Chapter 5. The Year of Violence.

As unemployment continued to rise to 5.8% of trade unionists by January 1908, unrest in industrial centres increased accordingly.[1] Several arrests were made in Birmingham when unemployed workers tried to force their way into the council house, an incident which did not reflect very favourably on Burns who had already refused a plea for financial aid from the local distress committees. From Manchester Jack Williams, not Stewart Grey as E.Halévy asserts, led a group of unemployed on a march to London to protest against the inactivity of the local authorities.[2] Violent clashes occurred when Williams arrived in Birmingham, and he was only allowed to pass through the centre of the city when he promised that there would be no more violence. This, however, led to a dispute among his followers and Grey travelled from Manchester to lead those who were in favour of continuing - only about a dozen - on to London. A similar but less ambitious march of about 200 men from Tottenham to Whitehall was broken up by the police and only four marchers were allowed to proceed to the house of commons where they handed in a petition.

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1 Table 1.

2 E.Halévy, The rule of democracy, 1905-1914 (London: 2nd ed., 1961), p 259.

When the King's Speech failed for the second consecutive year to mention unemployment the protests and agitation grew in intensity. Several socialist organisations held public meetings and at the beginning of March some 200 of Battersea's unemployed marched on the house of commons.[1] From the West Bromwich Branch of the I.L.P. came a plea for a repetition of the tactics of 1905, while at Brighton A.P.Hardy was arrested for obstruction when he tried to lead the local unemployed to the King's sea-side house.[2] Edward VII also figured in the plans of Stewart Grey who tried to present a petition to him. When he was officially informed by the Home Secretary that the King could not be advised to comply with its terms, he sent his followers off to Brighton, and took himself to Windsor in order to fast in the chapel. Failing to achieve much by this he moved on to London, announcing his intention of returning to Windsor at the head of an army of 10,000 unemployed.[3]

It was against this background that the Labour Party's propaganda campaign for the Right to Work Bill had been sustained. Barnes published a pamphlet similar to that written by MacDonald in 1907, and unemployment continued to be the theme of many labour speeches over

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1 Such meetings were held, for example, in Lincoln, Sunderland, Oadby, Reading, Govanhill, Glossop, Sheffield, and Manchester.

2 Labour Leader, 14 February, 1908.

3 The Times, 18 February, 1908.

Christmas and into the new year.[1] Both Shackleton and Jowett, for example, asserted that it would be the party's rallying cry in the new session.[2] Interest was considerable at local branch level in the I.L.P., and in London the M.D.C. suggested that a conference be organised in order to put these local branches in contact with the latest facts, and to facilitate agitation if the government again failed to announce an unemployment programme.[3]

But in spite of the intensive propaganda campaign the Right to Work Bill was not without its critics among the workers. A.E.Piggott had already condemned the measure as being too moderate, and more attacks were made when the special unemployment conference assembled in January with the aim of providing the party's parliamentary campaign with a good send off.[4] W.C.Anderson, for example, disliked the inclusion of a penal clause providing for the punishment of those who refused to work, as did Will Thorne. Some were against the use of emigration as one of the remedies which the local unemployment committee could apply. Others, such as George Belt, wanted it made

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1 G.N.Barnes, The unemployed problem (London, 1908).

2 Shackleton at Clitheroe, The Times, 7 January, 1908. Jowett in the Clarion, 17 January, 1908.

3 I.L.P., M.D.C.Minutes, 25 January, 1908.

4 Piggott made his criticisms in the Labour Leader, 29 November, 1907.

explicit that the measure was only a stop-gap until socialism was realised. MacDonald successfully defended the form of the bill, however, claiming that all members of existing distress committees would agree that it was greatly strengthened by the inclusion of the penal clause. Emigration, he went on, was not intended as a general remedy but was to be applied only in carefully considered individual cases. An amendment from the floor inserting a phrase to the effect that the bill was only temporary pending the transition to collective ownership, was heavily defeated, only thirteen delegates voting for it, and the resolution approving the measure was then passed unanimously.[1]

With this backing the Labour Party offensive in parliament was opened during the debate on the King's Speech by Arthur Henderson, who accused the government of raising false hopes and then cruelly dashing them again. If the government could not produce a bill of its own, he said, why wasn't the Labour Party's Unemployment Bill adopted?[2] This clearly alarmed the Liberal whips, for they prevailed upon Burns to prepare a speech, although personally he was against raising the matter.[3] It was as well that he agreed, however, for the

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1 Labour Party, Annual Report, 1908, pp 85-91.

2 Hansard, 4th Series, CLXXXIII, 169-71. 29 January, 1908.

3 Burns Diaries, 29 January, 1908. B.M.Add.MSS 46326.

next day MacDonald, supported by Crooks, Brace, Ward, and Snowden, moved an amendment regretting the omission of any unemployment proposals from the King's Speech. Burns remained completely unmoved in the face of their criticisms, claiming that their pessemism was ill-founded, and stating that the government was preparing existing machinery for the implementation of the poor law report, when it came.[1] According to the parliamentary correspondent of the Labour Leader many Liberals pulled long faces when Burns said that he would do no more than renew the exchequer grant for one year, and this back bench dissatisfaction was apparent when MacDonald was followed in to the opposition lobby by 146 M.P.'s, of whom about 70 were Liberals.[2] This insubordination infuriated the Liberal whips and may help to explain why they went to such lengths to prevent its recurrence on the second reading debate on the Right to Work Bill.[3] Augustine Birrell told a deputation from the Bristol Right to Work Committee that the "right to work" idea "might mean the disruption of the Liberal Party", and it seems that he was not far from the truth.[4]

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1 Hansard, 4th Series, CLXXXIII, 247-360. 30 January, 1908.

2 Labour Leader, 7 February, 1908.

3 See the Clarion, 7 February, 1908.

4 Bristol Right to Work Committee, Annual Report, 1908, p 2.

Typical of those who voted with MacDonald was Charles Masterman, shortly to get office at the Local Government Board. He was in favour of the Liberals going "forward boldly in some large and far reaching scheme of social reform."[1] On the other wing of the party were men such as Harold Cox, who felt that although the idea of the "right to work" was superficially attractive "it is easier to advertise a quack medecine than to find a real remedy for a long standing disease."[2]

The Labour Party amendment, followed as it was, four days later, by the first reading of the Unemployment Bill, unchanged from its 1907 form, succeeded in maintaining public interest in the principle of the "right to work", and George Roberts declared that the support given to the amendment showed that the government could not ignore the problem much longer.[3] Certainly the government press gave the amendment a great deal of attention, all of the papers coming out strongly against it. The Daily News, caught between its support for the Liberal Party and its radical sympathies, contented itself with praising parliament for having such an early discussion on one of the most pressing of contemporary social problems.[4] The Labour members

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1 C.F.G.Masterman, "Politics in transition", Nineteenth Century, LXII (January 1908), pp 16-7.

2 H.Cox, "The right to work", Quarterly Review, CCII (January 1908), p 203.

3 Typographical Circular, February 1908, p 10.

4 Daily News, 31 January, 1908.

themselves were quite pleased with the debate, and Wardle thought their speeches among the best ever delivered from the Labour benches.[1] Not so the Social Democrats, however. Harry Quelch felt that the whole debate had been mishandled.[2] Another regretted that no-one had pointed out the true socialist remedy for unemployment.[3] James Macdonald had already stated that he did not see that a formal declaration of disapproval would achieve very much.[4]

But the Labour Party was not put off by this criticism from the left, and continued its campaign with the issue of a circular suggesting that all labour organisations draw attention to the Right to Work Bill for the benefit of their local M.P.'s because "it is desirable that Members of Parliament should be made aware of the interest which organised labour takes in the subject."[5] This was followed by a second circular which contained a special appeal to trade unionists not to ignore the growing unemployment problem.

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1 Railway Review, 7 February, 1908.

2 Justice, 8 February, 1908.

3 Social Democrat, XII (February 1908), p 75.

4 Trades and Labour Gazette, January 1908, p 2.

5 See the Infancy of the Labour Party, II, p 73. 10 February, 1908.

> 'What have you to say to the Bill? You know that the Unemployed man always threatens your wages. He increases the power of the Non-Unionists. He is constantly liable to become a blackleg. He drains your funds. You have now to keep him whilst the man whom he enriches pays nothing. . . . Wage Earners! Stand by the Unemployed and the Labour Party's Bill.' [1]

The campaign culminated in London with a major public meeting on 12 March. It was addressed by MacDonald and Lansbury, and it was resolved to ask all the London M.P.'s to be in their places the following day when the second reading debate was due. Support meetings of a similar type were held in some provincial towns, but they were not on anything like the same scale as those of 1905.[2]

The continuance of the Labour Party pressure, the level of public interest, and the violence of unemployed agitation in cities such as Birmingham, obviously worried many Liberals, hence the large anti-government vote on 30 January. It is also significant that the first reading of the Right to Work Bill had been introduced in 1908 by a Liberal radical, P.W.Wilson, as none of the Labour members had been lucky in the ballot. The measure was thought to be sufficiently

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1 Labour Party, The Labour Party and unemployment (London, 1908).

2 See Infancy of the Labour Party, II, p 76. 18 March, 1908.

important to be the subject of a cabinet discussion on 11 March, and it was apparent that the press rumours about divisions within the cabinet over the measure were well based.[1] Lloyd George was in favour of it.[2] Asquith told the King that the "right to work" principle was "obviously inadmissible", but felt that something ought to be done for the sake of appearances.[3] Buxton too, thought that if the government was to oppose the second reading then "we ought at least . . . to have an alternative."[4] Lord Ripon, on the other hand, was not prepared to support the bill because he thought that public opinion was not in its favour, but he told Buxton that he would treat it gently.[5] Burns was completely opposed to it, and left his colleagues in no doubts as to his views which he embodied in a cabinet memorandum, discussed on 9 March. If the bill was put into operation, he argued, no-one would have any incentive to look for work, nor would any casual labourer take a temporary job unless it was well paid. He also expressed doubts about the ability of a local

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1 See, for example, Labour Leader, 12 March, 1908.

2 See Burns Diaries, 11 March, 1908. B.M.Add.MSS 46326.

3 H.H.Asquith to the King, 11 March, 1908. Asquith Papers. Vol 5, f 14. See also Burns Diaries, 14 February, 1908. B.M.Add.MSS 46326.

4 S.Buxton to Lord Ripon, 4 March, 1908. Ripon Papers. B.M.Add.MSS 43555, f 273.

5 Lord Ripon to S.Buxton, 6 March, 1908. Ibid., f 276.

authority to find work simultaneously for 1000 housemaids, 2,000 clerks, and 5,000 casual workers. In any case, he could see no point in changing the settled policy of waiting for the poor law report, and he was therefore against voting for the Labour Party's bill to have a second reading.[1] It is true that at this stage Beatrice Webb was expecting to finish the report before the autumn recess, but Burns himself had told Clynes that there was no chance of legislation based upon it during the current session of parliament.[2]

The possibility of an embarrassing split over the bill clearly worried the Liberal whips a good deal, for it was stated that they were preparing to take careful note of all who voted against the government on the second reading.[3] Whiteley, the chief Liberal whip, did not mince his words. Each member was informed that "an important division is expected. Your attendance and support of the Government is very earnestly requested."[4] This failed, however, to affect at least one important back bencher, for Beveridge told his

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1 The Unemployed Workmen Bill. PRO. CAB. 37/91. 9 March, 1908.

2 B.Webb Diaries, 17 February, 1908. Passfield Papers. I,1, Vol 26. For Burns' statement to Clynes see Hansard, 4th Series, CLXXXIV, 983. 20 February, 1908.

3 Standard, 12 March, 1908.

4 The Times, 14 March, 1908.

mother that Masterman felt he must support the bill and defy the whip.[1] So great was the interest generated by the Labour Party campaign that many papers discussed the bill's prospects in their morning editions, the Mail dismissing it as "sheer insanity", while the Standard published a series of short interviews with selected M.P.'s, giving their opinions of the bill and their voting intentions.[2]

In spite of this intense interest the house was little more than half full when P.W.Wilson rose to move the second reading, and it seems that many Liberals, including Lloyd George, had decided to escape their dilemma by absenting themselves from the debate. Wilson rather spoilt the effect of his opening speech by offering to drop the crucial third clause guarranteeing the right to work or maintenance, and one wonders if this was the result of his earlier visit to Asquith, who, it will be remembered, wanted to accept something but was against the principle involved in this clause?[3]

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1 W.H.Beveridge to his mother, 12 March, 1908. Beveridge Papers. L, 1, 204.

2 Daily Mail, 13 March, 1908: Standard, 12 March, 1908. The six members were Colonel Lockwood, S.Powell, H.Stavely Hill, H.Cox, R.Perks, and Horatio Bottomley. All six said they would vote against the bill.

3 This visit by Wilson to Asquith was noted by Burns. See Burns Diaries, 14 February, 1908. B.M.Add.MSS 46326.

Certainly, several Liberals might have voted for the measure had it been made less controversial in this way, but it hardly mattered as MacDonald, who was seconding, immediately contradicted Wilson by affirming that the Labour Party was not prepared to drop the clause.[1] If it was necessary because of the country's social and economic structure that there should always be some men who were out of work then surely, he argued, it was right that society should be responsible for such people. He was followed by Fred Maddison, the Liberal trade unionist, who moved an amendment which stated that while the house was prepared to consider any proposal dealing with unemployment, the present one could not be entertained as it would waste the nation's resources and create more unemployment than it relieved. The bill, he claimed, was the fruit of socialist agitation and trade unionists did not want it at all. After this amendment had been seconded by Henry Vivian, another Liberal trade unionist, Brace, the miner, rose and said that he had had no intention of taking part in the debate but he wished to refute Maddison's statement that trade unionists were not in favour of the

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1 The Liberal member for Watford told the local branch of the I.L.P. that his vote against the Right to Work Bill had been decided by MacDonald's assertion that clause three must stand. See Watford Branch I.L.P., Correspondence File, No 2, f 33. 13 March, 1908.

bill.[1] But the government had decided to support Maddison, perhaps hoping to shelter behind his assertion about the attitude of trade unionists. In some circles it was even alleged that the amendment had been drafted by Burns himself.[2] This resolve remained unshaken despite a very critical speech by Grayson, who claimed that the government's view was that "we are sorry for them, but we have to sit down in blank despair and evolve specious arguments for doing nothing."[3] When Burns rose to reply his speech was punctuated by interruptions not only from the Labour members, but also from Masterman, who accused him of converting Hollesley Bay into a "rural workhouse."[4] Burns was unmoved, however, and after praising himself because no-one had criticised his administration of the 1905 Act, he went on to claim that "with the exception of a few small bodies, well drilled and finely disciplined, but sometimes over-persuaded, there is practically no public support of what was known as the Right-to-Work Bill."[5] Asquith wound up the government's case and after Henderson had replied on behalf of the Labour Party the motion that the

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1 This was borne out by later events at the T.U.C. conference when the chairman was forced to take a card vote on a motion condemning Vivian and Maddison for their part in the debate. It was passed. See T.U.C., Annual Report, 1908, p 135.

2 Justice, 21 March, 1908.

3 Hansard, 4th Series, CLXXXVI, 58. 13 March, 1908.

4 Ibid., 70.

5 Ibid., 72.

amendment be left out of the resolution before the house was defeated by 265 votes to 116, several Liberals, including Alden, Atherley Jones, Masterman, Pickersgill, and Yoxall, voting against the government. On the subsequent motion that Maddison's amendment stand part of the resolution the defeated 95 who voted against this included Cremer, Wadsworth, Fred Hall, and Fenwick, all disputing Maddison's claims about the trade unionists.[1]

The debate was covered very fully in the press, and while many were critical of both the bill and the government's failure to produce any alternative, considerable fear was aroused by the size of the Liberal revolt. One anti-socialist wrote later that "the fact that this astounding measure was introduced from the Liberal benches is pregnant with warning."[2] Typical of the attitude of the opposition press was the comment that "whoever supports this bill is a Socialist and ought to wear a red flag as an outward sign of his being a dangerous firebrand."[3] The Daily News, again caught on the horns of a dilemma, avoided the issue by congratulating the government on rejecting a hasty and ill-considered piece of

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1 For the debate see Hansard, 4th Series, CLXXXVI, 10-100. 13 March, 1908.

2 G.Raine, Present day socialism (London, 1908), p 130.

3 Daily Telegraph, 14 March, 1908.

legislation, a monstrous piece of sophistry as the bill had been maturing for well over a year.[1]

The Social Democrats generally thought that the Labour Party had done well to get so many votes, but again it was suggested that the arguments of the opposition had not really been met because the Labour members had not yet grasped the basic causes and cures of unemployment.[2] Harsher was the resolution passed at the S.D.F. conference in April, condemning the measure as a mere machinery bill.[3] From the extreme left came the cynical comment that it was just as well the bill had been defeated, for if it had been put into operation its hopelessness would have been ludicrously apparent.[4]

But with public interest running at such a high level the Labour Party was in no mood to abandon the struggle and it is significant that shortly after the debate on the Unemployment Bill was concluded, the order for the second reading of the party's Eight Hour Bill was read and withdrawn.[5] This bill had originally been introduced by Thorne at the request of the T.U.C. on 11 February, and was down for

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1 Daily News, 14 March, 1908.

