal Elections are not national politics through a looking-glass. The way the electorate voted in these contests does not provide definitive answers to national political questions. It was only now that these elections came to be fought along party lines. These contests were not always fought on political issues either. The function of these elections was to elect municipal councils. The two major areas of business for the councils were public health and education.

"Municipal Corporations are governed by councils consisting of the mayor, aldermen, and councillors." 33 These contests elected only the councillors. The mayor and aldermen were

32 McKibbin, pp. 84-85.
selected by and from these officials. A councillor came up for election every three years. To be qualified to vote in local elections one had to be a burgess. Burgesses were persons of "full age who have been resident in or within seven miles of the borough during a period of twelve months preceding 15th July, are rated to the poor rate and have paid poor and borough rates due by a certain date."\(^{34}\) An alternative qualification was to be a ten-pound occupation burgess. In both cases, there was a necessary property qualification.

The result of these laws was to restrict the franchise even more severely than in national elections. Thus, the major factor to consider in evaluating local elections was the nature of the franchise. Nowhere in the United Kingdom was this figure over 20% of the adult population. In 1911, the figures were: Leicester, 19.6%; Sheffield, 18.5%; Manchester, 17.1%; Leeds, 19.7%; Bristol, 18.3%; Cardiff, 14.8%; and Swansea, 16.2%.\(^{35}\) The necessity of keeping these figures in mind when analyzing the remarkable results of 1910 to 1914 must be emphasized. Despite these low numbers, elections (which were held annually at the beginning of November) were fairly vigorously fought with a turnout of almost 75% of eligible voters in most municipalities.

Before evaluating the figures for the period, it is appropriate to justify the study of local elections. Despite

\(^{34}\)The Municipal Yearbook (1913), p. 7.

the low franchise and peculiarities of municipal government, municipal elections did "... unfold a pattern of politics".36 These elections provided the Labour Party the essential opportunity of creating a habit of voting which was so critical in British politics. In examining local politics, the special difficulties of the parliamentary situation are avoided and the trends identified in the earlier part of this chapter are seen in their full significance. With these explanations firmly in mind, it is now possible to evaluate my limited data.

In The Evolution of the Labour Party, Ross McKibbin gives the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Labour Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Gains</th>
<th>Losses</th>
<th>Net Gains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>NO CONTESTS HELD DUE TO WAR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


What do these figures mean and where do they come from? The answers to both of these questions are not given by McKibbin. The numbers can be found in the Report of the Labour Party’s Annual Conference. The major problem with these figures is that they do not go back to 1908 which was a disastrous year for Labour and Liberal alike.37 Therefore, the gains made

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36 P.J. Waller, from his review of Clarke’s Lancashire, in English Historical Review 87 (October, 1972), p. 845.

in 1909 and 1910 only made up for the losses of that year. Another difficulty with these figures is a comparison with the only other total figures available in this country. The two sources in question are The Times (London) and G.D.H. Cole's A History of the Labour Party from 1914.

The Times is the most intriguing and deceptive source. The paper reports only gains and rather arbitrarily adds any other information concerning the contests. The major thing to keep in mind about these results is that they were published in an extremely Conservative paper which would exaggerate the situation anytime the Liberals seemed to be losing strength. The complete results are in Appendix B. For the purpose of this paper, it is sufficient to note just a few things.

In 1910 according to The Times, the Liberals gained sixty seats, the Unionists gained forty-three, and the Labour and Socialist Parties gained thirty-four seats. A gain is considered to be the winning of a particular seat that had not been won in the previous election three years before. These are not net gains. Most of Labour's gains occurred in the Northwest and the West Riding. The most remarkable showing was at Manchester where Labour gained six seats. The only other information given referred to the composition of the West Ham council which showed fifteen Unionists, thirteen Socialists, and eight Liberal members. 38

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38 The Times, 2 November 1910.
In 1911, "the municipal elections showed large Liberal and larger Labour successes...". The total gains were Labour and Socialists, 56; Liberals, 52; and Unionists, 39. Labour's major successes came in Bradford, 6; Liverpool, 6; Birmingham, 6; Manchester, 2; South Shields, 3; and Leeds, 3. Again most gains occurred in the working class areas of the North. The Times sheds even more light on the situation when examining the Unionists gains. The Conservatives gained three seats in Burnley and had "a majority on the council for the first time in the history of the borough." Even more significantly, it was noted that this occurred because of Labour intervention. The Unionists also had council majorities in such traditional Liberal strongholds as Bury (Lancashire) and Coventry. Another interesting phenomenon was the presence of a fusion party in (Gillingham), consisting of a Liberal-Conservative party against Labour. Despite this coalition, Labour was able to secure two gains on the council. The gains in Liverpool (where there was also a fusion party) and Birmingham were particularly impressive not to mention the fact that 1911 marked the first year that Labour gained more seats than any other party in the country.

In 1912, the municipal results showed the following gains: Liberal, thirty-six; Unionists, fifty-eight; and Labour and

40 The Times, 2 November 1911.
41 Pelling, Geography, pp. 190, 253, and 266.
42 The Manchester Guardian, 2 November 1911.
Socialists, twenty-seven. The most notable Labour gains were in Bradford, 4; and Southampton, 2. More significant were the Unionist gains and where they occurred: Bolton, 2; Burnley, 2; Gillingham, 3; Huddersfield, 2; Leeds, 4; Manchester, 3; W. Ham, 3; Salford, 2; and Wolverhampton, 2. The Conservatives largest successes were in working class areas. The Gillingham result shows the effectiveness of fusion: the Liberal readiness to move to the political right. 1912 saw local elections in London as well. The following councils were all in working class areas and reveal the position of the parties after 1912.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Unionists</th>
<th>Lib.</th>
<th>Lab. and Soc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deptford</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambeth</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poplar</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Times (1912).

Out of all the constituencies, the Liberals held a majority on but 3 councils; two of them by only one to three councillors. The totals for London showed Unionists, 1,002; Liberals, 252; and Labour and Socialists, 48.

1913 was the culmination of Labour success. "They [results] showed an increase of the Labour strength" ... "and a considerable loss of Liberal seats to Labour and Socialist candi-

43 The Times, 2 November 1912.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
The following results were reported by The Times: Unionists, 52 gains and 51 losses; Liberals, 34 gains and 40 losses; and Labour and Socialists, 51 gains and 15 losses. The Labour Party had netted more seats than any other party. The most stunning successes occurred in Birmingham, 2; Bradford, 3; Leeds, 3; Leigh, 2; Hull, 2; Middlesborough, 3; and Stockton-on-Tees, 3. Looking at the Unionists’ success, the results showed the most significant gains to be in Halifax, 2; Oldham, 3; Salford, 2; and York, 4. The victory at York gave the Unionists a clear majority after a long period of deadlocks.