2 Justice, 21 March, 1908: Social Democrat, XII (April 1908), p 173.

3 S.D.F., Annual Report, 1908, p 29.

4 Socialist Standard, 1 April, 1908.

5 Hansard, 4th Series, CLXXXVI, 100. 13 March, 1908.

its second reading on 1 May. It was withdrawn, however, because Pete Curran, successful in the ballot for a day on which to discuss a commons' motion, decided, almost certainly after consultation with his parliamentary colleagues, to bring one forward on the eight hour question. According to the proceedural rules of the commons he could not do this when a bill on the same subject was still before the house. As his motion was to be discussed on 18 March it would seem that Thorne's bill was withdrawn so that Curran could use the opportunity to press home the unemployment attack. From the point of view of press coverage he was successful, for there were several comments on the discussion, a typical one labelling the idea as a "fresh challenge to the country's common sense."[1] Although there was no chance of the motion being passed Thorne wrote angrily from his sick bed, annoyed that his colleagues had failed to press to a division.[2] Certainly the Labour speakers do appear to have mishandled the debate, for one of the main arguments used against the Right to Work Bill had been that there was insufficient work to go round, and yet this fact was not utilised on this occasion to justify the demand for a general eight hour day.

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1 Daily Graphic, 19 March, 1908.

2 Justice, 4 April, 1908.

The I.L.P. report claimed that the Labour Party's unemployment campaign had been so successful that the government dare not ignore the matter much longer, and MacDonald told an audience at Halifax that the unemployed problem would not be allowed to sink below the horizon again, and that the bill would be introduced again and again.[1] But just what was to be done before the next session when the bill could be re-introduced? At a meeting of the joint board held on 17 and 18 March, it was decided to persist with efforts to keep the bill before the public.

> 'The appeal must now be made to the country. At tens of hundreds of Socialist meetings during the year the demand that the Bill be passed must be made, and at every meeting in the constituencies addressed by members who voted against the Bill their action must be challenged.' [2]

Some branches had already done this. The Southwark Branch of the I.L.P., for example, wrote to its local M.P. on 17 March demanding to know why he had failed to support the Right to Work Bill.[3] In a word of general encouragement to all those who had agitated for the bill MacDonald, enclosing copies of the division list, asserted that there was no intention of abandoning the "right to work" principle, and he

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1 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1908, pp 69-70. MacDonald's speech was reported in the Labour Leader, 20 March, 1908.

2 Labour Leader, 20 March, 1908.

3 Southwark Branch I.L.P., Minutes, 17 March, 1908.

urged everyone to persist with the education of the electorate.[1]

The second thread of the Labour Party's future policy was to defend the bill against those who were misrepresenting it, both in the press and in public meetings. It was decided to issue a special pamphlet to explain fully certain clauses in the bill which were subject to uninformed criticism, notably clause 3 (the right to work or maintenance), clause 7 (powers and duties of the proposed unemployment committees), and clause 12 (power of the Local Government Board to make regulations for the administration of the bill).[2] A further circular was issued stating that the joint board "repudiates most strongly the suggestion that in its working it will be inimical to Trade Unionism."[3] Certainly a policy of this sort was necessary as Liberal politicians in particular seem either to have misunderstood the scheme or, more likely, deliberately misrepresented it. There were some, such as H.J.Wilson, who genuinely thought the bill a bad one.[4] On the other hand, Runciman seems to have deliberately exaggerated his case during the Dewsbury by-election

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1 Trades and Labour Gazette, March 1908, p 147.

2 Infancy of the Labour Party, II, p 76. 18 March, 1908.

3 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1908, p 123.

4 See Wilson's letter to the Holmfirth Express, 21 March, 1908.

when he said:

> 'Any workman out of work for any cause, good, bad, or indifferent - for incompetency, for insobriety, for laziness - could come to the Dewsbury local authority and . . . if they said, "We have no work to give you", he could reply, "Then you must maintain me and my family." I venture to say that such a Bill would put a premium, not on the best, but on the worst, of our working classes.' [1]

This brought an angry telegram from Hardie who said that it was "scandalous that a carefully prepared measure . . . should be thus travestied in order to excuse the cruel vote against the Bill which Runciman recorded."[2] Even Lloyd George, speaking in support of Churchill at the Manchester by-election, said that the bill was a bad one, and his change of heart may have been connected with his promotion to the exchequer, which would have had to provide some of the expenses had the bill become law.[3]

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One by-product of the government's embarrassment over the Labour Party's bill was that an attempt seems to have been made by some of

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1 The Times, 20 April, 1908.

2 Labour Leader, 1 May, 1908.

3 Lloyd George Papers. C/33/1/3. 22 April, 1908.

Burns' rivals to use the opportunity afforded by the reconstruction of the cabinet after Campbell Bannerman's resignation in April, to push Burns out of office, or at least to by-pass his sole responsibility for the unemployed. The Local Government Board was one of the posts which Asquith, the new Premier, considered for Churchill.[1] Although he eventually became President of the Board of Trade, Churchill only took the position on condition that he was allowed to tackle unemployment, and certainly one of his first moves was to take on Beveridge and begin to plan for a national system of labour exchanges.[2] Burns' position was further weakened by the appointment of C.F.G.Masterman to the Under Secretaryship at the Local Government Board, especially as Masterman told Asquith that he hoped Provis, the reactionary and permanent head of the Local Government Board, would be replaced by some one with a drastic reform mandate.[3] Burns seems to have sensed the danger for he wrote to Asquith.

> 'I am not sure . . . whether you have finally decided upon the proposed colleague you mention . . . . If not then I should like a word with you first. If you have decided I will of course receive in a friendly spirit any man you may consider desirable to send here.'[4]

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1 R.Churchill, Winston S.Churchill. Vol II. Young Statesman, 1901-1914 (London, 1967), pp 240-44.

2 B.Webb Diaries, 24 March, 1908. Passfield Papers. I, 1, Vol 26.

3 C.F.G.Masterman to H.H.Asquith, 13 April, 1908. Asquith Papers. Vol II, ff 95-6.

4 J.Burns to H.H.Asquith, 13 April, 1908. Ibid., f 89.

But he was too late and Masterman got the job. It was perhaps an indication of Burns' weakened position that when Sir Berkely Sheffield asked on 23 June if the government intended to renew the exchequer grant for the unemployed, Masterman replied, stating that Lloyd George and Churchill were in communication on the subject.[1]

Even while the government was thus re-organising its personnel and possibly its policies, agitation continued, dragging on into the summer months as it had done in 1905, the last year of crisis. Windows were smashed in Manchester in protest against the government's inactivity, while in Glasgow a massive demonstration representing some forty trades took place on 27 June. Action of this nature was not popular with some of the Labour M.P.'s and Clynes told the Manchester unemployed that he did not look for a solution in men marching or congregating in town centres, but in "the men who were in work marching intelligently to the ballot box."[2] But apart from one effort, voluntarily abandoned, to prevent the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 being included in the Expiring Laws Continuance Bill, the Labour Party was strangely quiet on the national front, its attention being concentrated on the Old Age Pensions Bill and, in the case of some

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1 Hansard, 4th Series, CXC, 1516. 23 June, 1908.

2 Clarion, 3 April, 1908.

leaders, such as Shackleton and Henderson, the Licensing Bill. Generally, the party seems to have been content to persevere with the policy of educating the electorate. Thus Hardie moved a "right to work" resolution at a demonstration organised by the east end trades councils and socialist organisations, and there was a good deal of interest and activity at local level.[1] The Labour Leader recorded no less than nineteen branch meetings on unemployment during May, and a series of "right to work" demonstrations were organised in the provinces in July.[2] MacDonald seems to have been pleased with this response and, speaking at Clitheroe in July, he said with reference to the Unemployment Bill that "we shall brush it up a bit yet, put some elbow grease into it, and it will go better next year than last."[3]

But there was much criticism of this policy both within and without the party. J.M.MacLachlan said that it was no good following a policy of political opportunism and modest palliatives. The correct policy would be to channel the party's energies into a national campaign on the whole problem of poverty, instead of concentrating on its individual aspects.[4] At the I.L.P. conference

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1 The Times, 13 July, 1908.

2 The reports in the paper only ever covered a very small number of branches, thus the figure is more significant than might at first appear.

3 Labour Leader, 24 July, 1908.

4 Ibid., 29 May, 1908.

in April W.H.Peck had advocated using obstructionist tactics in the house of commons in order to force the government's hand.[1] Even the Yorkshire Federation of Trades Councils called for a more vigorous policy.[2] The S.D.P. (formerly the S.D.F.) was scornful of what it saw as the apathy of the Labour Party. "Yet nothing, practically nothing, is being done. There is not any agitation going on except what is kept up at great difficulty by the S.D.P. The Labour Party seems to think it has done its duty . . . ."[3] Two members of the S.D.P.'s Fleetwood Branch suggested a post card ballot, asking the Labour Party to drop its concern with other bills until something was done for the unemployed, in the hope that this would wake the M.P.'s up to a sense of their responsibilities.[4] On 1 August, when the session came to an end, Justice lamented that still nothing had been done, "the more reason for us to stir up hatred and determination among the workers as a class.[5] But in truth the S.D.P. had done very little itself except to establish a small committee to run the

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1 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1908, p 60.

2 Trades and Labour Gazette, July 1908, p 2.

3 Justice, 25 July, 1908.

4 Ibid., 1 August, 1908.

5 Ibid.

meetings on Tower Hill where between 1000-2000 men were turning up each day.[1]

The continuance of a high level of unemployment during the summer provided useful ammunition for the tariff reformers, although several of their more extravagant claims had been somewhat modified. In Lancashire Jack Smith, a former colour sergeant in the army, was in the process of forming a working class, non-union, tariff reform organisation called the Fair Trade Workers Union. He outlined his plans in a pamphlet, The so-called Labour Party exposed (Preston, 1908), and attacked the idea of the "right to work" as springing from a hypocritical exploiter of the working classes, Keir Hardie.[2] He spent the rest of the year issuing unsuccessful challenges to socialists to debate about tariff reform, but his organisation never prospered and seem to have vanished early in 1909.[3] The T.U.T.R.A. was still active but its work in this period is difficult to follow as the form of the reports in the Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform changed in December 1907 and became mere lists of meetings until June 1908. In that time 425 meetings are recorded as being held by the various

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1 Justice, 11 July, 1908.

2 J.Smith, J.Keir Hardie M.P.exposed (Preston, 1908), p 1.

3 See Lancashire Daily Post, 28 November, 1908: Preston Herald, 12 January, 1909.

branches, concentrated in the south west, London, and Yorkshire.[1] This was not very many when compared with the 2000 weekly meetings of the socialist bodies, but working men were also being exposed to the propaganda of the T.R.L. itself. The T.U.T.R.A. also took an active part in by-elections and R.Guiness, the Unionist victor at Haggerston attributed his success to tariff reform. "A prominent feature in the election was the work done by the Trade Unionist Tariff Reform Association."[2]

Just before this election the National Right to Work Council met at the house of commons - on 31 July. The council had been silent since the previous year, partly because its members had put their faith in a parliamentary policy, partly, it was reported, because it wanted to give the government every opportunity to act.[3] This had incurred the censure of the S.D.P., implicit in the resolution passed at the April conference in favour of establishing another "right to work" organisation with branches in all industrial centres.[4] But on 31 July the council, deciding that the government's optimism was based on unrepresentative and inaccurate Board of Trade returns, and

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1 Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform, December 1907-June 1908, passim.

2 The Times, 3 August, 1908.

3 Justice, 22 August, 1908.

4 S.D.P., Annual Report, 1908, pp 3-4.

also concerned by the ineffectiveness of the Labour Party, decided to collect reliable statistics from the large industrial cities and to invite trades councils and other labour organisations to form local "right to work" committees to act in conjunction with the national council to carry out a winter agitation.[1] Several of the local committees had, of course, continued to function since their foundation in 1905, but at least eight more came into existence in response to Smith's circular, and a further seventeen are mentioned in the course of the year.[2] Significantly, the initiative in many cases came from the local trades councils, although in February it had been pointed out that the difficulties of the national council had sprung from the failure of the trade unions to support it, especially with money.[3] Funds were still a problem in August and Smith appealed for help at the end of the month.[4] In the following week a circular was issued to labour organisations urging them to exert pressure to bring about the early re-opening of the distress committees, asking how many men had been on short time during the year, and asking trade unions to state how many of their men were out of work

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1 The Times, 1 August, 1908.

2 Although only eight are mentioned specifically as having been formed in response to Smith's appeal, it seems highly likely that some of the seventeen others were also set up at this time. See Table 5.

3 Trades and Labour Gazette, February 1908, p 8.

4 Justice, 29 August, 1908.

in the third week of September. It concluded with a plea to "remember. Governments help more quickly those who show that they are ready to help themselves. The silence of the unemployed means the neglect of their needs."[1] By mid-November this circular had been distributed to 1500 trade unions, 250 trades councils, and 1400 socialist societies.[2] Smith also decided to ask the M.D.C. of the I.L.P. to form a sub-committee to organise the agitation in London, but the council decided instead to refer the matter to the executive with the recommendation that it give immediate attention to unemployment. It was also decided that all the London district councils be asked to release their organisers for two weeks from 11 September for special work on unemployed agitation.[3] The Right to Work Council was obviously keen to make its action effective in London as well as the provinces, and seems to have envisaged the London I.L.P. playing the role occupied in 1905 by the C.W.C. The Trades and Labour Gazette welcomed the council's action and appealed to trade unionists to support it, as in the past they had "played the part of the stupid ostrich which sticks its head in the sand at the sight of coming

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1 National Right to Work Council, Manifesto, September 1908. In Cooke Collection. Vol 37, f 52.

2 Labour Leader, 20 November, 1908.

3 I.L.P., M.D.C.Minutes, 11 September, 1908.

danger."[1]

(iii)

The Labour Party policy of local efforts to educate the electorate about the Right to Work Bill continued through the summer recess, and the socialists in particular were much in evidence at local "right to work" demonstrations. But adverse criticism was still forthcoming and MacDonald wrote angrily to the Willesden Branch of the I.L.P., which had suggested a policy of parliamentary obstruction, saying that "there is nothing more disheartening to our Parliamentary work than the way that well-intentioned supporters like yourselves are misled by proposals that appear to be energetic, but which in actual fact are utter rubbish."[2] But in truth the education policy was not very inspiring and the general impression of apathy about unemployment on the part of the labour alliance was heightened by the preoccupation of the T.U.C. during the summer with old age pensions, and with internal union affairs, particularly the north east strikes. This impression was further confirmed by the proceedings at the September congress, which were somewhat innocuous. The only new idea discussed was whether the government should subsidise

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1 Trades and Labour Gazette, August 1908, p 2.

2 Justice, 31 October, 1908. MacDonald sent his letter on 5 October.

union unemployment funds, and although this was agreed to on a card vote, it was opposed by some powerful men, including Sexton of the Liverpool dockers, Roberts, the Labour Party whip, and Harvey of the M.F.G.B., all on the grounds that the government would be given a controlling interest in union funds.[1] Will Thorne was highly critical of the whole affair, complaining that the socialist resolution on unemployment submitted by his union had been the only one which gave the real cause and cure, but it had been so watered down by the grouping committee that now it called only for support of the Right to Work Bill.[2]

The employment situation showed no sign of improvement during the summer, and a Board of Trade memorandum, prepared at the end of August, predicted "a period of unusual severity for the working classes . . . conditions may become more stringent in the course of the winter."[3] There was the usual crop of protest meetings, deputations, and resolutions, but September, when the unemployed index rose to 9.3%, was marked by a strain of violence and a number of ugly incidents unparalleled since 1905.[4] In Glasgow 200 unemployed

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1 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1908, pp 168-69.

2 Ibid., p 163.

3 Board of Trade, Memorandum on the state of employment and trade during the first six months of 1908, August 1908.

4 Table 1.

workers broke into the council chamber and secured the commencement of several relief schemes. Two days later they interrupted Prince Arthur of Connaught as he was inspecting a Glasgow company of the Boys' Brigade, and then interfered with a civic lunch at which he was the guest of honour by singing the "Red Flag" outside the council house, and shouting deprecations against the royal family. All leave for troops at the nearby barracks was cancelled as the situation looked so bad. In Manchester the police, as in 1905, broke up a gathering of unemployed in Stevenson Square by means of a baton charge, and one Skivington, a hero of 1905, subsequently led a large number of the unemployed in to the cathedral where they punctuated the sermon with a series of comments. Skivington was only prevented from seizing the pulpit by a quick thinking organist, who drowned his attempts to address the congregation.[1] A silent gathering of some 10,000 unemployed outside the Sheffield town hall so un-nerved the councillors, that £10,000 was immediately voted for relief works.[2] From Nottingham 150 men set out to march on London, and elsewhere in the midlands there were clashes between the police and the unemployed, particularly in Birmingham. In Trafalgar Square on 4 October, Stewart

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1 Standard, 14 September, 1908.

2 The Times, 10 September, 1908.

Grey, arrested for obstruction, was twice rescued by a mob of unemployed and twice re-captured by the police.

These signs of violence alarmed many people, who saw behind them the influence of socialist agitators. "It is gratifying to learn", ran one account, "that the worst excesses are due, not to the distress of starving people, but to the deliberate policy of the Socialist Party."[1] The editor of the Express, Ralph D. Blumenfeld, had already taken steps to formalise the structure of the Anti-Socialist Union, and by the autumn he was making frequent attacks on the socialists in his editorials.[2] In particular, he urged his readers to support the speakers' school which the A.S.U. was setting up.[3]

On the other hand, many encouraged the violence of the unemployed. Victor Grayson, for example, told them not to stay in their hovels, but to

> 'come out . . . and to thrust their pinched starved faces into the faces of the well conditioned multitudes. . . they would be less than men if they did not use what energy this cursed civilisation had left them to get food immediately!' [4]

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1 Daily Graphic, 19 September, 1908.

2 "There was a meeting in my room at the Daily Express offices this morning (16 February, 1908) for the purpose of co-ordinating the opposition to Socialist teaching. The idea is to form a society to be called the Anti-Socialist Union." R.D.Blumenfeld, R.D.B.'s diary (London, 1930), p 224.

3 Daily Express, 13 October, 1908.

4 Labour Leader, 25 September, 1908.

The editor of the New Age said that the best things ever achieved by the unemployed had been the riots in Glasgow and the gigantic fight in Trafalgar Square over Stewart Grey.[1] Even at the T.U.C. the advocates of violence had been heard, Gribble claiming that they "must strike the fear of man into the hearts of their governors and so long as our Labour Members were content to be respectable . . . they would not get much further."[2] While some Labour M.P.'s, such as Will Crooks, were opposed to violence, others, such as Thorne, told the unemployed to help themselves from the bakers' shops if they were short of bread, and Grayson's later action in the house of commons had the sympathy of at least two other Labour members.[3]

The S.D.P. was greatly encouraged by the violence and made plans for a winter campaign on lines similar to those of 1904. Each local branch was asked to sponsor the formation of an unemployment committee, or to utilise existing ones if they were willing to co-operate with the Social Democrats. E.C.Fairchild, secretary of the central committee which they also set up, appealed for funds to enable Williams to get the movement launched in the provinces as well, but

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1 New Age, 3 October, 1908.

2 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1908, p 165.

3 Thorne's violent language was blamed by Messrs. Gill & Reigate of Oxford Street for the breakage of several of their windows by the unemployed "whose honest instincts have been perverted by some of our would be legislators." Daily Express, 20 October, 1908.

the response was so poor that the provincial movement never caught on.[1] The campaign in London would probably have failed too, had it not been for the generosity of Lady Warwick, who contributed £40 of the total of £42-4-6 collected by the middle of October.[2] The first stage in the London campaign was to be a demonstration in Trafalgar Square on 10 October, supported by simultaneous meetings in the provinces. Harry Quelch summed up the unemployed committee's objective. "Our object is to make the unemployed a menace . . . we can institute a reign of terror . . . we can make the governing classes howl with affright at the danger to their skins and their stolen wealth."[3] Certainly the banners carried by the marchers on 10 October were frightening enough - "Work or Revolution", and Will Thorne, one of the speakers, appealed to the Labour Party to obstruct all other legislation until unemployment had been tackled.[4] This may have been directed against David Shackleton who had affirmed at the T.U.C. conference that licensing was the most urgent social problem.[5] In the outlying areas of London the Right to Work Council organised

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1 S.D.P., Annual Report, 1909. p 11.

2 Justice, 24 October, 1908.

3 Ibid., 10 October, 1908.

4 Ibid, 17 October, 1908.

5 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1908, p 52.

marches to church on the morning of 11 October, followed in the afternoon and evening by public protest meetings, each of which appointed deputations to wait on the local London M.P.'s on 12 October, the day parliament re-opemed.

Many of these meetings were organised with the co-operation of local I.L.P. branches, and the M.D.C. also held a central meeting at the Scala Theatre on 4 October, appointing a deputation to see Asquith. But these activities were not enough for some elements in the party, and two Scottish branches called upon the N.A.C. to co-operate with all the available forces in favour of the "right to work." The North Kensington Branch was more specific, demanding that the party work closely with the S.D.P.[1] In fact, on 19 October, the Right to Work Council, composed mainly of I.L.P. socialists, did enter into a short lived agreement with the S.D.P.'s London unemployment committee.

(iv)

Parliament opened on 12 October amid scenes of rare violence, for the suffragettes as well as the unemployed were much in evidence. Burns told the I.L.P. deputation appointed by the Scala meeting that he was in touch with the situation and urged them to wait for a

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1 I.L.P., N.A.C.Minutes, 14 October, 1908.

statement from Asquith. This led the organisers to call off a projected march through London, which must have been a great relief to the hard pressed police, 2500 of whom were massed in Parliament Square, and who were put under considerable pressure when the contingents from the local Right to Work committees and I.L.P. branches began to arrive at about six o'clock. Their demands to see their M.P.'s were supported by Hardie, Glover, Hudson, Curran, Thorne, Roberts, and Summerbell, and the police authorities eventually informed the relevant M.P.'s that if they did not see the deputations there would be a full scale riot. Some idea of the strain which the Right to Work committees had helped to impose on the police can be seen in a letter written to Gladstone by M.L.Walter.

> 'Henry (Commissioner of Metropolitan Police) said the strain on the police caused by demonstrations of women, unemployed, etc. was heavy and increasing. Yesterday or Thursday (I forget which day) he had "hunger marches" taking place in twenty divisions. Every march had to be accompanied by a body of police: otherwise they would have begun to break into shops.' [1]

Signs of what the authorities could expect were soon apparent, for on the day after parliament opened Frank Smith, ruled out of

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1 M.L.Walter to H.Gladstone, 10 October, 1908. Gladstone Papers. B.M.Add.MSS 45994, ff 164-65.

order by the chairman for raising a discussion on the unemployed at a meeting of the L.C.C., refused to sit down and, protected by Crooks and Alfred Salter, and cheered on by the unemployed who were packed into the spectator's gallery, he defied for several minutes the attempts of officials to remove him from the council chamber. His action was very effective, however, as the L.C.C., pledged to reduce public expenditure, announced a scheme of unemployment relief costing a third of a million pounds on 18 October.[1]

If chaos and disorder reigned outside the very doors of parliament, they reigned no less inside the cabinet. Burns had already avowed his intent "not to yield to menace or ignorance", and Lloyd George had been frustrated in his attempts to persuade McKenna to create work by laying down now some of the ships scheduled for construction in the course of 1909.[2] On 12 October Asquith said in reply to a question from Henderson that the unemployment situation was under discussion and that he hoped to make a statement in a few days.[3] This was received in a friendly way by the Labour Party which, at a special meeting in the evening of the same day, agreed to

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1 Daily News, 19 October, 1908.

2 Burns Diaries, 8 September, 1908. B.M.Add.MSS 46326. For McKenna's reply to Lloyd George see R.McKenna to D.Lloyd George, 12 September, 1908. Asquith Papers. Vol 20, ff 85-9.

3 Hansard, 4th Series, CXCVI, 39. 12 October, 1908.

give the Prime Minister the time for which he had asked, as his request was considered reasonable. On 14 October Burns was told, somewhat abruptly by Churchill, that something would have to be done, and a small cabinet committee, consisting of Harcourt, Lloyd George, Churchill, Buxton, McKenna, Gladstone, and Burns himself, was established to work out a policy.[1] On the same day Churchill, Lloyd George, and Masterman, met Shackleton, Henderson, Curran, and Appleton at the offices of the Board of Trade to explain to them the principle of the system of national labour exchanges on which Churchill had been working since the summer. The labour leaders, noted Mrs. Webb, "were cordial but strongly urged that the organisation of casual labour by Labour Exchange should not be given them as a provision for unemployment."[2]

It seems that at this stage, and indeed for some weeks past, the Labour Party had abandoned hopes of legislation on the grounds that it would be passed in a hurry and would probably be bad if they had no time to discuss and amend it. What was necessary, said MacDonald, was the maximum utilisation of the 1905 Act.[3] Shackleton told his

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1 L.Masterman, C.F.G.Masterman (London, 1939), pp 110-11.

2 B.Webb Diaries, 29 October, 1908. Passfield Papers. I,1, Vol 26. Mrs Webb was also present at the meeting but she did not record it in her diary until about two weeks had passed.

3 The Times, 28 September, 1908.

constituents at Clitheroe that he hoped the amendment would be on the lines of allowing local authorities to levy a penny or half penny rate for unemployment relief.[1] On 16 October Henderson, who was involved in the negotiations with the government on behalf of the Labour Party, said that the party would accept a supplementary estimate to increase the government grant, and the granting of permission for the year for the payment of wages to unemployed men from a special rate levied by the local authorities under the 1905 Act. He further informed the government that unless action was immediate he would be unable to restrain his extremists.[2]

In fact the Labour Party extremists had already shown their hand when, on the previous day, Victor Grayson had moved the adjournment of the house in order to discuss the unemployed position, walking out of the house when the Speaker ruled that the Licensing Bill must come first. On 16 October he was suspended when he tried to interrupt the committee stage of the same bill. As he walked from the house, this time escorted by the Sergeant-at-Arms, he turned and condemned the Labour M.P.'s as traitors to their class. Henderson must have been afraid that Grayson had some sympathisers who would also act if the government dallied too long. One of these sympathisers was Thorne,

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1 The Times, 29 September, 1908.

2 Masterman, Masterman, p 111.

who had known all along what Grayson intended to do, for the member for the Colne Valley had told him at the beginning of the session that "I am determined to get Parliament to deal with the unemployment question . . . . If they don't then I'll cause trouble, even if it means me getting thrown out."[1] Thorne said that personally he would have supported Grayson, but as the party had already agreed on 12 October to wait for Asquith's statement he thought it absurd to make a disturbance before the proposals were known.[2] Fred Jowett thought that Grayson's offence lay in not telling the party officials what he intended to do, and there was a hint of support in his comment. "Theatrical display . . . may be magnificent, but it is not war . . . ."[3] If the government's proposals were no good when they were announced, he went on, "I would make one of a number to court suspension or anything else which would be likely to cause confusion in the ranks of the enemy."[4] The other element of extremism which Henderson feared was that represented by Hardie who, although he disagreed with Grayson's tactics, was still in a militant frame of mind. At Llanelli on 18 October he said that if

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1 Quoted in R.Groves, The mystery of Victor Grayson (London, 1946), p 45.

2 N.U.G.W. & G.L., Minutes of Delegate Meeting, 17 October, 1908.

3 Clarion, 23 October, 1908.

4 Ibid.

the government statement was not satisfactory then the Labour Party would satisfy the expectations of its most enthusiastic supporters.[1] The previous day he had forcast action "strong and stern" if the government failed to satisfy them.[2]

Henderson's proposals for a supplementary grant and a local rate to pay wages had been favourably received by Churchill, Masterman, and Buxton, but on 17 October Burns presented a memorandum to the cabinet in which he criticised these suggestions.[3] All he would consent to was an increase in the size of the exchequer grant - if it was necessary - relaxation of some of the regulations of the 1905 Act, and some administrative changes. The poor law report was imminent, he claimed, and he could see no reason to change the policy of waiting for it before acting, especially as it would require legislation to enable the local authorities to levy a rate in order to pay wages.[4] There followed a struggle in the cabinet which lasted for three days, but on 20 October Burns emerged triumphant having, in his own words, "made a dogged fight. W.C. and L.G. fought

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1 The Times, 19 October, 1908.

2 Ibid., 18 October, 1908.

3 Masterman, Masterman, p 111.

4 The Unemployed. PRO.CAB. 37/95. 17 October, 1908.

equally hard but wore them down by weight of mettle. At end L.G. capitulated and urged economy for Treasury's sake."[1] The same night Asquith informed the King of the government's intentions and it was clear, as Mrs. Masterman noted, that "J.B. has scored all along the line, partly because he came armed with figures . . . partly because the distrust of the Ll.G.-Churchill combination is so profound in the Cabinet . . . ."[2]

Asquith introduced the government's proposals on 21 October but apart from increasing the exchequer grant by £100,000 and relaxing some of the regulations of the 1905 Act, the best he could do was to offer an extra 2,400 places in the army special reserve, the bringing forward of orders for nine destroyers and five cruisers to be built in Admiralty shipyards, the speeding up of naval repair work to provide work for an extra 2,100 men, and an extra 8,000 places for temporary employment in the post office over Christmas. He prefaced his remarks by saying that he could not anticipate the measures to be introduced next session, but it was hardly worth his keeping silent as the Labour men at least, must have known that this was a reference to labour exchanges.[3] All this, Burns noted,

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1 Burns Diaries, 20 October, 1908.

2 Masterman, Masterman, p 112.

3 Hansard, 4th Series, CXCIV, 1159-73. 21 October, 1908.

was a "real triumph", as the Labour Party had been completely out-generalled over the question of the penny rate.[1] There was to be a full debate on the government statement on 26 October.

The Labour members immediately conferred and drew up a statement which, welcoming the promise of future legislation and the relaxation of the Local Government Board regulations, deplored the present plans as totally inadequate, nothing have been suggested which would increase the amount of work available to the distress committees. A small committee, consisting of Henderson, Barnes, MacDonald, Roberts, Duncan, Summerbell, Snowden, and Crooks, was set up to formulate future party policy for tiding over the winter. It was reported that the trade union M.P.'s were much more favourably disposed to the government programme than were the socialists, and it is thus perhaps significant that this committee, with the exception of Henderson, who was party chairman, consisted almost entirely of socialists, nominal and otherwise. Certainly, Shackleton said at Leeds that the proposals were a recognition of government responsibility.[2] W.T.Wilson said that the measures were only temporary and as such he welcomed them.[3]

When the allotted debate came on five days after Asquith's

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1 Burns Diaries, 21 October, 1908. B.M.Add.MSS 46330.

2 The Times, 26 October, 1908.

3 A.S.C.J., Monthly Report, November 1908, p 743.

statement the Labour Party launched a fierce attack on the government. It was perhaps ironic that the motion approving the proposals was moved by Percy Alden and opposed by Hardie, the two former colleagues on the N.U.C. Hardie's amendment to Alden's motion stated that "the proposals made are quite inadequate to meet the pressing needs of the unemployed this winter." He went on to criticise the government for failing to forsee the crisis and he informed the Liberal members that according to unofficial returns in his possession, supplied no doubt by the Right to Work Council, approximately 6,750,000 people were currently affected by unemployment. Why, he asked, could the penny rate leviable under the 1905 Act, not be used to pay wages? Many of the measures announced by the government were not, in fact, special ones. The postal service, for example, always took on extra men at Christmas. What good, he wanted to know, was £300,000 for some seven million unemployed? Many areas didn't even have distress committees, and he instanced his own South Wales. What guarrantee, he continued, was there that the money would be spent, and he suggested that control of the grant should be vested in a cabinet committee as Burns was apparently the only member

of the government unaware of the present distress. This demand seems to have been one which the party had decided to press as it was repeated by both MacDonald and Barnes. But Hardie's amendment was defeated by 236-68, figures which suggest that the Liberal revolt had almost been stemmed. It was again noticeable that when the house voted on Alden's motion of approval all the trade union members abstained. Only the socialists voted against it.[1]

Hardie had threatened strong action if the government failed to satisfy and some of the socialist members now decided to launch a sustained parliamentary offensive against Burns. It was concentrated on three themes - the problem of areas where distress committees did not exist; particular aspects of the government proposals capable, in socialist eyes, of extension; and the question of local authorities using rate money to provide wages for unemployed labour. The first two of these themes were raised in a series of questions designed, according to one report, to swamp Burns' department and cause him to spend all of the exchequer grant by Christmas.[2] This latter was probably an exaggeration but certainly at the beginning of November

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1 For the debate see Hansard, 4th Series, CXCIV, 1632-1752. 26 October, 1908.

2 Standard, 5 December, 1908.

MacDonald contacted all local authorities drawing their attention to the effect of Asquith's statement and urging them to secure for their unemployed a share of the promised relief. He also wrote to the secretaries of the I.L.P. branches asking if their local authority had applied for permission to form a distress committee, and also asking for information about local needs.[1] The parliamentary questions began as early as 27 October, when Snowden asked Burns if the authorities at Keighley had requested permission to create a distress committee and with what result.[2] This was the first of a series of such questions, always couched in precisely the same form, which were put regularly during the autumn session until 3 December when the climax - eight questions in one sitting - was reached.[3] Altogether 52 local authorities did apply in this period to set up distress committees, but Burns sanctioned 14 only.[4] Queries were also raised about areas too small demographically under the regulations of the 1905 Act to have committees. On 2 November Henderson asked what steps were being taken to allow such places to have a share in the

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1 Labour Leader, 6 November, 1908.