The other source that looks at local elections is G.D.H. Cole’s work in History of the Labour Party from 1914. From I.L.P. sources, Cole (like McKibbin) presents the following figures for 1913. "Labour and Socialist candidates were put forward... of these, 196 were elected, giving a gain of 106 new seats as against twenty-one seats lost—a net gain of eighty-five seats." In the same year, 353 Labour candidates appeared at the District and Parish Council elections, and of these 196 were successful—a net gain of sixty-eight seats. Cole calculates that there must have been about 420 Labour representatives sitting on a variety of municipal councils by the outbreak of World War I.

46 The Annual Register (1913), p. 224.
47 The Times, 3 November 1913.
49 Ibid. 50 Ibid., p. 447.
What do these results mean? In a general sense, they do show the general growth of Labour around the country. Yet, without getting more details it is difficult to say much more. Fortunately, Chris Cook has assembled data in his book Crisis and Controversy. The Manchester Guardian also provides added detail on the results. Cook's findings will be analyzed first, followed by a look at the Guardian's results.

In his article "Labour and the Downfall of Liberalism", Chris Cook asserts that after a period of large Liberal successes at the municipal level (1902-05);

... the period after 1906 had seen the Liberals not merely on the defensive, but suffering some severe reverses. Thus in 1908, Liberals suffered heavy losses throughout Lancashire as well as losing control of Sheffield, Nottingham, and Leicester in 1908. These were serious defections; Leicester had been in radical control since 1835; Nottingham for forty years. They were joined by others; in 1909, Coventry fell to the Conservatives for the first time in twenty years. In 1911, Burnely was won by the Conservatives for the first time in its history. In 1912, Liberals lost control of Bradford. In 1913, the Conservatives wrested Huddersfield from the Liberals, the first time they had won control of this Nonconformist stronghold since the incorporation of the borough in 1868.51

One would naturally try to trace this Liberal decline to the rise of Labour considering the aggregate results from The Times and McKibbin. This analysis unfortunately will not hold up under careful scrutiny. One problem was the disaster of 1908, making the results from 1909 to 1914 less absolutely significant. Another problem is the patchy and uneven march of Labour. In Birmingham, after six gains out of fourteen

51Cook, p. 40.
candidates in 1911, only one out of seven was successful the next year, then four out of seven in 1913. After six gains in 1911 at Liverpool, none were successful in November of 1912. Rochdale and Sheffield provide similar parallels. The following table provides the most detailed sketch of the position of the parties after 1913.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Con</th>
<th>Lib</th>
<th>Lab</th>
<th>Oth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnley</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolverhampton</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Cook, p. 43.

This table sheds no light on the hypothesis which has Labour ousting the Liberal Party before 1914. In fact, many of Labour's successes seem to have come at the expense of the Conservatives in many areas. Yet, that should be qualified by the realization that a large sector of the working class had been traditionally Tory. Cook examined five cities to examine the actual course of Labour growth. A brief summary of his findings is helpful.

Bradford had been an I.L.P. stronghold since the early 1890s. After 1902, this strength was reflected in the remar-

The following table shows the growth of the Labour vote in Bradford.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Con</th>
<th>Lib</th>
<th>Lab</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indeed the Liberals were losing their support directly to the Labour Party. The same kind of growth occurred in Bradford's sister city of Leeds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Con</th>
<th>Lib</th>
<th>Lab</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Liberals not only lost seats to Labour but to Conservatives as a result of Labour intervention. In three-cornered contests, the Liberals were normally at the bottom of the

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53 Reynolds, p. 319.

54 Cook, p. 46.
poll. In Sheffield, Labour fared dismally but this did stop the decline of the Liberal Party there before 1914. At Leicester, the Liberals were faring poorly due mainly to poor relations with the Labour Party (See Chapter 2 on the by-election for 1913). Labour was in fact doing quite well since they had the largest number of councillors returned in contested elections. Leicester was lost for the first time since 1835 and there Lib-Labism had no meaning despite the parliamentary situation (i.e. MacDonald). At Nottingham, Labour was doing poorly. Yet their challenge to Liberalism was such that the Conservatives were in firm control there by 1913. Cook also notes that Manchester was in Conservative hands throughout the period.

The Manchester Guardian gives fairly detailed municipal election results for these years. Clarke's argument does not hold up for Lancashire at the local level. Other than Wigan, Wakefield, Oldham, and Manchester (and there only from 1909 to 1911), Conservative-Liberal fusion was more the trend than progressivism. There were fusion parties in Liverpool, Halifax, Huddersfield, and Barrow. In 1908 at Manchester, a Conservative candidate was successful in attracting Liberal votes by running as an Independent against Labour. In Barrow, Leigh, and Salford, the Liberals were losing elections directly to Labour. The following table gives a further view of the

55 Cook, p. 51.

56 The Manchester Guardian, 2 November 1908.
general decline of Liberalism in the North.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Con</th>
<th>Lib</th>
<th>Lab</th>
<th>No Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>1913</td>
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<td>(20)</td>
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<td>Includes Aldermen</td>
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<td>Barrow</td>
<td>1908</td>
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<td>1913</td>
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<td>Leigh</td>
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<td>1909</td>
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<td>1913</td>
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In Barrow and Leigh, Labour was gaining most of its seats from the Liberal Party. The loss of Leigh in 1912 was significant as it was the only safe Liberal seat in Northeast Lancashire. 57 Indeed, it was the first time that the Liberals had lost Leigh in 13 years. 58 The precipitous decay of Liberalism in Halifax and Barrow was also significant. The small town of Nelson was a special case being the only council with an actual Labour majority (despite Lib-Con fusion) in the area. 59 The Chesire division of Macclesfield witnessed a steady growth in Labour representation despite joint opposition by the Tories and a conservative Liberal Party. Between 1910 and 1912, 5 gains were reported there. Southampton and Bedford are further examples of Labour expansion at the expense of Liberalism. 60

57 Pelling, Geography, pp. 267-68.
58 The Manchester Guardian, 3 November 1913.
59 Ibid., 2 November 1912.
60 The Times, 4 November 1913, p. 5.
The importance of the by-election results are magnified locally. In Wigan and Wakefield, a Lib-Lab alliance continued with marked success supporting Clarke's argument. From 1908 to 1913 in Wigan, the Liberal and Labour Parties had joined in stunning successes, wresting the council from the Conservatives for the first time in many years. But for the most part, the tensions nationally were translated to the local level. The most remarkable phenomenon was the growth of fusion parties. The Liberal Party was evidently faring so poorly as to prefer a coalition with the Tories. This implied that the Liberals were not willing to work out locally a policy of accommodation that the leaders of the national party had forged. The following is a partial list of those boroughs where these fusion parties existed at one or more elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Halifax</th>
<th>Leicester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Ham</td>
<td>North Kensington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poplar</td>
<td>Gillingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huddersfield</td>
<td>Paddington</td>
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<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>Croydon</td>
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<td>Barrow</td>
<td>Leigh</td>
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<td>Hammersmith</td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>Leeds</td>
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<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>Sheffield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>Crewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Ham</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCES:** Cook, *The Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, and Waller.

The growth of fusions seems to suggest that the "New Liberalism" had not been transferred to the constituency and local level. Further evidence for this conclusion can be drawn from the rise in three-cornered contests in relatively strong progressive areas. 1909 to 1911 marked the heyday of Manchester.

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61 *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 November 1913.
progressivism. After that period, there was at least one three-cornered contest in that city until the war. Oldham also saw an increase in triangular elections. With this evidence as a stepping-stone, it easy to hypothesize respecting other Liberal problems.

The organizational problem alluded to earlier seems to be borne out by Cook's findings. In many areas (Leicester for one), there was tremendous confusion between local Liberal parties and the N.L.F. The Liberals were without a programme and without efficient machinery. One of the significant statistics which Cook has uncovered was the age and occupation of municipal candidates. The Liberals were consistently older than Labour candidates and for the most part from middle and upper class ranks. Leeds and Wolverhampton were two examples of towns where Liberals refused to field working class candidates.

62Cook, p. 42.
63It is interesting to note Cook's local findings for the post-war era in The Age of Alignment. Labour successes and Liberal failures were of course stimulated exponentially by the war. Yet, the areas which had shown vulnerability before 1914 were the same as those which witnessed large Labour gains and larger Liberal misfortunes in the early 1920s.
64Emy, p. 285 and Cook, p. 62.
65Ibid.
66Cook, p. 61.

*An interesting comparison to this local figure can be found in Barbara Tuchman's The Proud Tower (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962). On page 369, she claims that of the 377 M.Ps elected for the Liberals in 1906, "154.. were businessmen, 85 were barristers, 69 were Gentlemen, 25 were writers..., 22 were officers and the remaining 22 included university professors, teachers, doctors and champions of causes."
67Cook, p. 61.
The proposition that the Liberal Party was in a difficult position because of the awkwardness of retaining their middle class support while appealing to the working class can also be tested at the local level. Considering the disastrous state of Liberal municipal politics, the marked revival of Conservatism in these areas, the growth of fusion parties, the patchy growth of Labour, and most importantly the low franchise figure, it is possible to say that large segments of the Liberal Party had defected to the Conservative camp by 1914. This conclusion interestingly substantiates Butler and Stokes's findings in *Political Change in Britain*. They attempted to find out where most Liberal support had gone after 1930 and the death of the party as a political force. It was significant that the vast majority of support had gone to the Conservative and not the Labour Party. In fact, the flow of support from the Liberal Party was predominantly middle-class. With these two facts in mind, one might consider the possibility of a "Center" Party forming, consisting of the Unionists and the right-wing of the Liberal Party. This seems to have been occurring at the local level. It is therefore possible to explain the decline of Liberalism locally despite the uneven (and in places dismal) progress of

68 This is not Cook's conclusion. Cook understates the importance of fusion parties and claims that the decline of Liberalism was a result of the renascence of municipal conservatism. Cook reaches this conclusion for many reasons. The major one being fear of overstating his remarkable findings.

69 Butler and Stokes, pp. 168-69.
the Labour Party as a result of the low municipal franchise figures. Why this was not translated to the national situation is explained by the unique constitutional challenges to Liberalism before W.W. I. The evidence to support this hypothesis is not sufficient to make a definitive statement. But the local studies that have been done (Bradford and Wolverhampton) seem to suggest that this conclusion was possible. Bradford for example had long been a Liberal stronghold. But with middle-class businessmen in control of the organization, cordial relations with Labour seemed doubtful. In fact, the fusion party there coupled with the defection of the Illingworths strongly points to an electoral realignment occurring in Bradford before 1914.\textsuperscript{70} This was also true of Crewe and Macclesfield as well.\textsuperscript{71} The examples of Leeds, Nottingham, Sheffield, and Leicester provide striking correlations with the results of the by-elections of 1911-14. As with the parliamentary contests, the Conservatives were making large gains because of Labour intervention.

Conclusion

Research for this chapter has provided some new and exciting evidence on the fortunes of the Liberal Party before 1914. Clearly the Liberal Party after 1910 was not as healthy an institution as most recent commentators have suggested. However, the "inevitabilist" camp can not take heart from this

\textsuperscript{70}Reynolds, p. 319.

\textsuperscript{71}The Manchester Guardian, 4 November 1913.
study either. For if Liberalism was in decline before 1914 (as indeed this paper has shown), it was not because the Labour Party had superseded it. The Liberal Party was having difficulties because of its own inability to adapt to three fundamental challenges.

The primary threat to the Liberal Party was its relationship with the Labour Party. Most Conservative periodicals of the period 1910 to 1914 (Annual Register, The Times, and Spectator to name a few) claimed the existence of a "Labour revolt". There was something of a Labour revolt during this period but this rebellion was not confined to the Labour Party. The Liberal Party at the constituency level was not particularly friendly towards Labour. Containment was the rule and many Liberal leaders had no intention of aiding Labour. Just before the Hanley and Crewe by-elections of July 1912, Riddell noted in his diary that:

It is evident from what Lloyd George said today that the fight between the Liberal and Labour Parties is pretty bitter. It is quite clear that the Liberals would like to wipe out the Labour Party, and that failing this, they are anxious to keep it 'in its place'.

In discussing the specific by-elections, the great progressive minister Lloyd George went on to say that "I would rather see the Conservatives get in than the Labour man."
P.F. Clarke's contention that there was a growing harmony between the Liberals and Labour in Manchester is not backed up by

73 Ibid.
the facts. In a letter to the Spectator, it was claimed that "The hitherto peaceful relations of Liberalism and Labour in Manchester are at an end, and the "split" may show its effects in more than one division of the city."\(^7\) The proof of this was the Liberals' decision to bring forward their own candidate for E. Manchester to replace the Labour man. "The new development is an attempt on the part of Liberalism to 'get its own back'."\(^5\) Though there was no election forthcoming to bear this contention out, it was significant that at the local level there were two three-cornered contests in 1913. Salford and Oldham had triangular contests as well. Clarke himself notes disunity in Manchester locally between the I.L.P. and Liberal Party.\(^6\) The growth of fusion parties is of course the final proof of the bitter feelings between Liberalism and Labour. Thus, by 1914 the Liberal Party had failed to reach a modus vivendi with Labour and the results of this destructive policy were seen in the by-election and municipal election results.

The challenge embodied by Harcourt and Samuel's concerns after the 1910 elections is more difficult to gauge because of the lack of local research done and because of the "whiggish" members' care not to bring down the government during the constitutional crises of 1911-14. Yet, the example of Bradford, Outhwaite's outburst at Midlothian, and the lack of Liberal

\(^7\)Spectator, 30 August 1913, p. 310.

\(^5\)Ibid.