2 Hansard, 4th Series, CXCV, 46. 27 October, 1908.

3 Ibid., CXCVII, 1630-32. 3 December, 1908.

4 Thirty Eighth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1908. British Parliamentary Papers, 1909, XXVIII, p 569.

grant and was told that they did not qualify for donations from it.[1] Nine days later Hardie asked, unsuccessfully, if the extra £100,000 promised by the government could be provided on conditions which would permit its use by districts not covered by the 1905 Act.[2] Curran then suggested on 13 November, and again on 17 November, both times without success, that such areas be combined and one committee be formed for the whole district.[3] The following week Hardie again asked if the £100,000 could be given on terms different to those of the original grant, but he was again informed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that this was not possible.[4] But despite all these refusals the pressure must have told, for in February 1909 Burns admitted that he had so far spent £196,750, far more than in the previous year.[5]

A second main theme of the questionning concerned particular aspects of the government schemes. Thus Richards asked Burns, unsuccessfully, if he would circularise the distress committees with advice about the best sort of work to provide for the unemployed.[6]

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1 Hansard, 4th Series, CXCV, 784. 2 November, 1908.

2 Ibid., CXCVI, 270. 11 November, 1908.

3 Ibid., 713. 13 November, 1908: ibid., 1014. 17 November, 1908.

4 Ibid., 1776. 23 November, 1908.

5 Ibid., 5th Series, I, 225. 18 February, 1909.

6 Ibid., 4th Series, CXCV, 47. 27 October, 1908.

George Roberts wanted the inquisitorial nature of the inquiry form necessary under regulations issued in 1905 to be modified, but Burns replied that he could see no reason to change it.[1] Bowerman asked if some of the ship repair work could be transferred to south London shipyards in order to relieve the distress there, but McKenna told him that all such work was reserved for royal shipyards.[2] The most sensational incident arising from this constant pressure came on 12 November when Burns, in reply to a question from Thorne, stated that the Local Government Board circular concerning the removal of restrictions on applicants for work allowed full discretion to local distress committees to relax such barriers. Henderson immediately rose and asked if this was what the Prime Minister had meant by his statement, and later in the day he moved the adjournment of the house in order to draw attention to the discrepancy. The covering letter which Burns had circulated with the new order, alleged Henderson, completely contradicted Asquith's promises, and the Liberal leader replied that Henderson was quite correct in supposing that he had not meant to imply that the local authorities should merely have a discretionary power, but that the restrictions should

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1 Hansard, 4th Series, CXCVI, 45. 10 November, 1908.

2 Ibid., 260. 11 November, 1908.

be lifted entirely. Burns too, he went on, had misunderstood him but the mistake had now been rectified.[1] This public rebuke clearly upset Burns, who had already pondered on how long Asquith would continue to support him.[2] Now he noted with poetic sadness that "I sat serene and endured the spleen, but wondered at its source . . . an unexpected blow from the P.M. Why?"[3]

It will be noted that this campaign in the house of commons was carried out almost entirely by the socialists in the Labour Party. Apart from Henderson, who was a member of the unemployment policy committee set up on 19 October, and also chairman of the party, only two non-socialists took part, and one of these, John Ward, was interested only in the welfare of his Stoke constituency. Only two non-socialists, Henderson and W.T.Wilson, supported Hardie when he introduced a two clause bill on 8 December, which would have amended the Unemployed Workmen Act to allow local authorities to levy a rate to pay wages, and would have given the status and powers of distress committees to the smaller committees created by the 1905 Act to collect statistics and run labour bureaux in districts too small to

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1 Hansard, 4th Series, CXCVI, 640-44. 12 November, 1908.

2 Burns Diaries, 26 October, 1908. B.M.Add.MSS 46326.

3 Ibid., 12 November, 1908. B.M.Add.MSS 46326.

qualify for full distress committees.[1] The others who backed Hardie were Barnes, MacDonald, Jowett, Duncan, Curran, Roberts, and Summerbell. Hardie hoped that the government would take up the bill and it was put down for a second reading on the following day, but it never came up for further discussion. It is again a pointer to the division between the socialists and the trade unionists that at the joint board meeting on 9 December it was necessary for Hardie to explain that his introduction of the bill in no way reflected on the status of the joint board.[2] Obviously he had acted entirely on his own initiative.

Hardie, his parliamentary colleagues on the Right to Work Council, and the other parliamentary socialists who had constantly shown themselves anxious to secure action for the unemployed, evidently intended their parliamentary campaign to be supplemented by outside pressure organised partly through the medium of the London I.L.P., whose branches all sent deputations to see their local M.P.'s on the day when the government proposals were being discussed. More importantly, this desire may explain the formation of the Joint

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1 Wilson's support may perhaps be explained by the fact that he was a member of the A.S.C.J., and that the incidence of unemployment was so high in the building trades that the Building Trades Federation organised a demonstration in Trafalgar Square at the end of November.

2 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 9 December, 1908.

London Right to Work Council on 19 October, particularly in view of the reluctance of the I.L.P.'s London organisation to form a sub-committee to run the agitation in London.[1] The meeting which set up the Joint London Council was held on 19 October and was attended by Barnes, Curran, Smith, Quelch, and Hardie from the National Right to Work Council, and by representatives of the S.D.P.'s unemployment committee. E.C.Fairchild of the S.D.P. was appointed secretary of the new body. It seems significant that this meeting was apparently arranged in a hurry, for the S.D.P. had originally planned to hold a meeting of its own on 19 October, but at the last moment this was brought forward to 17 October, perhaps to facilitate discussion of the proposed co-operation.[2] Hardie was threatening vigorous action and if he had in mind the activities of 1905, it was obviously to his advantage to combine with the S.D.P., which was stronger in London than the I.L.P., and which had already set up a network of London committees. A nation wide agitation would be much more effective if it was led by London. The converse of this explains why the S.D.P. was willing to work with the Right to Work Council. The Social Democrats had never been able to organise a national movement

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1 See p 247.

2 The change of date was not announced until the issue of Justice, 17 October, 1908.

successfully, as its own failure in the autumn was showing.[1] Co-operation with the Right to Work Council offered the prospect of involvement in a movement of national significance. More mundane, but equally important, was the fact that the S.D.P.'s London unemployment committee was running short of money.[2]

The joint committee set up on 19 October also suffered from monetary difficulties in its early days and this may explain why it failed to achieve very much. Even by the following March its funds held a balance of only 5/11d and this was only because of a loan of £3.[3] It was hampered too, by the fact that co-operation with the S.D.P. at this time was not very welcome to many members of the Labour Party, particularly MacDonald, who was busy defending the party from the attacks of left wing critics, many of them connected with, or certainly encouraged by, the S.D.P.[4]

Fortunately for Hardie this ineffectiveness did not affect the National Right to Work Council, and at the end of October Smith reported that he was inundated with requests from local right to

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1 See p 253.

2 See Knee's appeal in Justice, 24 October, 1908.

3 The income sheet was published in ibid., 20 November, 1909. Total income between October 1908 and March 1909 was only £49-2-4d.

4 See his letter quoted on p 248.

work committees for speakers and that he would be grateful for any offers of assistance.[1] Early in November the National Right to Work Council took a deputation to see Sidney Buxton and it was successful in persuading the Post Master General to reduce overtime in his department, thus facilitating the employment of an extra 450 men. By contrast with the Joint London Council the national body had no difficulty in raising the £250 needed to arrange a national conference on the unemployment problem, which was to be followed by a representative deputation to the Prime Minister. This conference was held on 4 and 5 December, and although it was attended by 312 delegates, it did little more than give an airing to solutions long advocated by labour. Ironically, the "right to work" resolution ran into some difficulty as many of the distress committee representatives claimed that this was a controversial issue which ought to have been avoided.[2] The Social Democrats were disappointed with the way in which the deputation presented its case to Asquith, and Ben Tillett thought the whole affair was "quite a farce."[3]

For some reason the parliamentary committee of the T.U.C. refused

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1 Labour Leader, 30 October, 1908.

2 National Right to Work Council, Conference on destitution and unemployment (London, 1908).

3 See Dockers Record, February 1909, p 4. Both main socialist papers expressed similar disappointment. See Labour Leader, 18 December, 1908; Justice, 19 December, 1908.

the Right to Work Council's invitation to send representatives to this conference, and decided to contact the joint board with a view to holding its own meeting to consider the legislation promised by the government for 1909.[1] Perhaps this was a reaction against the co-operation with the S.D.P., but it certainly confirms the reports that the trade union leaders had been satisfied with the government proposals of October.[2] The attitude of the T.U.C. may also have been coloured by the fact that its leaders had been taken into the government's confidence about labour exchanges. Shackleton, Thorne, Bowerman, and Steadman went to Germany in November to examine at first hand the working of the German exchanges, and their report was considered sufficiently important by Churchill to warrant sending a copy of it to Asquith.[3] The joint board, meanwhile, decided in December to hold its own conference to consider amendments to the Right to Work Bill, shelving an unemployment report prepared by the G.F.T.U., whose representatives were somewhat annoyed.[4]

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1 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 19 November, 1908.

2 See, for example, The Times, 22 October, 1908.

3 W.S.Churchill to H.H.Asquith, 29 December, 1908. Asquith Papers. Vol 11, ff 250-53.

4 T.U.C., P.C.Mnutes, 16 December, 1908.

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Despite the vigorous policy followed in parliament by some of the socialist members of the Labour Party, and the backing provided by the "right to work" movement, criticism did not decrease. Grayson's action in walking out of the house of commons had won much support, mainly because it had spotlighted the failure of the Labour Party to achieve very much.[1] At least 30 branches of the I.L.P., 6 socialist societies, and 21 branches and the national executive of the S.D.P. passed resolutions approving his stand, and condemning the Labour M.P.'s for not supporting him.[2] On the other hand, 13 I.L.P. branches passed resolutions of confidence in the Labour Party, and when Grayson refused to appear on a public platform at Holborn with Hardie, 42 branches of the I.L.P. are recorded as having passed motions of support for Hardie. MacDonald wrote some extremely vindictive letters in reply to the condemnatory resolutions. He told the Oldham Branch of the S.D.P., for example, that he was not in the least surprised to receive their letter "knowing as I do the general stupidity of the S.D.P. and its incapacity to understand the meaning of any political demonstration."[3]

But it was the tactics of Grayson and Smith which caught on with

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1 See H.Quelch, Literary remains (London, 1914), p 202.

2 See Labour Leader, Justice, Clarion, New Age, October-December 1908, passim.

3 Quoted in Justice, 31 October, 1908.

some of the unemployed. In Bradford a council meeting was broken up forcibly by unemployed intruders, and when Buxton visited the town at the beginning of November the Lord Mayor alerted the local militia in case of trouble.[1] The Lambeth police were called upon to evict the local unemployed from a meeting of the guardians.[2] In December unemployed workers seized control of the Lewisham borough council meeting, while in Swansea the town hall was occupied.[3] The continuance of this violence, which the S.D.P. had welcomed, caused them also to consider further how best to utilise it. R.Edmonson, who had just written a pamphlet on the danger presented to the working classes by the recruitment of the unemployed into the army, was sent to Lancashire to begin a lecture tour on the subject, while, more importantly, it was decided to recommence the old tactic of sending the unemployed into the west end. Williams was put in charge of this and he appealed to the unemployed to follow him.[4] The first march was held on 25 November when some 2000 men paraded through London's richer quarters. Shop-keepers immediately began to complain

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1 The Times, 28 October, 1908.

2 Ibid., 26 November, 1908.

3 Ibid., 8 December, 1908: ibid., 17 December, 1908.

4 His appeal was published, oddly enough, in ibid., 19 November, 1908.

as they had done in 1905. On 16 December so many unemployed turned out that Regent Street was completely blocked. Two days previously a question was asked in the commons about the possibility of increasing the strength of the Metropolitan Police in view of "the great increase of duties recently thrown upon it . . . ."[1] Despite the implications of this question, however, the level of agitation seems to have declined somewhat in the last few weeks of the year.

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1 Hansard, 4th Series, CXCVIII, 1252. 14 December, 1908.

Chapter 6. The Decline of the "Right to Work."

The decline in agitation noted at the end of 1908 may have been related to the slight fall in the number of unemployed in November. But in December the index rose again to 9.1% and things were so bad in the building trade - 14.9% of trade unionists in the industry were out of work in December - that six of the leading unions arranged a conference at the beginning of February in order to consider what representations could be made to the Prime Minister.[1] The M.D.C. of the I.L.P. was also active in lobbying government members. At the beginning of January it led a deputation to Burns to protest at the manner in which the Local Government Board was rejecting work schemes submitted by the various London boroughs. Burns, however, refused to see it.

The level of agitation remained at a minimum over Christmas. The lull was so noticeable that when Asquith wrote to Burns congratulating him on the success of his policy, he referred to the "almost complete dying down of agitation and complaint."[2] The S.D.P. unemployment committee was, as usual, in dire need of funds which

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1 Table 1. See also O.B.S., Trades Circular and General Reporter, February 1909, p 5.

2 H.H.Asquith to J.Burns, 3 January, 1909. Burns Papers. B.M.Add.MSS 46282, f 75.

certainly limited its ability to sustain a lengthy campaign over Christmas, especially as it was planning to hold effective demonstrations to coincide with the re-opening of parliament.[1] But there was also some unwillingness on the part of the unemployed themselves to demonstrate, for the S.D.P. had to abandon at least one projected march to Grosvenor Square because not enough unemployed turned up.[2] As far as trade unionists were concerned this may have been because they were looking to the promises of government action made last October, and were thus waiting to see what emerged in the King's Speech. This at least was what Henderson implied in the house of commons on 16 February.[3] It may also explain why the T.U.C. put off plans to hold nation wide demonstrations in favour of the eight hour day.[4]

But the decline of agitation was confined, as a Board of Trade memorandum pointed out, to those areas where distress was limited, places such as London, the west country, and South Wales.[5] It was still rife in the north east, midland cities such as Coventry and

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1 See Knee's appeal for funds in Justice, 2 January, 1909.

2 Ibid., 16 January, 1909.

3 Hansard, 5th Series, I, 55. 16 February, 1909.

4 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 21 January, 1909.

5 Estimate of the number of employed . . . . PRO.CAB. 37/97. 2 January, 1909.

Birmingham, and in parts of Yorkshire, and hunger marchers from these regions were much in evidence. A party from Leeds arrived in Stroud on 3 January and several of them were promptly arrested for provoking a brawl in a public house. Stewart Grey reached South Wales on 7 January with another group and one of his lieutenants, R.Williams, attempted to emulate the exploits of the 1906 land-grabbers by settling on a piece of land near Cardiff. He was arrested for obstruction. Men from Manchester had arrived in Stafford the week before.[1]

It was not long before violence broke out again in London when one of the S.D.P. organisers, R.Greenwood, began to hold a series of meetings in the fashionable west end squares. Grosvenor Square was the scene of one such demonstration on 13 January, and a second, held the following week in Belgrave Square, was the occasion of much violence. Typical enough was the case of Joseph Lloyd, arrested for inciting people to violence because he had urged the unemployed to attend such meetings armed "not with your fists but with something else."[2] One protester claimed that the only object of such gatherings was to insult west end residents.[3] Another feared that

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1 See The Times, January 1909, passim.

2 Quoted in the Standard, 6 February, 1909.

3 The Times, 22 January, 1909.

only the police stood between London and total riot.[1] Thus it was not surprising that the police resolved to take a much firmer stand in the future and permission was refused for a second meeting in Belgrave Square which Greenwood had planned for 25 January.[2] But in spite of this there were fresh clashes when unemployed workers from St. Pancras, foiled in their attempt to see Asquith, held an impromptu meeting in Trafalgar Square. The situation became so ugly at one point that reservists were called out.[3]

Financial problems for the unemployed organisations were still pressing, however, and were so acute in some cases that Justice claimed that Greenwood was apparently expected to "live on air, and grow fat by expanding his lungs by open air speaking."[4] It was no coincidence that in the middle of January Jack Williams, the veteran unemployed organiser, appeared in the bankruptcy court.[5] The Joint London Right to Work Committee was also in need of funds but it did continue to function.[6] It issued a circular in mid-January to all

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1 Daily Mail, 22 January, 1909.

2 Standard, 21 January, 1909.

3 Daily News, 27 January, 1909.

4 Justice, 23 January, 1909.

5 Ibid.

6 New Age, 14 January, 1909.

London labour and socialist bodies giving details of a second "right to work" conference to be held on 14 February, and also of the various demonstrations planned to coincide with the opening of parliament.[1] The London branches of the I.L.P., perhaps annoyed at the negative response afforded to a deputation which they had sent to discuss unemployment policy with the officers of the Labour Party, decided to support these meetings and also to organise one of their own on 16 February, an arrangement welcomed by the Joint London Right to Work Committee which offered all possible assistance.[2] It was resolved to print 100,000 leaflets calling on the unemployed to turn out at the demonstration.[3] The M.D.C. also appealed to its own members to organise so that large numbers were present, and it asked for a minimum of publicity, perhaps in the hope of taking the authorities by surprise.[4]

The series of demonstrations began on 13 February when the Church Socialist League held a rally in Trafalgar Square to demand the "right work." One of the main organisers was Rev.J.C.Campbell, who had

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1 An unbound copy survives in I.L.P., M.D.C.Minutes, 21 January, 1909.

2 For the deputation's report see ibid., 8 January, 1909.

3 Ibid., 30 January, 1909.

4 I.L.P. circular which is unbound and undated. It is contained with the minutes of the M.D.C. "Do your best in this respect; but please make no mention of this fact until February 14 . . . ."

published several socialist tracts under S.D.P. auspices.[1] On 15 February Greenwood led a march of unemployed men into the west end. The previous day the "right to work" conference had decided to ask the Labour M.P.'s to lead the womens' march planned for 16 February, but they all excused themselves except Grayson and O'Grady. Both MacDonald and Snowden asserted vehemently that they would have nothing to do with anything organised by the S.D.P., indicative of some division of opinion within the ranks of the I.L.P. members, some of whom had co-operated with the S.D.P. in the previous session. It was indicative too, of division between national and local leaders that MacDonald's statement was immediately refuted by Harley of the M.D.C.[2] Despite these divisions the women were accompanied for part of the way by O'Grady and Grayson, who were both undeterred by the fact that while the procession was forming up in Cavendish Square, a squadron of horse guards rode by with drawn swords. Harry Quelch tried to interpret this as an attempt by the authorities to frighten the would-be marchers, but it seems far more likely that the troops were merely on their way to take up position as escort to the royal

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1 Campbell was a leader of the "New Theology" movement. See F.Brockway, Inside the left (London, 1942), pp 15-6.

2 This incident was reported in Justice, 20 February, 1909.

carriage.[1] But there were some signs that the authorities were worried. There were several accusations made later about police brutality towards the 6-8000 women who took part in the march, and this may have been a brutality born of fear.[2] Also it should be noted that Harley, who had been given permission to hold an I.L.P. rally on the evening of 16 February, was told at the last minute that he could not, after all, hold his meeting.[3]

Neither Hardie nor Barnes joined in with the womens' march and while it is possible that this was because they had prior engagements, it seems far more likely that they were already beginning to regret their earlier alliance with the Social Democrats. For one thing, Barnes doubted the tactical wisdom of marching large numbers of women and children round London for political purposes. When parliament discussed unemployment on 17 February he said that while he was glad that "the sea of suffering surging round our very doors . . . last night even, overflowed into our lobby", he wished to dissociate himself from the people who organised great demonstrations

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1 Justice, 20 February, 1909.

2 See I.L.P., M.D.C.Minutes, 25 February, 1909: Hansard, 5th Series, II, 182. 9 March, 1909.

3 Labour Leader, 19 February, 1909.

and failed to provide sufficient food for those taking part.[1] "We had nothing to do with that, and will not have anything to do with it."[2] Hardie probably shared this view, for it will be remembered that when he was planning the 1905 marches he had shown considerable concern for the physical well being of the processionists.[3] In any case, he apparently considered that the hardest part of the struggle for the "right to work" was now over, and thus may have felt that such a large demonstration was not justified.[4]

The decisive factor in influencing the attitude of Barnes and Hardie, however, was probably the widespread rumour that Victor Grayson, supported by Ben Tillett and Harry Quelch (a member of the National Right to Work Council), and encouraged by the Social Democrats, intended to launch a strong attack on the Labour Party executive during the annual conference at the end of January. Hardie could not have been unaware of the violent reactions of both Snowden and MacDonald against the alliance with the S.D.P. and the idea of co-operation with that body, which seems also to have alarmed some provincial trade unionists. In Nottingham, for example, the Right

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, I, 98. 17 February, 1909.

2 Ibid.

3 See p 122.

4 Labour Leader, 1 January, 1909.

to Work Committee was suddenly dissolved; in Newcastle the trades council withdrew its representative on the Right to Work Committee, while the trades council in Manchester set up an entirely new committee under its own control.[1] Hardie's main concern had always been the preservation of the labour alliance, and, faced with these indications of hostility towards joint action with the S.D.P., and the imminence of a Social Democrat inspired attack on the Labour Party, he and his I.L.P. colleagues must have decided to close the ranks and abandon the short lived alliance.

As it happened, the expected attack never materialised, for Grayson was absent from the vital session of the Portsmouth conference. He claimed that he had been kidnapped by two army officers who had offered him a "short motor car ride in the town to see the sights", and who had then driven him into the country and dumped him.[2] He was unable to say, however, why they had done this. The whole episode is clouded in mystery and it is puzzling to note that for some reason the Labour Leader found it necessary to report that the same two men had also tried to kidnap Hardie as well, a story which did not appear in any other paper.[3] It would be tempting to interpret

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1 For Nottingham see Trades and Labour Gazette, January 1909, p 12. For Newcastle and Manchester see ibid., April 1909, p 10.

2 Westminster Gazette, 30 January, 1909.

3 Labour Leader, 5 February, 1909.

this as a cover story, but neither Grayson nor his supporters ever claimed that the Labour Party had arranged for him to be kidnapped. In any case, to be really effective he should have made his move earlier in the conference before the speeches were subjected to a time limit, something he should have forseen. Maybe he realised that the majority of the delegates were against him and decided to bide his time until the I.L.P. conference at Easter. At all events, wrote Hyndman later, " it was a very bad business and to this day I do not understand it."[1]

But, saved from the embarrassment of public internal wrangles, the Labour Party conference concluded its activities at Portsmouth with an impressive display of solidarity, the delegates calling for a ministry of labour, a national system of labour exchanges, and the recognition of the "right to work." The parliamentary party was urged to make the question of unemployment of paramount importance during the session.[2] Thus armed the party decided on 15 February to ballot for the Right to Work Bill again, and also to move an amendment on the King's Speech if its proposals on unemployment were not considered satisfactory.[3] The speech in fact mentioned only

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1 H.M.Hyndman, Further reminiscences (London, 1912), p 281.

2 The Times, 29 January, 1909.

3 Infancy of the Labour Party, II, p 108. 15 February, 1909.

labour exchanges about which most Labour M.P.'s had known for some time, and there can be little doubt that some of the trade union members were shocked by what they regarded as the government's duplicity. Brace, for example, stated that he did not consider labour exchanges in any way a redemption of the government's promises of the previous October, and Barnes, who moved the amendment condemning the proposals as inadequate, said that exchanges were "tantamount to throwing a stone to a hungry man."[1] But the amendment was defeated by 207 votes to 103.[2] Of the votes cast in favour 28 came from Irish Nationalists, 16 from Unionists, 29 from Labour Party men, and the remaining 32 from Lib-Labs, figures which suggest that the Liberal revolt had now been well and truly quelled. Henderson was accordingly very disappointed with the vote, attributing it partly to the strenuous activities of the government whips, and partly to the speech made by Fenwick, who had interpreted the amendment as implying that Asquith's word could not be trusted, and who had added that if the government was defeated it would resign, a very unwelcome prospect.[3]

During the course of the debate several Labour speakers

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, I, 104. 17 February, 1909.

2 For the debate see ibid., 98-191.

3 F.S.I., Monthly Report, March 1909, p 16.

threatened vigorous action if the government failed to do more than set up a system of labour exchanges. Hardie, for example, warned that "we shall not accept the present position without such a campaign . . . as will make the Government sorry for its great betrayal. . . 1895 showed on whose side the last laugh lay."[1] Henderson told the East Ham Branch of the I.L.P., which had sent in a request that urgent steps be taken, that the Labour Party was going to give the matter special attention.[2] Wardle also said that unemployment had been the main topic of concern at the party meeting on 25 February and that it was hoped to raise the question as soon as possible.[3] But all these statements of intent produced little in the way of concerted party effort, and G.B.Shaw referred to the usual policy of "beginning with a crushing indictment of the Government and of society at large, and then fizzling out" as a "futile business."[4] The trade union M.P.'s, despite the unanimity of their vote on the Labour Party amendment, now seem to have devoted their main energies to organising and mobilising union opinion on labour exchanges, via the parliamentary committee. A meeting of 200

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, I, 184. 17 February, 1909.

2 East Ham Branch I.L.P., Minutes, 25 February, 1909.

3 Railway Review, 5 March, 1909.

4 G.B.Shaw to W.S.Sanders, 27 February, 1909. Fabian Society Collection. Part A, Box 6(a). Correspondence from G.B.Shaw.

delegates representing some 1,550,000 workers was held on 17 March in order to discuss the exchanges and unemployment insurance, and several deputations went to see Churchill. The G.F.T.U., while lending support to the T.U.C.'s efforts. still placed great faith in the Right to Work Bill. In February, for example, Appleton, the secretary, issued a statement calling on all members to support the measure as this was the only way of securing government action.[1]

The socialist M.P.'s, having now decided that co-operation with the S.D.P. was unwise, could only resort to extra-parliamentary speeches in order to keep unemployment before the public, and certainly Hardie and Barnes in particular made every effort to do this.[2] But they were hampered to some extent by the need to concern themselves with the topics in which the public was interested, and as the great naval scare produced by the rapid growth of the German navy reached almost panic proportions in England in March 1909, Labour speakers could hardly ignore it.[3] The other method left open to the socialists after the cessation of joint action with the S.D.P.

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1 Railway Review, 12 February, 1909.

2 Hardie spoke on it at Manchester (Labour Leader, 5 March, 1909), and at Walworth (ibid., 12 March, 1909): Barnes at Merthyr (ibid., 2 April 1909), and at Aberdeen (ibid., 16 April, 1909).

3 For the naval scare itself see F.W.Hirst, The six panics and other essays (London, 1913), pp 62-102. Of the six speeches made by Labour M.P.'s in the week ending 26 March the main theme of each was the scare. See the Labour Leader, 26 March, 1909.

was the raising of questions in the commons about unemployment matters, and this was continued, although with much less vigour than in the previous autumn.[1] In March Wardle, backed by Clynes, Barnes, Summerbell and Hardie, moved a reduction in the sum of £100,000 being voted to the Local Government Board for expenses under the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905. This was not pressed to a vote but the Labour members made it clear that the move was a tactical one designed to facilitate an attack on government policy or rather lack of it. Wardle wanted to know, for example, if Burns considered that the creation of fourteen new distress committees was an adequate fulfilment of the government's promises of the previous autumn.[2] But the jibes were lost on Burns, who told Masterman that at the end of the debate the Labour M.P.'s "cooed like doves feeding out of my 'and."[3] This attack had followed one made the previous week by Clynes and MacDonald against the administration of the 1905 Act.[4] It was followed by another, this time led by Barnes, made during the Easter adjournment debate, but this again failed to produce any constructive

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1 For example, see Summerbell's question in Hansard, 5th Series, I, 577. 23 February, 1909: and Duncan's in ibid., II, 518. 11 March, 1909.

2 Ibid., II, 461. 10 March, 1909.

3 Quoted in Masterman, Masterman, p 128.

4 Hansard, 5th Series, I, 1217-23. 1 March, 1909: ibid., 1317-23. 2 March, 1909: ibid., 1441-75. 3 March, 1909.

suggestions.[1]

In part, of course, the Labour Party's lack of energetic action was due to the great accumulation of government business. Harley had warned as early as February that this would prevent any drastic action and events proved him right.[2] It was well illustrated when Hardie asked if there would be time to discuss the reports of the poor law commission and was told that no government time could be allocated for such a debate, although there was nothing to prevent a private member balloting for time in the usual way.[3] Similarly, Henderson inquired if there would be an opportunity to debate the recommendations made by the commission on afforestation and was informed that in view of the state of public business there wouldn't be.[4] By May, MacDonald was claiming that "the whole session is already mortgaged. It is absolutely impossible for any new substantial measure to go through the House, and I am afraid that what has to be done will be put off to next year . . . ."[5]

Although O'Grady, one of the small group of Labour M.P.'s who had persistently put pressure on the government, tried to placate

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, III, 1213-27. 7 April, 1909.

2 Labour Leader, 26 February, 1909.

3 Hansard, 5th Series, III, 185. 30 March, 1909.

4 Ibid., 1672. 22 April, 1909.

5 Ibid., V, 494. 19 May, 1909.

the party's left wing critics by arguing that the attacks in parliament did constitute the vigorous action which had been promised, there were many who did not agree and by the beginning of April requests were flooding into Labour Party headquarters for the party to move the adjournment of the house in order to draw attention to the plight of the unemployed.[1] Some 8.2% of trade unionists were still out of work at the end of March.[2] The Joint London Right to Work Committee, failing to secure any promise of action when it took a deputation to see Labour Party leaders on this subject, decided to urge all labour organisations to press the demand for an adjournment on the party. This decision was embodied in a circular sent out, probably near the end of March, for it came up for discussion at a meeting of the East Ham Branch of the I.L.P. on 1 April.[3] James Parker was sufficiently alarmed to publish a defence of the party's refusal to move the djournment, pointing out that at the most this would provide $2\frac{3}{4}$ hours of debate, and that in any case the Speaker would not now consider the subject of sufficient importance to warrant an adjournment. The individual

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1 O'Grady defended the party in the Clarion, 12 March, 1909.

2 Table 1.

3 East Ham Branch I.L.P., Minutes, 1 April, 1909.

branches, he added, must continue to work up local pressure in each constituency.[1] This appeal to the localities was by now wearing a little thin, for when the N.A.C. of the I.L.P. repeated it at the annual party conference at Easter, Mrs. Cobden Sanderson replied that the branches had already done excellently and that it was now up to the Labour M.P.'s to do something.[2]

One reason put forward by some to justify the Labour Party's comparative inactivity in the house of commons was that the Right to Work Bill was due for its second reading on 30 April. It had been revised over Christmas with the aid of J.H.Greenwood, a lawyer, the main change being that national responsibility for the unemployed was only now to be operative when more than 4.0% of the workers in a specified area were out of work. When it was less than this the responsibility was to rest with the local unemployment committees to be set up under the terms of the bill. This revision had attracted some hostile comment at the Labour Party's conference, but MacDonald had successfully defended it by pointing out that some of the bill's clauses only became operative in times of "exceptional distress", a term which thus had to be defined.[3] As already stated, Appleton of

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1 Parker published his article in the Labour Leader, 9 April, 1909. Justice, 27 November, 1909, later claimed that over 500 of the resolutions suggested by the Joint Right to Work Council were sent in.

2 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1909, p 71.

3 Labour Party, Annual Report, 1909, p 100.

of the G.F.T.U. had urged his members to support the bill, and the Labour Party held a support meeting in the Drury Lane Theatre on 28 April. But it was noticeable that some sections of the I.L.P. in particular, seemed to lack enthusiasm for the measure. The London branches were so luke warm that a projected demonstration in Trafalgar Square, designed to provide support for the bill's second reading, had to be abandoned for want of support.[1] On the national front it is significant that between March and mid-July the I.L.P. sold 75,850 pamphlets, of which only 800 dealt with the Right to Work Bill and a further 500 with the general aspects of the unemployment problem. Together this represented just over 1.7% of the total sold in this period.[2] This compared with the 20,500 unemployment pamphlets sold out of a total of 141,000 between March 1908 and 28 February, 1909, a figure which represented 15% of the total. If to this are added the 6,500 sold on afforestation the percentage becomes 20.[3] This seems to indicate some cooling of enthusiasm for the bill on the part of some labour elements, although

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1 See I.L.P., M.D.C.Minutes, 21 May, 1909.

2 I.L.P., Minutes and Reports from Head Office, July 1909.

3 Ibid., April 1909. If the figures are worked out as monthly averages, 160 were sold each month on the "right to work" from March to mid-July 1909, compared with 1708 in the earlier period. Thus in 1909 one can postulate that a total of 2508 "right to work" pamphlets were sold, a monthly average of 358, substantially less than in 1908.

the party managed to secure 115 votes for the second reading of the Unemployed Bill. Despite this the whole proceedings were, in the words of the Morning Post, "lethargic and disappointing."[1] The debate was so carelessly handled by the Labour members that John Ward, who was not even a member of the Labour Party but who was seconding Hodge, even misunderstood the nature of some of the revisions, saying that the "right to work" clause now only became operative when unemployment stood at over 4.0%, and he had to be openly corrected by Shackleton.[2] Richardson said later, in a significant phrase, that the bill would pass "once Labour wakes up."[3]

The lack of enthusiasm in parliament may be explained by the fact that the bill had been completely overshadowed by the controversial Lloyd George budget introduced the previous day. But it does seem that, despite the Labour alliance's commitment to the measure, the "right to work" no longer bulked so largely or so exclusively in labour eyes outside parliament as a potential unemployment solution. It was losing its monopoly position and shortly after the second reading an article in the Socialist Review stated that the bill would "perhaps never pass. It is a manifesto."[4]

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1 Morning Post, 1 May, 1909.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, IV, 641-65. 30 April, 1909.