\(^6\)Clarke, Lancashire, p. 165.
working class candidates all point to the Liberals' failure to reconcile (if this was even possible) many members of the party with the "New Liberalism". The most striking example of this phenomenon occurred at Halifax. This constituency had been one of the areas covered by Lib-Lab agreements at the parliamentary level. Yet, at the local level, there was strangely enough a Conservative-Liberal fusion party. The "New Liberals" were increasingly becoming the leaders of the parliamentary party and their ideology was in the vanguard by 1914. Yet, it is not clear whether this new intellectual outlook had truly permeated the party. After the loss of Leith-Burgs in the by-election of 1914, J.M. Hogge wrote Lloyd George that "The older generation of Scotsmen have been bred in Radicalism, but there is growing up a large industrial element, the component parts of which are for practical purposes unknown to the official party." The results of the by-elections in Manchester in 1912 point to this unresolved dichotomy of the new and old Liberal. By 1914, "the 'New Liberalism', for all of its achievements, had not brought into being a new Liberal Party." Much of the Liberal Party could agree with Asquith when he said "I do not come here to preach a new gospel. The old gospel is good enough for me and I believe for you also."  

77 The Manchester Guardian, 2 November 1908.  
78 Emy, p. 288.  
79 Petter, p. 59.  
80 Cross, p. 66.
The last challenge to Liberalism was posed by the necessity of a new style of organization engendered by the new political situation in England that began in the period 1900-10. It has been argued that Clarke's claim that the reorganization of the Liberal Party in Manchester had occurred under the pressure of progressive politics is at best improbable. This can be shown by just a brief look at the political machinery of the Labour and Conservative Parties.

The Labour Party has a ready made organization of an almost perfect character in the Trade Unions. It deals very largely with everyday facts relevant to the lives of its supporters and easily understood by them. Its real work is done, as the work of political conversion must be done, not on the platform but in the workshop and the home.81

The growing coordination between the N.E.C. and local parties after 1911 was critical in making the Labour Party a viable machine. Yet, it should be equally noted that there was still a very vocal minority that remained autonomous and troublesome to the N.E.C. Despite the difficulties of the Conservative Party, it too had gone under a period of vigorous reorganization. After the ascendancy of Bonar Law as party leader in 1911, the Conservatives began the effective linking of competing party bodies, local parties, and the Central Office.82 Meanwhile, the Liberals had reorganized their party without reorienting their members.83


82 Ibid., p. 71.

83 It should be mentioned that despite NLF reorganization, Cook's and Emy's findings claim that actual centralization and cohesion had as yet not taken place other than in parts of Lancashire.
The Liberal Party of 1914, unbeknownst to its leaders, was not yet ready to face the challenges of the new political situation of the twentieth century. The Liberals had undergone the requisite ideological and structural growth, but had as yet not linked this with the actual electoral situation. This was by no means an insoluble problem. Yet, the lessons of local elections showed that if the Liberal Party did not adapt to the changing times, its future was questionable. The longer the Liberals waited, the more difficult it would be to negotiate a mutually beneficial pact with Labour. Working class consciousness would continue to crystallize in the form of trade unionism (which increasingly meant support for the Labour Party). The Labour Party's organization would grow stronger and more cohesive. Thus, a certain momentum would begin to build that would be increasingly difficult to check and steer into a progressive alliance. By 1914, there was no way to predict the future of Liberalism with certainty.
CONCLUSION

Historia Vagula

The Lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.
(Sir Edward Grey-August 4, 1914)1

Oh the war! If it would only cease!
(Lord Haldane to his mother, January 7, 1915)2

World War I contributed to "a process of disintegration in the Liberal Party which by 1918 had reduced it to ruins."3 The War presented an entirely new set of challenges to Liberalism.4 By 1915, Asquith had been forced to accept a Coalition Government including the Conservatives and Labour. Before the war had ended, the party had been torn assunder into two rival factions. Other than the political ramifications, the war sped up many of the new trends that this paper has identified. Under the pressures of full mobilization, trade union membership exploded and working class consciousness was stimulated exponentially. Thus, to eliminate World War I as a primary

1Dangerfield, p. 424.


3Ibid. 4See the first three chapters of Wilson.
contributor to the unnaturally precipitous demise of Liberalism is indeed foolhardy.

This study ends with August 4, 1914. To compare ante-bellum England with its condition in the aftermath of 1918 yields only differences, not similarities. Thus, to make some kind of "inevitablist" argument for the death of the Liberal Party is very difficult.

This paper has attempted to grapple with four major historiographical questions.

1) What was the position of the Liberal Party by the outbreak of World War I?

2) How does one justify historical demarcations? (i.e. How and why were three chapters in this paper decided upon?)

3) What kind of change (political or social) can be achieved through a given political system?

4) What is the nature of a period of transition and how does it affect the political system?

Between 1886 and 1914, England underwent a series of important social changes which would alter the entire basis of partisan politics. The growth of worker consciousness led to the polarization of the electoral system. The Conservatives came to stand for wealth and the Labour Party for the working man. The Liberal Party was caught somewhere inbetween. The Liberals intellectually met the challenge by attempting to become the party of the working class. But this was no simple task. The traditional adherents to Liberalism were not eager to take on such an ideology nor should it be expected that they could in such a short period of time. Thus, the Liberal Party became something of a political potpourri,
attempting to retain its traditional middle-class supporters while at the same time trying to attract a new working class constituency. This would almost certainly lead to internal tension. The breakdown of Lib-Labism and the results of local elections are the proof of this problem. By 1914, the Liberals were in a critical situation. They had not resolved the internal inconsistencies between policy and rank and file sentiment. However, World War I interfered denying the Liberals the opportunity of resolving this fundamental challenge. Yet, it must be emphasized that it was not the War which initiated the Liberal's problems. As of 1914, the Liberals were already experiencing serious difficulties and decay.

It is a difficult yet necessary task to divide history into sections. The divisions this paper has made seem to be the most helpful in evaluating the first fourteen years of the twentieth century in England. The most conspicuous feature of these years was the great social upheaval within the working class (chapter I). This is a political paper and it has therefore been necessary to see what the tangible effect of social upheaval was on the political system. Thus, an examination of the Labour Party was necessary (chapter II). The final chapter attempted to describe the actual (both from the perspective of 1914 and with the benefit of 20:20 hindsight) political situation by 1914. Certain conclusions can now be made by examining these three chapters as a unit.