3 N.U.B.S.O., Monthly Report, May 1909, p 223.

4 Socialist Review, III (June 1909), p 246.

This process had really begun in a tentative way when the afforestation committee issued its report. This commission, appointed in 1906, contained two Labour men, Summerbell and Ward, and in March 1908 its terms of reference had been expanded, largely as a result of Labour Party pressure, to inquire whether "it is desirable to make an experiment in afforestation as a means of increasing employment during periods of depression in the labour market . . . ."[1] The report stated that if the 9,000,000 acres of suitable wood-growing land were wooded, temporary work would be provided for 18,000 men in winter, and permanent work would ultimately be available for 90,000. Furthermore, there were "sufficient unemployed persons willing . . . and able who could advantageously be employed without a period of special training."[2] Labour men received these suggestions very favourably, and Henderson was angry that no place was found for them in the government's programme, particularly as Burns had been telling them for the past three years to wait for this report.[3] Hardie was also annoyed, claiming that at least £1,000,000 should have been allocated to afforestation in 1909.[4]

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1 Liberal Magazine, XVII (February 1909), p 61.

2 The Times, 16 January, 1909.

3 Hansard, 5th Series, I, 54-5. 16 February, 1909.

4 Labour Leader, 19 February, 1909.

Some Conservative papers even thought that the Labour Party might tag the proposals on to the Right to Work Bill, fearing that if this happened the result would be an afforestation plan which was no more than a vast scheme of relief works, rather than a means of preserving a vital national resource.[1] But the Labour Party did not incorporate the suggestions into their bill, and in fact did no more than ask if there would be time to discuss the subject in the house of commons.

A second very important source of ideas which served to challenge the Labour Party's emphasis on the "right to work" came in the long awaited report of the royal commission on the poor laws, which was issued on 17 February. Although the majority report secured, in Beatrice Webb's words, a "magnificent reception", it was unpopular with working class organisations.[2] It was the minority report which captured their imagination. As far as unemployment was concerned the signatories of the minority report recommended that a national system of labour exchanges be set up, a ministry of labour created to replace the poor law authorities and the distress committees, and which was to be responsible for organising the national labour market.

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1 Morning Post, 16 January, 1909.

2 Quoted in K.Muggeridge & R.Adams, Beatrice Webb. A life (London, 1967), p 189.

In addition, trade unions should receive unemployment fund subsidies from the government, working hours of transport workers and all who were aged under eighteen were to be reduced, and the government was to plan its own works, which were to include foreshore reclamation and afforestation, over a ten year period in order to offset fluctuations in the market demand for labour.

The Social Democrats were opposed to the minority report because it recommended the abolition of the guardians, and this was seen as a threat to the only existing element of popular control in the entire poor law system.[1] This fear was embodied in a Social Democrat backed resolution passed by the L.T.C.[2] More importantly, they objected to the unemployment proposals. A.A.Watts, for example, thought that the causes should have been more explicitly stated, and he also felt that more drastic recommendations could have been made.[3]

Ramsay MacDonald claimed that the minority proposals were "our old proposals paraphrased, brought up to date as to facts and experience, issued at public expense."[4] There was considerable truth in this but the Labour Party was still unsuccessful in an attempt

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1 S.D.P., The minority report of the poor law commission (London, 1909).

2 Trades and Labour Gazette, January 1910, p 5.

3 Social Democrat, XII (March 1909), p 101.

4 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1909, p 45.

to start a discussion on the report in the commons, and their M.P.'s were only able to express their views in a debate on the unemployment proposals initiated by Pickersgill. In his speech MacDonald picked out the insurance and exchange ideas, as did Henderson, who went so far as to claim - incorrectly - that these ideas had both been contained in the Right to Work Bill. Shackleton concentrated on the suggestions to restrict overtime, working hours, and child labour.[1] There were, of course, parts of the report with which the Labour leaders did not agree. When MacDonald drew up a report on behalf of the joint board, for example, he argued that unemployment should be the responsibility of the Board of Trade, rather than a labour minister.[2] This certainly was also one feature which Bob Smillie rejected at the T.U.C. conference, saying that the work involved would be too much for one man.[3] Ben Tillett, who was in favour of the suggestion, got nowhere in his attempts to commit the labour alliance to putting pressure on the government to establish such a post.[4] On the other hand, the report was heartily supported by the I.L.P.'s N.A.C. In September one inquirer was informed that the

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, V, 484-525. 19 May, 1909.

2 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 18 August, 1909.

3 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909, pp 140-41.

4 See his letters to the T.U.C. in P.C.Minutes, 20 October, 1909: ibid., 17 November, 1909.

party was backing the Webbs' newly created National Committee to promote the break up of the Poor Law.[1] This is even more significant when it is remembered that one of the members of the new N.A.C. elected at Easter was J.M.MacLachlan, who in 1908 had advocated that the Labour Party should abandon its policy of modest palliatives and concentrate on a national campaign ranging over the whole spectrum of poverty.[2] There can be little doubt that the poor law minority report was a challenge, particularly among certain sections of the I.L.P., to the virtual exclusiveness which the "right to work" had hitherto enjoyed. Sidney Webb was very keen to popularise the report's unemployment proposals, for even before they were made public, he was making arrangements for a large open meeting at which they would be widely publicised.[3] When this meeting materialised Webb, perhaps unwittingly, criticised the Right to Work Bill. Unemployment, he declared, would not be solved in one session of parliament, nor was the solution "to be found in a word, such as Socialism with a big 'S' or in two words, such as Tariff Reform. There is no one panacea."[4] At the I.L.P. conference one delegate

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1 I.L.P., N.A.C.Minutes, 30 September, 1909.

2 See p 242.

3 See S.Webb to W.S.Sanders, 1 January, 1909. Fabian Society Collection. Part A, Box 4. Correspondence from S.Webb.

4 Quoted in Fabian News, XX (April 1909), p 40.

from Norwich advocated that the party should strive for unemployment legislation on the lines of the minority proposals which he described as "the last word."[1] More significantly, he proceeded to criticise the Right to Work Bill on the grounds that it was not a national solution because the local committees were to be the medium of some of the relief provided, and also because some of the expenses were to be raised from local rates.

This is not to argue that the "right to work" no longer claimed any support. It would have been very surprising had the idea disappeared immediately it was challenged because it was well rooted by 1909. During the summer one of Barnes' speeches on the bill was published as a pamphlet, The unemployed problem (London, 1909), and no fewer than eleven branches submitted "right to work" resolutions for inclusion on the I.L.P.'s conference agenda for 1910.[2] The relationship between the two sets of proposals was symbolised in the election manifestos of W.S.Sanders and Alfred Salter, two Labour by-election candidates during 1909. They mentioned both the Right to Work Bill and the minority report.[3]

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1 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1909, p 71.

2 Reynold's Newspaper, 20 February, 1910.

3 N.L.C., Election addresses, 1909.

It was against this background of increasing doubt about the "right to work" claim that the controversial Lloyd George budget was introduced, George Roberts even asserting that it had been precisely timed to influence all those who intended to vote for the Labour Party's Unemployment Bill on the following day.[1] But whatever lay behind the timing of the budget it could not be ignored or opposed by the Labour Party, for either course of action would have forfeited the claim to be a truly radical party. In any case, there were several good reasons for labour to support it. Firstly, its principles were acceptable to labour thinkers as it represented the attack on landed monopoly which Snowden had advocated in his pamphlet, A few hints to Lloyd George (London, 1909). The Labour Party conference on taxation at the beginning of the year had called for a graduated income tax, taxation of monopolies and of state conferred monopolies, estate and legacy duties, land valuation, and a surtax on large incomes.[2] The budget in fact contained suggestions for a tax on unearned incomes, a supertax for incomes of over £3000 p.a., settlement estate duties, several new land taxes; death duties were increased by steepening the graduation scales, and legacy and

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1 Typographical Circular, May 1909, p 2.

2 Labour Party, Special conference on unemployment and . . . taxation, 1909.

succession duties were raised from 3% to 5%. In May the T.U.C. passed a resolution approving the principles on which the budget was based, although concern was expressed at the possible effects of the proposed tobacco duty on workers in the cigar industry.[1] Fred Jowett wrote that whatever else might be said about the budget "it is doing the work of the Socialists."[2] Even the New Age referred to it as a "victory for socialist ideas."[3]

Perhaps equally important in rallying labour support for the budget were the purposes for which the revenue was intended. "Apart from the increase in the navy expenditure", wrote Snowden, "Socialists may regard the destination of the new taxation with every satisfaction."[4] Besides the increased navy expenditure, the bulk of the money, some £10,000,000 was to be devoted to financing the old age pensions scheme set up the year before. A further £1,500,000 was designated for the initial stages of far reaching plans for unemployment relief, notably labour exchanges, insurance, and the Development Bill.[5] Liberal speakers, particularly Lloyd George

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1 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 19 May, 1909.

2 Quoted in F.Brockway, Socialism over sixty years (London, 1946), p 92.

3 New Age, 13 May, 1909.

4 Socialist Review, III (June 1909), p 256.

5 See Lloyd George Papers. C/33/2/24. 22 December, 1909.

himself, made much of this, as did the Liberal Publication Department. The pamphlet What the budget is and means (7 June, 1909) laid special emphasis on the unemployment proposals which it was designed to finance, and these efforts were apparently successful, for at the September assembly of the T.U.C. Shackleton praised the budget because it would at last enable a general attack to be made on the unemployment problem.[1] George Barnes affirmed that as it linked up labour exchanges, to which he had been opposed because they were merely useless pieces of machinery, with schemes for development and afforestation to provide more work, he would no longer be hostile to the exchanges.[2]

Only the left wing of the labour movement did not join in with the general eulogy with the exception, as already indicated, of the New Age. The S.D.P. passed a resolution regretting that the Labour Party had sacrificed its independence by supporting the budget, and Hyndman claimed that the bulk of the new taxation would in any case fall on the working classes.[3] James Macdonald thought that all measures, including the budget, should be opposed until the "right to work", the only real solution to unemployment, had been secured.[4]

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1 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909, pp 48-9.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, IV, 797. 3 May, 1909.

3 See Justice, 14 August, 1909; ibid., 18 September, 1909.

4 Trades and Labour Gazette, April 1909, p 1.

Many Social Democrats thought that the Labour Party's support for the government made all the more sinister the pervading rumours of a Liberal-Labour alliance for which MacDonald had allegedly been working all the time.[1] Such fears would probably have been greatly increased had a letter from MacDonald to the Chancellor of the Exchequer been made public, for it indicated that there was a great deal of co-operation between them.

> 'I hope you will let me know immediately the Cabinet decides anything, what it is. As the result of three or four days steady negotiation I think I have straightened out everything, and if an election should come, the Anti-Budgetists will not get much comfort out of our relationships.' [2]

Later in the year Justice published a telling cartoon which portrayed the Labour Party gentleman escorting home Miss Budget. In the background stood an unemployed man complaining that "he seems to have forgotten all about me since he took up with that hussy."[3]

Strictly speaking such a charge was not true, for many members of the Labour Party were, through the medium of the T.U.C., concerning themselves with the government's unemployed programme

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1 See, for example, the allegations made in the Social Democrat, III (May 1909), pp 224-5.

2 J.Ramsay MacDonald to D.Lloyd George, 17 September, 1909. Lloyd George Papers. C/5/11/1.

3 Justice, 6 November, 1909.

currently before the country - exchanges, insurance, and the Development Bill. In any case, as suggested, support of the budget was not entirely irrelevant to the needs of the unemployed. But the charge did illustrate the way in which the labour movement's own remedies had been overshadowed by the spate of reports and legislative proposals which emerged in the course of 1909. No longer were its energies devoted exclusively to propagating its own "right to work"; they were largely absorbed in discussing other poeples' ideas. As early as March, George Roberts had detected that Churchill was more sympathetic to the claims of the unemployed than Burns had ever been, while Rose wrote that while neither of the major parties had put forward any solution going right to the heart of the problem, "it is surely true that a forward tendency is being manifested."[1]

(ii)

Chief of the government's legislative proposals were the labour exchanges. Although the Labour Exchange Bill had its formal first reading on 20 May, Churchill had already taken advantage of a discussion on the poor law to indicate the main lines of his scheme. The exchanges were designed, he said, to cope with two deficiencies -

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1 Roberts made his comments in the Typographical Circular, March 1909, p 10. For Rose's statement see F.Rose, The coming force (London, 1909), p 103.

the lack of labour mobility, and the lack of accurate information about the labour market. They would be of use in estimating the seasonal and geographical requirements of certain trades, and in encouraging school leavers to enter prosperous trades rather than dying ones. It was hoped to divide the country into about ten areas, each with a divisional clearing house and with between 30-40 first class exchanges (in cities with populations of over 100,000), 45 second class (population 50,000-100,000), and about 150 minor offices and sub-offices. Although the whole system would be controlled by the Board of Trade there would be in each area a joint advisory committee to ensure impartiality between labour and capital. These were to consist of equal numbers of representatives of workers and employers with a neutral chairman.[1]

Labour leaders had known about these proposals for some time, but this did not prevent there being divisions of opinion as to their usefulness, or fears and doubts about the operation of the exchanges. There were firstly what can be termed the "miscellaneous" objections, springing usually from particular trades or interests. Thus Havelock Wilson, the seamen's leader, was completely against exchanges on the

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, V, 499-505. 19 May, 1909.

grounds that the special bureaux for seamen operated for the past sixty years by the Board of Trade had been a total failure, and during the debate on the second reading of the bill he moved that it be deferred for six months.[1] Sexton was afraid that a classification system, which the exchanges would use, would put some men permanently out of work. In Liverpool, he said, there were 22,000 dockers of whom 15,000 were in work at any one time. If dock labour was de-casualised and classified the unlucky 7,000 would always be the same men.[2] He told his members at the end of 1908 to offer "the most strenuous opposition to their establishment."[3] The general labour unions expressed through the medium of the General Labourers Council the fear that unskilled men would suffer if classification systems were used by the new exchanges, and demanded that their position be guarranteed vis a vis the skilled men.[4] Some other elements, vocal at the T.U.C. annual assembly, feared that the exchanges would usurp the functions of those unions which already ran their own labour bureaux.[5]

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, V, 580-81. 20 May, 1909.

2 Labour Leader, 25 June, 1909.

3 N.U.D.L., Annual Report, 1908, p 10. He had relented, however, by the end of 1909.

4 N.A.U.L., Quarterly Report for Quarter ending 26 June, 1909, pp 4-5.

5 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909, p 10.

Perhaps more important than any of these objections was the point that the exchanges would do nothing to increase the amount of work available. Labour writers had always claimed that this was the way in which unemployment should be tackled. Hardie said that on their own exchanges were "an insolent attempt to fool the nation."[1] Barnes, in a metaphor taken up later by Rose, thought that they were "the mustard without the beef."[2] On the other hand, Harley of the I.L.P.'s M.D.C. thought that these criticisms were unfair, for no-one had ever claimed that exchanges would actually provide work; indeed, in outlining his plan Churchill had specifically stated that this was not their object.[3] To some extent anyway, this point was met when the budget was announced with its plans for large national schemes to increase the available volume of work. It was this which caused Barnes to change his attitude towards the exchanges.[4]

There were also fears that union wage rates and conditions would not be observed by the exchanges, and during the second reading debate on the bill Curran argued strongly that no job should be offered at less than union rates and conditions.[5] Against this

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1 Labour Leader, 19 February, 1909.

2 For Barnes see ibid., 26 March, 1909: for Rose see ibid., 23 April, 1909.

3 Ibid., 16 April, 1909.

4 See p 304.

5 Hansard, 5th Series, VI, 1054-63. 16 June, 1909.

William Mosses argued at a meeting of the T.U.C.'s parliamentary committee that to insist on such a condition would cause the whole system to collapse.[1] But on 21 July the joint board decided to press Churchill for a regulation to compel employers to state clearly what they were prepared to offer for a particular job. This he agreed to do, pointing out that it would be extremely difficult to enforce the suggestion that only union wage rates should be offered.[2]

Most fundamental of all the fears, however, was that the exchanges would be used as recruiting agencies for blacklegs during times of industrial dispute, and this was included in a list of warnings against them issued by the Joint London Right to Work Committee.[3] Curran claimed at the special T.U.C. conference held in March that this was all the existing bureaux had been used for.[4] But here the value of the investigations made by the T.U.C. parliamentary committee into German exchanges became evident, for Bowerman was able to point out that this had been one of the main fears of German trade unionists, but experience had proved it to be groundless.[5] In

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1 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 11 July, 1909.

2 Ibid., 28 July, 1909.

3 Justice, 27 November, 1909.

4 N.U.B.S.O., Monthly Report, March 1909, pp 158-59.

5 Ibid.

any case, as Wilkie suggested, if an employer was intent on finding blacklegs it was evident that he would be more successful - and more anonymous - on the back streets of a town than in the exchanges, where the moral pressure exerted by the presence of trade unionists would probably be enough to deter potential blacklegs.[1] Despite this, Henderson was in favour of throwing the exchanges out of gear when a dispute was taking place and he was supported by Ben Tillett. O'Grady said that there would be little to fear if information about all disputes was carefully posted, perhaps by putting notices onto the exchange's walls, and Richards added that if the exchange did supply blacklegs then they could soon be brought to collapse by a boycott on the part of trade union members. As far as the joint board was concerned Bowerman than clinched the argument by saying that shutting exchanges had been tried in Germany and had proved to be a complete waste of time.[2] Although Henderson was thus over-ruled at the joint board meeting, his suggestion was raised again at the T.U.C. in September but it was defeated again.[3]

All these fears explain why so much interest was taken in the question of the control and management of the exchanges. Much

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1 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909. pp 150-52.

2 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 11 July, 1909.

3 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909, p 109.

depended on the quality of administrators appointed and this was a matter with which labour was very concerned. Clynes said that the exchanges would only be accepted by the workers if they had equal representation on the advisory committees, and Joseph Pointer, a new Labour M.P., said in his maiden speech that they would be extremely suspicious if they had no representation at all.[1] Particularly sensitive on this point were the general labour unions who were naturally the most subject to exploitation, and also the workers in the engineering and ship building industries who had suffered from the blackleg activities of the free exchange run by the Shipbuilding and Engineering Employers Federation.[2] In fact, there was little to fear on this point as Churchill had told Asquith as early as January that equal representation of workers and employers was to be the root principle of trade boards, labour exchanges, and insurance committees.[3] He had made this same point in outlining the exchanges system in the house of commons, but the advisory committees still hadn't been appointed when the T.U.C. met in 1910, even though the first exchanges had been opened on 1 January.

The N.F.L.A. was also much concerned with the structure of the

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1 For Clynes see N.U.B.S.O., Monthly Report, March 1909, pp 158-59. For Pointer see Hansard, 5th Series, VI, 1002-03. 16 June, 1909.

2 N.A.U.L., Quarterly Report for Quarter ending 26 June, 1909, pp 4-5.

3 W.S.Churchill to H.H.Asquith, 12 January, 1909. Asquith Papers. Vol 22, f 89.

advisory committees and the managerial positions, and at the annual conference in October 1909, Collison moved a resolution approving of Churchill's scheme provided that

> 'a just and adequate share of the controlling authority may be allotted to Free Labour Representatives, so that the widespread distrust at present prevailing among the millions of non-union workmen throughout the country with regard to Government interference may be allayed, perfect freedom of action between Employer and Employed established and a perfect equality of industrial rights secured to Trade-Unionists and Non-Unionists alike.' [1]

This question of free labour representation obviously alarmed trade unionists because Shackleton found it necessary to point out to the parliamentary committee that the possibility of non-union working class delegates on the advisory committees was fairly remote as there was no satisfactory method of selecting them.[2]

Labour leaders were also concerned about the quality of the men appointed to be managers of the exchanges. Pointer, for example, was afraid that civil servants were being given special incentives to apply for such jobs.[3] Thorne was anxious to know how they were to be

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1 N.F.L.A., Annual Report, 1909, p 40.

2 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 11 July, 1909.

3 Hansard, 5th Series, IX, 1079-80. 22 September, 1909.

appointed, and in September Churchill announced that local officers would be chosen by committees of three, representing workers and employers, with a neutral civil servant as chairman.[1] The chief appointments, however, he intended to make himself, and it may have been a desire to offset any labour criticism incurred by this which governed his immediate appointment of Shackleton to advise him about such posts.[2] It was probably no surprise to trade union leaders when Beveridge was given the job of Director of Exchanges, but the Social Democrats were highly critical. His only qualifications, it was claimed, were a university education, a link with Toynbee Hall, and the writing of a book which no-one had read.[3] The Morning Post reported that the G.F.T.U. was seriously concerned by the number of posts in the new administrative machine which had gone to public school men, and early in 1910 the management committee did in fact set about preparing a report on these appointments.[4] When the first managerial posts were announced at the end of 1909 Collison was very pleased that none of them had gone to men "likely to be influenced

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, X, 1484. 9 September, 1909.

2 This itself provoked the criticism of the S.P.G.B. which claimed that Shackleton had "taken every opportunity of . . . furthering the interests of the employing class." Socialist Standard, 1 January, 1910.

3 Justice, 16 October, 1909.

4 Morning Post, 3 November, 1909.

by trade union agitation", which he took to be a direct result of his own pressure.[1]

But in spite of all these reservations about the exchanges labour leaders were not slow to appreciate that there were good arguments in their favour, providing that the questions of control and administration were satisfactorily dealt with. It was claimed, for example, that to ignore them would mean that they would fall completely into the hands of free labourers and employers. Snowden pointed out that exchanges were to be used for registering workers, a necessary step towards dovetailing the supply and demand of labour.[2] Some Social Democrats thought that this was their only use.[3] But this facet did appeal strongly to labour which had always shown awareness of the need for accurate statistics. Harley, adopting Barnes' culinary metaphor, said that even if exchanges were the mustard without the beef, it was necessary to estimate the amount of beef required.[4]

But the most potent argument put forward for the acceptance of the exchanges was that they were, as Churchill himself pointed out, a

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1 The Times, 14 December, 1909.

2 Labour Leader, 28 May, 1909.

3 Social Democrat, XIII (June 1909), pp 263-65.

4 Labour Leader, 25 April, 1909.

necessary preliminary to any system of unemployment insurance. Although legislation on this question was not expected until 1910 at the earliest, discussion of the idea had begun as early as 1908 in labour circles.[1] Just as with the exchanges themselves fears and objections were numerous. Most important, of course, was the matter of whether the scheme should be contributory or not. The N.F.L.A. was against any contribution from the state, seeing it as an attempt "to bolster up the Trade Unions of the country with a Government guarrantee as to funds . . . ."[2] But it was for different reasons that socialists and others objected to the contributory idea. They were against the workers making any contribution. Some, such as Snowden, objected on principle.[3] Naylor claimed at the T.U.C. conference that the majority of trade unionists were against a contributory system.[4] The Joint London Right to Work Committee said that such a scheme must be opposed because those most needing to be insured against unemployment were those who generally earned the lowest wages and who were thus least able to afford deductions. It would be tantamount to "feeding the dog off his own tail."[5] Will

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1 See, for example, Wilkie's comments in A.S.S.A., Annual Report, 1908, p xii.

2 N.F.L.A., Annual Report, 1909, p 8.

3 Labour Leader, 26 February, 1909.

4 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909, p 108.

5 Social Democrat, XII (June 1909), p 264.

Thorne thought that the nation could afford to foot the whole cost, which, he estimated, should not be more than £2,000,000 a year.[1]

Others were against the contributory principle on the grounds that it would inevitably damage the position of trade unions, and the parliamentary committee had to re-assure delegates at the annual conference that this had not happened in Germany.[2] W.T.Wilson was afraid that the unions would lose their influence and attraction if non-unionists were compelled to insure against unemployment. The only incentive which men would have to stay in their union would be the maintenance of wages and even this would disappear if the principle of arbitration became popular, as seemed likely.[3]

There were those, however, who were not against contributions being paid by the workers. The G.F.T.U. had set up a sub-committee as early as February 1909 to gather information about all existing unemployment insurance schemes, and the subsequent report, compiled by Appleton and Curran, recommended that the financial burden should be equally divided between workers, employers and the state. It was hoped to submit this to the joint board, but there was apparently a lack of liason, for when the matter was raised the joint board

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1 N.U.G.W. & G.L., Quarterly Balance Sheet, 25 September, 1909.

2 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909, p 108.

3 A.S.C.J., Monthly Report, June 1909, p 355.

secretary informed the federation that the T.U.C. had already arranged to discuss the question at the special conference on 17 March.[1] Tillett was another who was not against contributions from the workers, so long as the employers and the state paid an equal share into the insurance fund.[2] Barnes said that he expected there would be great protest if the contributory principle was implemented, but that this would be considerably reduced if all three interested parties were contributing.[3] Clynes made the rather obvious point that if there was no contribution from the workers the scheme would not be insurance. He doubted, too, that the country would accept a plan which did not involve some financial sacrifice on the part of the main beneficiaries.[4]

And again, just as in the case of the labour exchanges, there was the fear that any system of insurance would be open to abuses unless the trade unions had some say in its control. Alexander Wilkie, Alfred Matkin, and Matthew Arrandale all told Beveridge that this was vital, while Hill of the boilermakers managed to get a

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1 Joint Board, Minutes, 11 March, 1909. G.F.T.U., Proceedings and Reports, 1908-1909.

2 Dockers Record, May 1909, p 6.

3 Unemployment insurance; criticisms, December 1909. Beveridge Papers. D 026.

4 N.U.G.W. & G.L., E.C.Minutes, 15 August, 1909.

resolution to this effect passed at the T.U.C.[1]

One aspect of the insurance scheme at which Churchill had hinted, and a suggestion included in his cabinet memorandum, was that the government should subsidise union unemployment funds.[2] It will be remembered that in 1908 the T.U.C. had passed a resolution in favour of this and despite the hostility of some important labour figures, the idea seems to have caught on. In October 1908, a member of the typographer's union had gone to France to see how true were allegations, made by his own general secretary, George Roberts, among others, that such a system led to the government control of funds, and he claimed that it did no such thing.[3] The minority report of the poor law commission also suggested this as a means of alleviating the hardships caused by unemployment, and on 10 February, 1909. W.T.Wilson said that the Labour M.P.'s would do all they could to speed the passage of such legislation.[4] How far he was able to speak for his colleagues is uncertain, but the T.U.C. deputation which went to see Asquith and Lloyd George on this subject on 25 February contained six Labour M.P.'s - Shackleton, Wilkie, Bowerman, Bell,

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1 For the first three see Unemployment insurance; criticisms, 29 May, 1909. Beveridge Papers. D 026. For Hill see T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909, p 188.

2 Scheme for unemployment insurance and draft heads of a bill for the establishment of unemployment insurance. PRO. CAB. 37/99. 19 April, 1909.

3 Typographical Circular, November 1908, p 3.

4 A.S.C.J., Monthly Report, March 1909, p 180.

Steadman, and Thorne.[1] In putting the T.U.C. case, Bowerman stressed that between 1897 and 1906 the 100 principal unions had spent some £4,000,000 on unemployment relief. By aiding the distress committees, he went on, the government was aiding the non-unionist and in fairness ought to help unionists in a similar way. In his reply, however, Asquith pointed out a difficulty. Trade unions did not separate their funds into benefit and industrial sections which meant that there would be no safeguard against them using public money in order to finance industrial actions. They could not have such grants as they were seeking unless the funds were separated, said Asquith, and it was probably an indication of their unwillingness to do this that the matter had not been raised before.[2] It is a good illustration of the way in which the government succeeded in taking the initiative away from the labour movement during the year that a grants-in-aid resolution was defeated at the September congress, despite a plea by Bowerman that this would make the parliamentary committee look stupid in view of the request they had made in February that the government should consider the matter. Some of the opposition was, as in the case of Roberts, based on the same

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1 I.e. representative of labour.

2 The deputation was reported in A.S.S., Quarterly Report, March 1909, pp 23-6.

objections as in the previous year. But, significantly, Hill of the boilermakers said that he was now against the proposal because it was essentially a sectional solution and thus irrelevant at a time when the government was at last working along national lines.[1]

One of the developments which Hill mentioned in the course of his speech was the Development Bill, the third of the lines along which the government was proposing to tackle unemployment. It was designed to confer on the government the powers necessary to embark upon schemes of road improvements, afforestation, marshland reclamation, and agricultural experiments, partly to improve facilities in these spheres, but also to provide work for the unemployed. It was this aspect of the measure which commended it to Hardie, who saw it as a means of providing work for those still in need and not covered by the projected Insurance Bill.[2] Barnes and Roberts supported it because it was an attempt to substitute collective enterprise for private profit mongering, and the former stated in the commons that he welcomed it "as a contribution to the solution of the problem of unemployment . . . the first real attempt

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1 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1909, pp 156-58.

2 Labour Leader, 5 November, 1909.

to deal deal with unemployment on the lines of what might be called organic change."[1] The Social Democrats were not so impressed, however, and it was suggested that the bill was meant to satisfy easily placated socialists. If as much as was promised by Lloyd George was in fact achieved, claimed one writer, it would be a miracle comparable with that of the loaves and fishes.[2] In the Clarion it was pointed out that even if the bill did contain the seeds of a future solution, this was not much compensation to those who were currently out of work, and to whom the government also had a responsibility.[3]

(iii)

Thus by the latter half of 1909 the "right to work" was no longer the only unemployment solution competing for labour support, and it is interesting to note how often labour speakers were forced back on the expedient of claiming that ideas now being given legislative expression were their own. MacDonald had claimed this for the minority report of the poor law. Clynes stated that labour exchanges were really part of the Right to Work Bill, although this was not true.[4] Henderson said that the government had begun to take

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, X, 983-84. 6 September, 1909. For Roberts' views see Typographical Circular, October 1909, p 11.

2 Justice, 16 October, 1909.

3 Clarion, 1 October, 1909.

4 Labour Leader, 4 June, 1909.

out the Labour Party's bill in penny numbers.[1] The trade union organisations concentrated by and large on organising union opinion about the various government measures, and it may well be indicative of increasing resentment on the part of the Labour Party at thus being pushed even further into the shadows that there was an argument about this at the joint board meeting on 11 July. This meeting had originally been summoned to formulate a common policy on exchanges, shortly after Churchill had asked the T.U.C. to appoint a permanent sub-committee on exchanges which he could consult whenever he desired. In opening the meeting Shackleton said that many deputations had seen Churchill, who was now well aware of the views of trade unionists. This provoked an immediate protest from Henderson and the Labour Party representatives on the board because, it was claimed, these deputations had acted before any common policy had been agreed upon. Henderson added that he had been forced to deal with many questions concerning the exchanges, often unaware of the attitudes adopted by the various deputees, and constantly "hampered by the fear that contradictory suggestions might have been advanced."[2] He further complained that many amendments had been put

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, V, 519. 19 May, 1909.

2 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 11 July, 1909.

down of which he knew nothing, although he had been expected to discuss them. In the light of this complaint it is worth noting that during the committee stage of the Labour Exchanges Bill Beveridge told his mother of one Labour M.P. who had put down a whole series of amendments, but because he had acted without first consulting his colleagues he was "made to stay discreetly away when he ought to have moved his amendments and they fell to the ground."[1] The members of the parliamentary committee were not slow in defending their actions. Davis pointed out that the Labour Party could easily have requested a joint board meeting had it really wanted to discuss a joint policy, while both Shackleton and Bowerman said that in the past circumstances had sometimes made it necessary for the Labour Party to act without consulting the other partners on the board, and the plea of exigency had always been accepted as justification. After Hardie had advocated joint action where legislative proposals were concerned, Henderson moved a resolution that the board should see how far separate action by any one body with regard to prospective labour legislation could be avoided. This was passed, despite Shackleton's assertion that if this meant that the T.U.C. had to consult the

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1 W.H.Beveridge to his mother, 7 July, 1909. Beveridge Papers. L, 1, 204.

Labour Party every time before it acted, then they would not do it.[1]

It was perhaps symbolic of the waning of the "right to work" cry in 1909 that the National Right to Work Council, originally the creation of I.L.P. socialists, seems to have disappeared in the course of the year. It was not mentioned in any of the labour papers in 1909, and George Lansbury, one of the executive, was totally involved in the Webbs' campaign against the existing poor law, being a vice-president of their national committee. Frank Rose, another of the Right to Work Council's executive, certainly had no idea of what the London Committee was doing, for in March he stated that the C.U.B. had taken a deputation to see the officers of the Labour Party.[2] He was promptly corrected by Harley, who pointed out that the deputation had been organised, not by the C.U.B., but by the London and District Right to Work Council.[3] It is important to notice that the words "joint" and "committee" had both been dropped from the organisation's name, perhaps suggesting the breakdown of co-operation between the S.D.P. and the parliamentary socialists. This was also indicated by the fact that none of the leaders of the national movement or any of the Labour M.P.'s attended the annual meeting of the London Council

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1 T.U.C., P.C. Minutes, 11 July, 1909.