Attempting to link the growth of working class conscious-
ness with the growth of the Labour Party is at best problematic. However, there are certain relationships between the two which are important to understand. The uniqueness of the working class movement in England was a very important factor in the shaping of a "Labour Party". Defined by forces peculiar to England, the new worker did not consider himself a Marxist or revolutionary Syndicalist. While adopting these movements' tactics, the worker steadfastly refused to embrace their creeds and names. Instead, the worker took refuge in trade unionism. This type of practical and traditional action was of no small importance for the Labour Party. It was not accidental that such groups as the S.D.F. and Fabians were excluded from any control of the party soon after its formation in 1900. It was also not an accident that Lloyd George's plea for national unity during the Agadir Crisis succeeded. By July 1914, many people felt that a "General Strike" was imminent. Yet, with the outbreak of war, the vast majority of the working class readily traded in their picket signs for guns. The I.L.P. had formed a working class coalition with the knowledge that it was the vast and as yet untapped force of conservative trade unionists which would make or break the fortunes of an independent political Labour Party. Though the N.E.C. resisted direct control by the T.U.C., it was the growing harmony between the two bodies which was the most important feature of the pre-war party. It was also not a coincidence that the N.E.C. developed a political organization that was based on the trade unions. The most important influ-
ences on the Labour Party were those that affected trade unionism (e.g. Taff Vale, Osborne Judgement, and the Trade Union Act of 1913).

The most pressing demands of the English working class movement were very concrete and specific. The Labour Party's programme from 1906 to 1914 was also very narrowly defined. More idealistic leaders such as Hardie, Hyndman, and Tillett held little influence in the party by 1914. There is little doubt that the great bulk of the labour movement held the views espoused by trade unionism. Thus, the Labour Party only became more radical as the rank and file became more radical. MacDonald moved the N.E.C. slowly until after the strikes and political ruptures in the mining constituencies of 1911-14 seemed to suggest that the party as a whole was ready for stronger political action. Thus, the N.E.C. finally relented in allowing more three-cornered contests.

The constraints of the political system also bore heavily on the fortunes of Labour. The nature of the franchise, the traditions of political voting habits, and the constitutional crises of the day were all serious obstacles to an unfettered growth of Labour power. The pact of 1903 is the best example of the need for compromise in order to break into a highly structured system. It was not easy to overcome as pervasive a force as Lib-Labism. Yet, the Labour Party could grow only as fast as certain traditions were lost. This naturally leads to an examination of the position and actions of a highly confusing and contradictory Liberal Party.
The Liberal Party had all of the advantages of a well-established institution. Yet, because of the confusion in aspirations between the leaders and rank and file of the party, much of this advantage had been lost by 1914. The decision by the party to allow Labour to grow virtually without challenge from 1901 to 1910 must be viewed as a grave and decisive error. By letting Labour occupy certain areas, a habit was allowed to form. This momentum was translated into organization and fueled by a heightened working class consciousness. Labour was by no means a mere interest group by 1914. Yet it was treated as such by the Liberal Party. The lessons of the by-elections and local elections between 1910 and 1914 all revealed the serious repercussions of this foolish and contradictory policy. A possible 1914 or 1915 General Election would have to be fought on fundamentally different grounds for the Liberals not to be swamped because of three-cornered contests. Ideological differences were unimportant; even if they existed. It is easy to make these observations in 1980. We can look back at the situation of 1914 free from the difficulties and myopias of those years. From the perspective of 1914, it is difficult to imagine the Liberals formulating new strategies with regard to Labour considering the exigencies of the era. But it is only possible to gain a clear view of the electoral situation of the time by juxtaposing these three chapters.

A much larger and general historical question concerns the amount of change that can be accomplished through a poli-
tical system. The period this paper examines is an excellent case study for gaining an insight into this question.

The initial force for change comes from outside the political system. This is the force of rising class consciousness which begins as a very unwieldy, nebulous, and unfocused impetus. Immediately, this impetus encounters a series of filters which begin a process which will narrow the force's scope. In the case of workers' consciousness, the initial filter is embodied in the traditions and customs of Britain (Chapter I, section ii). The next step in this process is the finding of a suitable outlet in which the now narrowed consciousness can become visible. Trade unionism was that object.

By residing in the union movement, working class consciousness was encumbered by yet a further set of constraints. These filters included such things as institutional constraints (e.g. union procedures) and the very fact that this force was working through an established process. The next filter is the most critical and most difficult to penetrate. It is the actual entrance into the political arena. That working class consciousness was able to penetrate the political system reveals the enormous strength and importance of the movement. Yet, once within the political forum, the initial impetus is even more severely defined.

All of the constraints inherent in the system serve to prevent any cataclysm (despite the cataclysm the force can and did exhibit at times) from occurring. The nature of the
franchise, the two party system, and many other features of British politics limit the amount of change that can be achieved through the system. Once one adds such constraints as the issues of the day (e.g., constitutional crises), the actions of political actors (e.g., the actions of the Liberals), and other external obstacles (Taff Vale, Osborne, etc.), the amount of potential for change is admittedly very small in a short space of time. By 1914, what remains are certain trends and patterns of disenchantment which reveal themselves in such ways as rank and file unrest (Keighley, Leicester) and municipal election results. The difficulty in Lib-Lab relations is the most salient of these patterns and the most important for the period this paper deals with. Thus, political change is tempered by a vast array of different forces and filters. The entire process (unless interrupted by something as momentous as the First World War) is a very slow one and becomes more defined by negative obstacles cast in its path than by the original ambiguous impetus. That anything of the original working class consciousness remained and had profound influence on the political system by 1914 attests to its overwhelming strength and vitality.

It is time to return to the hypothesis originally propounded in the Introduction to this paper. It is critical that 1910 to 1914 be understood as a period of transition. The essential quality of a period of transition—which actually defines it as such a period—is the interaction between the old and the new. In order to elucidate this point, it is
important to examine each chapter and identify these points of tension.

The crux of chapter I was its emphasis on an entirely new set of trends which began to permeate and profoundly affect the working class. These new forces included the growth of education, the reduction in the work week, and the new developments in communication. The most important old force was the working class tradition in England. Pride in England and pragmatic vision were the hallmarks of this tradition. Another important old problem was the economy. There had of course been periods of inflation before. That this phenomenon reoccurred at the same time that these newer forces began to affect the working class was critical in defining what types of demands would be formulated by the newly aroused consciousness of the British worker.

The trade union movement offers another set of comparisons between the old and new. Trade unionism itself was certainly not a new force; hence, the "New Unionism". Between 1890 and 1914, there was an on-going battle between the new unions and old unions for supremacy in the T.U.C.\(^5\) Inherent in both of these confrontations was a question of issues. The new unions stressed demands of union recognition, working only with union men, intra-union association, political action, and a quest for a minimum wage. Yet, the traditional purposes of unionism remained strong. Safety

\(^5\)See the Webbs' *History of British Trade Unionism*. 
regulation, prevention of wage cuts, and craft and union integrity all continued to be important forces up to 1914.

The Labour Party itself was a new entity. Yet, externally and internally it too experienced the tension of old and new. External to the party were such old considerations as the constraints of the system and traditional political perceptions of the electorate. Yet, these older questions were now being challenged in a very significant way by the new and powerful effect of political unionism and heightened working class consciousness. Within the party, the clearest example of old and new can be seen in the struggles over leadership of the N.E.C. On one side were such veterans as Hardie and Hyndman seeking control. On the other, were reactionary Lib-Labers like Bell and Burns. In the end, a compromise was reached with the ascendancy of men such as MacDonald and Henderson to the leadership. The struggle over control and coherence (see Chapter II) are examples of how these tensions were translated to the operational level.

In the Liberal Party, the problem of transition was most acutely felt. The New Liberal versus the Old Liberal was the critical confrontation for the future of the party and electoral system (as it was then constituted). The manner in which this dichotomy was solved would dictate whether the party would remain a significant force in politics. In Chapter III, three problems were identified as trouble spots for the Liberals. The difficulties in organization were not new. The struggle between autonomous, fragmented organization and
Centralization was an important feature of these years. Centralization was beginning to prevail by 1914. The problem of compositional stress (middle-class against working class) was also not new. Yet, in degree, the movement to the left by Liberalism was radically different than ever before. The leaders and thinkers of the party had within four years left the basic tenets of nineteenth century Liberalism smoldering in their grave. Was the party as a whole ready for such a rapid change? If the decay of Lib-Labism in the constituencies has any significance, it appears not. The problems between the Liberal and Labour Parties were of course not completely due to the old versus new tensions. In many ways, these problems—especially from the Labour point of view—were more practical (e.g. fielding working class candidates). Yet, the critical question was whether the Liberal Party, not merely its elite, had changed? Given Lib-Lab tensions and municipal election results, it is apparent that the old against new tension had not been resolved.

The tensions engendered by a period of transition do not all occur in the same way. Sometimes the old and new will confront one another (as within the Liberal Party). At other times, the old and new will interact in such a way as to sharpen and define the new (e.g. the effect of unionism and British tradition on a heightened working class consciousness). Admittedly, this interpretation yields many ambiguities. In describing the Liberal Party, Dangerfield labeled it as an "Animula Vagula". Definitions are always imprecise. In a
period of transition, history is vague: Historia Vagula. There are no definitive answers. In a sense, this entire paper has attempted to trace several process problems. Thus, the period 1910 to 1914 should be considered as a series of transitional tensions which attempted to work themselves out. However, after 1914, the political system "was involved in an encounter with a rampant omnibus (the First World War), which mounted the pavement and ran (it) over."\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{6}Wilson, p. 18.
The purpose of this appendix is to examine the economic condition of the wage-earner in England in the years 1900-14. The three measurements that will be examined are nominal wages, real wages, and prices. Of course these three measurements are dependent upon one another. But it is most convenient and helpful to examine them individually. The major sources used are A.L. Bowley's *Wages and Income in the United Kingdom Since 1860*, the Board of Trade Labour Gazette, and the most recent study found in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. 7, part I. Two clarifications should be made before proceeding with the examination.

The question why certain sources are used and others excluded is important. Bowley's work is used because almost all "wage statistics for the pre-1914 years are based" on his work. The Gazette is used for several reasons. Its statistics were the numbers that the government used in assessing the economic condition of the country. The Gazette was published every month and thus from an historical standpoint,

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reveals the perceptions of most people of the time. It is therefore invaluable as a source for a paper on political perceptions. Pollard's work is used as it is the most modern, most eclectic, and presumably most accurate work to date.

The second problem is the difficulty in providing accurate measurements for the period in question. Many industries had no systematic method of reporting wage-changes. Many industries are simply missing. Thus, this study will examine changes from year to year and compare these changes to previous years.

The index of the nominal wage is tabulated from figures reported by trade unions and employers, and these only when they are compiled uniformly and, relate to more than one date. The major problem is the question of changing relative numbers. This refers to a problem of composition. Just examining the general change in the nominal wage is misleading. The problem arises from the fact that different industries have more people than others. Thus, the Coal Mining Industry might report a 102,175 pound rise in wages a week for 978,000 people compared to the year before. This rise might account for over 75% of the complete rise in wages for the entire country. This obviously does not help assess how England as a whole was doing as far as nominal wages were concerned. Bowley has devised an equation for this problem taking into account all of these factors (See A).
Bowley's figures for nominal wages are as follows:

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Building</th>
<th>Shipbuilding</th>
<th>Cotton</th>
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<td>163</td>
<td>115</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1880 was the first year Bowley examined, and he used it as his base year (i.e., 100). Until 1900, there was a gradual rise from 100 to 130. After 1900, the changes in wages were uneven. 1900-05 was a period of decline. 1905-07 was a period of recovery to the previous wage levels. 1908-11 was a period of general stagnation. The year 1912 was fairly prosperous as compared with 1911 mainly due to the Miners Minimum Wage Act. Thus, the general change in wages from 1900-14 was an uneven rise of 8 points. The Labour Gazette's appraisal for 1911 can be generalized for the whole period. There was a "slight upward movement in wages... but did not become at any time very marked." To clarify this examination of nominal wages further it is helpful to look at the wages for specific industries both in Bowley and the Labour Gazette.

Bowley reports the following figures.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agricultural</th>
<th>Coal</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Shipbuilding</th>
<th>Cotton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>122*</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>123*</td>
<td>122*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOTE: 1914 is an anomaly because of the impact of the war. The first six months actually revealed a mild depression. But this was totally negated by the inflation the war caused.

In both Bowley and the Gazette, the numbers (See B) revealed several trends. The Coal Mining industry had a very large effect on the course of the nominal wage. Most other industries had relatively stable wages to 1910 and then a rise of only a few points occurred before the war. Hence, the course of the nominal wage was fairly similar to the course of wages in the coal industry. The first decade of the twentieth century can basically be seen as a struggle to regain the levels reached in 1900. 1910-14 can be construed as a period of modest gains in the average wage as the 1900 level was finally eclipsed.

The nominal wage alone only reveals that wages were not improving very much. It is even more helpful to compare this figure with the cost of living. The cost of living (or course of prices) is tabulated by indexing which requires the technique of weighting. Bowley established a certain budget of expenditures and evaluated its cost year by year. The items in this budget included food, rent, fuel, clothing, and sundries. The following table is Bowley’s account of the course of the cost of living as compared with wages. Column 1 was converted from the nominal wage into similar terms of the cost of living index to afford some basis of comparison.
Column 3 is the real wage which is found by dividing Column 1 by Column 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wages</th>
<th>Cost of Living</th>
<th>Quotient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table is from the Gazette and examines the course of the retail price of food. 23 articles are indexed and then weighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Quotient 1</th>
<th>Quotient 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900-100</td>
<td>1907-105.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-101.9</td>
<td>1908-108.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-101.6</td>
<td>1909-108.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-103.2</td>
<td>1910-109.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-104.3</td>
<td>1911-110</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-103.7</td>
<td>1912-114.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-103.2</td>
<td>1913-115</td>
<td>1914-111.6-pre war</td>
<td>127.2-war</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More specifically, the retail price of bread rose 16.2% from 1900. The price of meat rose 21%. Dairy goods rose about 10%.

An analysis of the preceding data reveals a general steady rise in the cost of living and the price of food from 1900-14. At times, these prices rose sharply (food-1911-12). Other than the years 1907-09 which saw a depression, the cost of living was higher than the nominal wage. Real wages fell
throughout most of the period and the best they ever did was to achieve a degree of stability after 1911.

One final question to ask of the economic statistics is what was the wage-earner's share in the total G.N.P? Keynes, Bowley, and Pollard were all struck by the stability of this relationship. For over 40 years, the wage-earner who made up approximately 75-80% of the population was consistently earning about 40% of the G.N.P.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Wages as Percentage of GNP</th>
<th>Wage-earners as % of occupied population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870-4</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-9</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-9</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-4</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-9</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-9</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-13</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows a declining percentage of the workforce earning a consistent percentage of the G.N.P. Thus, it would seem that the wage-earner was actually improving his position. But this is misleading. These are aggregative figures which obscure certain distributive anomalies (e.g. skilled and white collar workers were improving their position) within the wage sector. Yet, the most misleading aspect of this table is the simple fact that there was tremendous inequality evident. Three-fourths of the workforce was earning only two-fifths of the G.N.P (i.e. 25% of the population earned 60% of the G.N.P.). There is a gradual improvement but nothing significant when one examines each industry.

This study's purpose has been to establish that the period
1900 to 1914 for the worker, was at best, one of stagnation. Nominal wages fought throughout the entire period to regain the levels of 1900. Meanwhile, prices were fairly consistently rising throughout the period. An even more important consideration is not these general macro-economic trends. In the study of trade union growth, the three most important groups which served as catalysts for the growth in the T.U.C. were the miners, railwaymen, and the unskilled transport workers. The miners' plight is fairly well illustrated in the statistics with wages not recovering to their 1900 level until 1913. The railwaymen and transport workers' numbers are not included. Both these groups suffered from severely depressed wages and conditions. The effect of rising prices was most acutely felt in these quarters. In conclusion, wage stagnation was felt and perceived by most wage-earners in the face of rising prices. It is important to note that the fifteen years before the period in question were marked by rising nominal wages and falling prices. Thus, the worker of the early twentieth century was quite unaccustomed to the phenomenon of wages lagging behind prices. This is apparent from almost all of the literature of the period (see especially Askwith). Fit into a framework of a more educated worker with more leisure time to think and read political, socialist, and industrial propaganda, some causal relationship can be seen for the subsequent growth of trade unions and in turn the Labour Party. In particular, the plight of the workers in the three major industries of the period was most
severe. This led to organization and disputes in the period after 1910. All of these men (RR, coal, transport) were part of industries integrally connected with Britain's economy and their efforts to enhance their positions were directly felt by the entire country. Thus, even if the aggregate totals are not very revealing and make projections tenuous, the specific numbers of these other industries are clearly bad enough to point to political action and growth.
statistics in Appendix E. But in 1931 and in 1935 the earlier proportion was restored, owing to the fact that women suffered less from unemployment than did men.

The effect of various hypotheses is shown in the following little table. There it is seen that very little depends for the final index on these proportions of agriculturists to other males, or of females to males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average earnings (in shillings)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual earnings</td>
<td>1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry (Table XI)</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture (p. 113)</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>16'7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion 8 : 1</td>
<td>16'7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted</td>
<td>16'7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>25'9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (Table XI)</td>
<td>11'8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>21'8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion 7 : 3</td>
<td>46'9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combined</td>
<td>46'9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus it is clear that in 1935 the index obtained from actual earnings reads higher than that from wage-rates as on p. 30. This is the justification for modifying the latter as is there done.

1 The figures of Table XI are reduced 9 per cent. to include boys.
FACTORS OF CHANGES IN AVERAGES

Forward measurement of change in average wages, the relative numbers in industries being as at first date:

\[ R_1 = \left( w_1 N_1 + \ldots + w_l N_l + \ldots + w_m N_m \right) + (W_1 N_1 + \ldots + W_l N_l + \ldots + W_m N_m) \]

\[ = S (wN) + S (WN). \]

Backward measurement of change, the relative numbers being as at the second date:

\[ R_2 = S (wn) - S (WN). \]

Increase of average wage:

\[ I = w - \bar{W} = R_2 \times R_1 = R_4 \times P_2, \]

where

\[ P_1 = \frac{S (WN)}{S (n)} = \frac{S (Wn)}{S (N)} \quad \text{and} \quad P_2 = \frac{S (wn)}{S (n)} = \frac{S (Wn)}{S (N)}. \]

Then \( R_1 \) or \( R_2 \) measures the change in the average due to the shifting of numbers, while \( R_4 \) or \( R_5 \) measures that due to changes of wages.

Write

\[ w_i = R_1, w_i + x_i, \quad n_i = \frac{n}{N}, \quad N + \gamma_i, \quad w_i = \bar{W} + \tau_i, \]

so that \( x, y \) and \( \tau \) measure the variation of \( w, n \) or \( W \) from their averages or weighted averages.

Then

\[ S (x_i N_i) = 0, \quad S (y_i) = 0, \quad S (\tau_i N_i) = 0. \]

It follows that

\[ R_2 - R_1 = \frac{S (wn) - R_1 \times S (Wn)}{S (Wn)} = \frac{S (\{R_1 w_i + x_i\} n_i) - R_1 \times S (W_i n_i)}{S (Wn)} \]

\[ = \frac{S (x_i n_i)}{S (Wn)} \times S \left\{ \frac{R_1 (\bar{N} + \gamma_i)}{N_i} \right\} \]

\[ = \frac{S (x_i)}{S (Wn)} \times S \left\{ \frac{R_1 (\bar{N} + \gamma_i)}{N} \right\}, \quad \text{since} \quad S (x_i N_i) = 0, \quad = \frac{1}{P_1} \times \text{Mean} \left( \frac{x_i \gamma_i}{W \bar{n}} \right). \]

Therefore \( R_2 > R_1 \) if increase in numbers is correlated with increase of wages in excess of \( R_1 \).

If \( R_2 = R_1 \) there is no net gain or loss by transference to rising or falling wages.

Also

\[ P_1 = \frac{S (W_{m} n_{m}) - S (\{W_{i} + x_{i}\} n_{i})}{S (W_{n})} = 1 + \frac{S \left\{ \left( \frac{n}{N} \right) I + x_{i} \right\}}{S (W_{n})} \]

\[ = 1 + \frac{S (\tau_{i} N_{i})}{S (W_{n})}, \quad \text{since} \quad S (\tau_{i} N_{i}) = 0, \]

\[ = 1 + \text{Mean} \left( \frac{x_{i} \gamma_{i}}{W \bar{n}} \right). \]

Hence \( P_1 > 1 \) if \( x_{i} \) and \( \gamma_{i} \) are positively correlated, that is if an increase in relative numbers is associated with high wages at the first date.

Similarly \( P_2 = 1 + \frac{1}{R_1} \times \text{Mean} \left( \frac{x_{i} \gamma_{i}}{W \bar{n}} \right) \), where \( w_i = \bar{w} + v_i \),

so that \( S (\gamma_{i} n_{i}) = 0, \quad P_2 > 1 \) if an increase in relative numbers is associated with high wages at the second rate.

With the help of these formulae we can obtain rough indications of the influence of the shifting of numbers on the general average over several periods.

Mr G. H. Wood gives the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average money wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allowing for change in numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking the second column as \( I \) and the third as \( R_1 \), we have

\[ \begin{array}{c|c|c|c}
   \text{I} & \text{R}_1 & \text{P}_2 \\
   \hline
   1850-1880 & 1.47 & 1.41 & 1.12 \\
   1880-1910 & 1.55 & 1.45 & 1.10 \\
   1910-1910 & 1.86 & 1.73 & 1.13 \\
\end{array} \]

Using the index 100:130 for \( I \) 1880-1910, as on p. 6 above, we have \( P_2 = 1.13 \) for that period. Thus approximately half of the increase in average earnings is due to movement to higher wages, half to movement towards rising wages.

\(^1\) *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 1909, pp. 102-3, brought to a later date with the help of *ibid.*, 1912-13, p. 320.
### Number of Workpeople whose rates of wages were reported as changed in 1913, 1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Trades</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal Mining</td>
<td>919,724</td>
<td>319,573</td>
<td>£169,146</td>
<td>£12,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron, Acc. Mining</td>
<td>2,717</td>
<td>2,529</td>
<td>2,132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarrying</td>
<td>1,917</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>1,134</td>
<td>1,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick, Iron Manufacture</td>
<td>2,024</td>
<td>1,671</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron and Steel Manufacture</td>
<td>1,904</td>
<td>2,034</td>
<td>1,254</td>
<td>1,575</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total for trades in which wages declined in 1914.**

- 1,901,762
- 3,458,269
- £17,266
- £3,293

### Net Amount of Increase (+) or Decrease (−) in the weekly wages of those affected, as compared with the preceding year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Trades</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>108,077</td>
<td>128,933</td>
<td>28,165</td>
<td>+12,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Shipbuilding</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>1,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Metal Trades</td>
<td>29,977</td>
<td>23,925</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>1,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile Trades</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>1,175</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>1,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Trades</td>
<td>144,140</td>
<td>15,896</td>
<td>6,154</td>
<td>+1,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Trades</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>1,175</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>1,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing, etc., Trades</td>
<td>37,657</td>
<td>46,045</td>
<td>8,636</td>
<td>1,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass, etc., Trades</td>
<td>80,927</td>
<td>86,138</td>
<td>4,238</td>
<td>1,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Trades</td>
<td>34,187</td>
<td>31,850</td>
<td>2,693</td>
<td>+1,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees of Local Authorities</td>
<td>4,107</td>
<td>4,487</td>
<td>3,899</td>
<td>+1,564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total for trades in which wages rose in 1914.**

- 777,711
- 835,441
- £31,182
- £37,853

**GRAND TOTAL**

- 1,657,991
- 1,684,900
- £176,403
- £5,062

### Number of Workpeople whose rates of wages were reported as changed in 1910, 1911.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Trades</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>4,970</td>
<td>14,822</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>+1,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Mining</td>
<td>915,646</td>
<td>919,288</td>
<td>+4,642</td>
<td>+5,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron, Acc. Mining</td>
<td>105,192</td>
<td>105,573</td>
<td>+414</td>
<td>+282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarrying</td>
<td>5,196</td>
<td>5,114</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick, Iron Manufacture</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>1,096</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron and Steel Manufacture</td>
<td>92,263</td>
<td>43,297</td>
<td>+48,966</td>
<td>+1,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Shipbuilding</td>
<td>23,287</td>
<td>19,977</td>
<td>+3,310</td>
<td>+1,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Metal Trades</td>
<td>2,253</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile Trades</td>
<td>20,450</td>
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<td>1,5,915</td>
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**Total**

- 546,948
- 825,294
- £14,356
- £25,967
APPENDIX B


November 2, 1910

I

Labour and Socialists

Accrington-1
Aston-1
Blackburn-1
Bolton-1
Bootle-1
Bradford-1
Bury-1
Chatham-1
Coventry-1
Croydon-1
Gillingham-2
Huddersfield-1
Leeds-1
Leicester-1
Liverpool-1
Macclesfield-2
Manchester-5
Northampton-2
Salford-2
Swansea-1
Taunton-1
Thornaby-on-Tees-1
Wakefield-1
W. Ham-2
Wolverhampton-1
Total=34

145
**Labour and Socialists**
- Ashton-Under-Lyne-1
- Bath-1
- Birkenhead-2
- Bolton-1
- Bradford-6
- Brighton-1
- Carlisle-1
- Chatham-1
- Crewe-2
- Croydon-1
- Darwen-1
- Gillingham-2
- Halifax-1
- Huddersfield-2
- Ipswich-1
- Jarrow-1
- Leeds-3
- Leigh-2
- Liverpool-6
- Macclesfield-1
- Manchester-2
- Portsmouth-1
- St. Helens-1
- Salford-1
- Southampton-2
- S. Shields-3
- Stockport-1
- Taunton-1
- Stoke-on-Trent-1
- Wakefield-1
- Wolverhampton-1
- York-2

**Total=56**

**Unionists**
- Bedford-3
- Blackburn-1
- Burnley-3
- Cheltenham-1
- Colchester-1
- Coventry-3
- Derby-2
- Dudley-2
- Grantham-2
- Grimsby-2
- Huddersfield-4
- Plymouth-3
- Pudsey-1
- Ryde-1
- Southampton-1
- Southend-3
- Southport-1
- Totnes-1
- Stockton-on-Tees-1
- Wakefield-1
- West Hartlepool-1

**Total=37**

**Liberals**
- Bath-1
- Barnsley-1
- Beaumaris-3
- Birkenhead-2
- Bolton-1
- Bootle-1
- Bradford-1
- Bury-1
- Cardiff-1
- Carlisle-1
- Chesterfield-2
- Denbigh-1
- Devonport-4
- Durham-1
- Kidderminster-1
- Leeds-1
- Merthyr-2
- Middlesborough-2
- Northampton-2
- Norwich-2
- Nottingham-2
- Oldham-3
- Oxford-1
- Rochester-1
- Sheffield-5
- Stockport-2
- Thornaby-on-Tees-1
- Sunderland-1
- W. Bromwich-1
- Yarmouth-2
- York-1

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November 4, 1913

**IV**

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II. Articles


III. Secondary Works