2 Labour Leader, 5 March, 1909.

3 Ibid., 12 March, 1909.

in November. The collapse of the alliance was due, as suggested, to the disagreement over tactics, the hostility of several elements within the labour alliance to the idea of co-operation with the S.D.P., and to the S.D.P. part in the attacks on the parliamentary performance of the Labour Party.[1] Any remaining inclination to joint action must almost certainly have been destroyed by the stormy I.L.P. conference when the "big four" of the party, Hardie, Snowden, Glasier, and MacDonald, resigned in protest against the activities of the militants led by Grayson and encouraged by Blatchford and the Social Democrats. When the new executive of the London Right to Work Committee was elected eight of the fourteen members belonged to the S.D.P. - Fairchild, Greenwood, Lock, Macdonald, John Scurr, Williams, Dora Montefiore, and Mrs. Hicks. Two more Social Democrats were among the ten trade union representatives also elected.[2]

It was reported at this annual meeting that the committee had a balance in hand of some 4/5d.[3] It was not surprising, therefore, that all that it achieved was the despatch of one letter to the C.U.B., suggesting that the London distress committees be instructed to take

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1 See pp 283-84.

2 This annual conference was reported fully in Justice, 27 November, 1909. When in November 1910, two London branches of the S.D.P. sent in resolutions demanding that steps be taken to organise the London unemployed, they were informed that the party was already doing this - through the medium of the London and District Right to Work Committee. See ibid., 26 November, 1910.

3 Ibid., 27 November, 1909.

an unemployed census, as this would facilitate a more informed approach to the problem.[1] The same basic financial shortage lay at the root of the inactivity of the S.D.P.'s own unemployment committee which had been set up in October. This committee led one deputation of ex-servicemen to the War Office and was apparently successful, for five days later the National Association for the Employment of ex-Soldiers held its first ever conference at the War Office, attended by the Under Secretary for War, Sir Edward Ward. But nothing further was accomplished. Lack of funds was such a problem to the S.D.P. that Justice had almost collapsed during the year.[2] General subscriptions had fallen and the Pioneer Boot Works at Northampton, which had long been a staple source of party funds, contributed less.[3] Halfway through November the London branches had combined assets of £11-19-0.[4] By Christmas Justice was appealing not only for money, but for speakers to replace Williams, who was away, at Tower Hill.[5]

(iv)

One other aspect of unemployment agitation in 1909 needs to be mentioned and this is the progress made by the T.U.T.R.A. After the

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1 Reynold's Newspaper, 3 October, 1909.

2 Justice, 23 October, 1909.

3 S.D.P., Annual Report, 1910, pp 2-7.

4 Justice, 13 November, 1909.

5 Ibid., 25 December, 1909.

advance of the first two years of its existence, it had declined somewhat, particularly in the midlands. By the end of 1908 many tariff reformers were expressing doubts as to its usefulness. Hewins told Balfour that

> 'Opinions as to its efficiency and value in the Tariff movement differ very widely. I am bound to say that . . . in the places I have visited . . . they are doing very good work . . . . On the other hand, I think branches might be mentioned which are of very little value, and naturally in any controversy as to the claims of the Trade Union Association, critics insist very much upon such branches . . . .' [1]

This may explain why the T.U.T.R.A. was still dependent financially on Medhurst, its chairman, as Hewins also informed Balfour, even though the T.R.L. had agreed to consider the question of financial assistance as long ago as 1904.[2] It probably accounts also for the fact that Medhurst went so rarely to meetings of the T.R.L. executive. He attended all the meetings until March 1906, but of the thirteen noted by The Times between that date and 15 June, 1910, he was present at only two.

During 1909 there was a general retraction by tariff reformers

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1 W.A.S.Hewins to A.J.Balfour, 14 December, 1908. Balfour Papers. B.M.Add.MSS 49779, ff 202-03.

2 See Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform, August 1904, p 92.

of the extravagant claims made in 1907-1908 about the ability of tariff reform to provide work for all. Lord Percy said at Edinburgh that "it would not provide work for all - no measure would - but it would do something to steady employment, to mitigate and shorten the periods of depression."[1] At Eastbourne Hewins denied that anyone had ever made the claim that tariff reform would result in universal employment.[2] This did not deter the leaders of the T.U.T.R.A., however, from seeking ways of making their movement more effective, and after a series of regional council meetings in the spring of 1909 it was decided that all future activities should be conducted by the councils rather than by the individual branches. This does seem to have had some effect, for there were now reports of meetings being broken up by socialists and other agitators.[3]

Increased centralisation was not the only innovation made in 1909. In June, after a successful financial appeal had been made, it was decided to strike into Lancashire, the traditional home of free trade where approximately 22,000 trade unionists had been out of work in January.[4] Reid, so successful in the west country in

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1 Scotsman, 3 March, 1909.

2 Cited in Liberal Magazine, XVIII (January 1910), p 760.

3 Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform, September 1909, p 216: ibid., October 1909, p 288.

4 S.J.Chapman & H.Hallsworth, Unemployment in Lancashire (Manchester, 1909) p 44.

1906-1907, moved to Manchester to direct operations. This effort was supported by the T.R.L. and also by a vigorous campaign in the tariff reform press. Between 18 May and 21 June, for example, the Daily Express published thirty five articles about the effects of tariffs on unemployment, asserting that a general 10% tariff would mean work for an extra 534,675 men.[1] By July, meetings had been held in twelve leading Lancashire towns, and progress was sufficient to warrant the formation of a Lancashire District Council on 2 October. It is, of course, impossible to estimate how far the growth of the T.U.T.R.A. in Lancashire was due to the appeal of the tariff remedy for unemployment. Certainly, the county had been badly hit by unemployment during the year, and the Unionists were stressing it, sensing a general election in the offing. By the time that election came round, in January 1910, Lancashire had at least twenty branches of the T.U.T.R.A., and it was perhaps indicative of the relative decline elsewhere that Hewins could later say of this period that "the Lancashire working mens' branches of the Tariff Reform League were amongst the strongest we had in the country."[2]

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1 L.G.Chiozza Money, Work for all (London, 1909).

2 Hewins, Apologia, I, p 237.

Chapter 7. The Year of Stagnation.

The general election of January 1910 was a direct result of the decision taken by the house of lords on 30 November, 1909, after six days of intense debate to reject the budget. Two weeks later the commons condemned the peers' action as "a breach of the Constitution and a usurpation of the rights of the Commons", Asquith dissolved parliament, and the election campaign began.[1] The contest was dominated by four issues:- the powers of the house of lords to reject financial measures, behind which lurked the whole matter of the peers' power to hold up home rule for Ireland; the budget; and the Unionists' main platform, tariff reform.[2]

Unemployment as such did not play a very significant role in the campaign, although it was frequently asserted afterwards that it had been important. But by December 1909 the unemployed index, reacting to signs of industrial recovery in both Europe and America, had fallen to 6.6%, and when it was discussed at all in the election campaign it was generally in the context of tariff reform.[3] As early as October the Observer, forseeing the election, had stated that "the

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, XIII, 546-82. 2 December, 1909.

2 These are the conclusions of N.Blewett, The British general elections of 1910 (Oxford D.Phil., 1967).

3 Table 1.

master word of this struggle in its appeal to industrial democracy must be this - Unemployment."[1] Austen Chamberlain told Balfour that while tariff reform was undoubtedly the Unionists' trump card, it needed much hard work "to make the people look at the question in the proper light as first and foremost, for working men, one of employment."[2] Significantly, of the Unionist candidates who mentioned fiscal changes, 90% appealed to the prospect of increased employment and greater wages. The next most common argument was that tariff reform would increase revenue - but it was made by only 55%.[3]

The T.U.T.R.A. was active, particularly in industrial constituencies such as Sunderland, where unemployment had been heavy. A special staff was organised in London to co-ordinate the efforts of the association with those of the T.R.L. and of the local Conservative organisations. Between twenty and thirty meetings were held in London each week, and nightly meetings were arranged in Bristol. Branches which were sufficiently strong helped the local Unionist candidates, and Leo Amery wrote later that from the branch in Wolverhampton, where he was standing for the Conservatives, "we drew some effective working class speakers."[4] These speakers stressed

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1 Observer, 3 October, 1909.

2 A.Chamberlain to A.J.Balfour, 29 January, 1910. Balfour Papers. B.M.Add.MSS 49736, f 63.

3 Blewett, The British general elections, p 578.

4 L.Amery, My political life (London: Three Vols., 1953-1955), I, p 336.

unemployment, and the Scottish Council of the T.U.T.R.A. appealed for all its supporters to make unemployment the leading issue in the fight, including in its manifesto the unemployment statistics of ten leading trade unions.[1]

The Conservatives, however, were hardly in a position to dictate the election issues, anymore than were the Labour candidates, who found it difficult to emphasise unemployment despite the obvious desire of many of the leaders, especially those in the I.L.P., to do so.[2] Labour groups in areas where unemployment had been particularly bad also wanted it underlined, hence the appeal made by the Glasgow Trades Council for unemployment to be treated as the issue.[3] Similarly, the Scottish T.U.C. placed unemployment at the head of a list of topics which it circulated to all Scottish candidates with a request for information as to their respective views.[4] But generally the Labour candidates could not ignore the main national issues if they wished to be identified with the forces of progress and in any case, many of them heartily supported the budget.

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1 See Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 15 December, 1909.

2 See, for example, Clynes' article in the Labour Leader, 21 January, 1910: statements by Hardie, Hall, Belcher, and MacLachlan in Socialist Review, IV (January 1910), p 336: and by Barnes in ibid., IV (December 1909), p 262.

3 Trades and Labour Gazette, February 1910, p 12.

4 Ibid., January 1910, p 10.

Only in constituencies where there were three-cornered fights, which made it necessary for Labour candidates to emphasise the distinctive aspects of the Labour Party programme, were they able to concentrate on social reform and unemployment. Thus in these constituencies Blewett found that 22% of the official Labour candidates gave first place in their manifesto to the "right to work", as opposed to only 4% of those involved in straight contests with Conservatives.[1] The total number of Labour candidates who gave it first place was only 9 out of 78, but what is worthy of note is that it was mentioned by no less than 47, suggesting that it had become a firm and popular Labour cry.[2] This was a tribute to the work of the I.L.P. in establishing the Right to Work Council, and also to the Labour Party's concentrated propaganda campaign of 1907-1908. Its popularity was further illustrated when A.M.Thompson of the Clarion organised a mock poll on the election issues. No less than 4361 people voted in favour of the "right to work", and only 47 were against it.[3] Certainly as far as unemployment was concerned the Labour Party and the labour movement had a far more definite policy in 1910 than it had had in 1906.

And yet at the same time the Labour election manifestos also illustrated the way in which the exclusiveness of the "right to work"

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1 Blewett, The British general elections, p 575.

2 Table 3.

3 Clarion, 28 January, 1910.

was being challenged. Philip Snowden, whose influence in the Labour Party was considerable, was one of 22 candidates who stated that the government's own legislation had made, or would make, a substantial contribution to the solution of the unemployed problem, while others, such as MacDonald and Roberts, added that this programme had realised the major part of the Right to Work Bill. The proposals of the minority poor law report were also in evidence as a challenge to the "right to work", and the 11 candidates who referred to them included Barnes, who was shortly to be made party chairman, and Henderson, whom he replaced, as well as W.C.Anderson, a member of the I.L.P.'s executive. Six of this 11 also mentioned the Right to Work Bill.[1] The manifesto issued by the I.L.P. gave almost equal prominence to the two approaches to unemployment.[2] Both J.H.Belcher and George Barnes wrote in the Socialist Review that the way to tackle unemployment was via the Right to Work Bill and the suggestions contained in the minority report.[3]

But in general the subjects which dominated the Labour manifestoes were little different to those of the Liberals, and the failure to stress social issues, and more especially unemployment, produced

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1 See Table 3.

2 I.L.P., General Election Manifesto, January 1910.

3 Belcher in the Socialist Review, IV (January 1910), p 336: Barnes in ibid., IV (December 1909), p 262.

considerable criticism. Lansbury, for example, deplored the fact that so much energy was being devoted to a constitutional struggle which, he claimed, might well prove to be unimportant.[1] At the Labour Party conference, held just as the election campaign was ending, a member of the National Builders Association argued that the party should have condemned the budget and made an all out stand on the "right to work."[2] J.Drew Roberts wrote to the Leader regretting that "unemployment and the right to work . . . were not the central issue of the Labour campaign . . . ."[3] In the Clarion Blatchford used the same argument to maintain his almost continuous indictment of the Labour Party. "The deserters", he thundered, "had been so busy defending free trade against the assaults of the Tariff Reformers that (to them) such insignificant problems as Unemployment and Poverty appear to have been forgotten."[4]

The election left the Labour Party, however, in a strong position, for although some of the old stalwarts had been defeated their places had been taken by new members and, with the inclusion of the miners, who had decided in 1908 to join the party, it now held 40 seats. The

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1 Labour Leader, 7 January, 1910.

2 Labour Party, Annual Report, 1910, pp 65-6.

3 Labour Leader, 4 March 1910.

4 Clarion, 21 January, 1910.

government had 275, the Unionists 273, and the Irish Nationalists 82, a result which meant that if for any reason the Irish abstained, the Labour Party might be able to bring down the government. This apparently alarmed some prominent Liberals. H.W.Stead of the Review of Reviews told the Master of Elibank, newly promoted to chief Liberal whip, that he hoped to see

> 'you, the Whip of the Labour Party and the Whip of the Irish Party lunch together everyday, or sup together, or sleep together if you like, or you should never leave the room without having come to an agreement as to what ought to be done.' [1]

H.R.Maynard confided in his friend, Beveridge, his fear that MacDonald might use his party's advantageous position for "forcing relief schemes or rights to work upon the Board of Trade."[2]

These same fears were the very hopes of those who desired to see the passage of the Right to Work Bill; men such as Albert Smith of the Birmingham I.L.P. federation, who wrote to The Times expressing the hope that the party's balancing position would be used to push the measure through.[3] But the "right to work" did not appear in 1910. Nor was an unemployment amendment moved on the King's Speech, a

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1 H.W.Stead to the Master of Elibank, 15 February, 1910. Elibank Papers. N.L.S. MSS 8802, f 13.

2 H.R.Maynard to W.H.Beveridge, 2 February, 1910. Beveridge Papers. L, III, 225.

3 The Times, 29 January, 1910.

decision which evidently brought relief to Asquith because he told the King that Barnes "spoke in a more friendly tone than had been anticipated."[1] It was later explained that O'Grady and Barnes had decided not to move their amendment for fear of toppling the government. Hardie did not agree with this decision, arguing that although there would have been another election immediately had the government been beaten on such an amendment, it would have been fought on an exclusively labour issue - unemployment.[2] At Swansea in March he stated that unemployment, the poor law, and the "right to work" were the Labour Party's special concern and that they could not afford to be sidetracked into propping up a tottering government.[3] His view was shared by Jowett, who was afraid that if the party concentrated on constitutional issues social questions would be entirely lost sight of.[4] Perhaps more significant for the future of the Labour Party was the disgust of Leonard Hall, a member of the I.L.P.'s N.A.C. "If there were a firm bargain - a quid pro quo - something tangible, for instance, for the scores of thousands of poor devils swarming round the doors of the Labour Exchanges, one could

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1 H.H.Asquith to the King, 22 February, 1910. Asquith Papers. Vol 5, f 190.

2 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1910, pp 51-9.

3 Labour Leader, 18 March, 1910.

4 Ibid.

understand. But there is nothing."[1] It was no coincidence that when Hall helped to compose the famous "green manifesto", Let us reform the Labour Party, which appeared later in the year, one of the charges levelled against the Labour Party was that it had neglected the cause of the unemployed for the sake of political expediency.[2]

Certainly there were several Labour leaders and M.P.'s who thought that the party should concentrate on bringing the constitutional issue to a successful conclusion. These included Anderson, Snowden, MacDonald, Henderson, Pointer, Wilkie, and Seddon.[3] At Cardiff, for example, Snowden said that there was no alternative to the fight with the peers if they wanted the budget, even though such a struggle would take a long time.[4] MacDonald felt that they should be "stiffening the back of the Government so as to get the supremacy of the Commons settled once for all."[5] He was so keen on this that in April he was urging Elibank to stand firm against the Irish,who were threatening not to support the budget, arguing that to give in would have the effect of strengthening the position of the

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1 Labour Leader, 4 March, 1910.

2 See L.Douthwaite et alia, Let us reform the Labour Party (London, 1910).

3 Labour Leader, 7 January, 1910.

4 Ibid., 11 March, 1910.

5 Ibid., 4 March, 1910.

house of lords.[1] Even Barnes, one of the most ardent of the supporters of the unemployed, said in February that nothing should be allowed to obscure the question of the peers' veto, which incurred him some criticism at the I.L.P.'s Easter conference.[2]

A second argument which was used against the Labour Party taking immediate action on unemployment, and thus running the risk of bringing down the government, was that it could not afford another election. The January campaign had been a big strain, and now the party's financial resources were threatened by the effects of the Osborne decision. In this case, brought by W.V.Osborne against the A.S.R.S., the law lords had decided that trade union contributions to maintain M.P.'s were not among the legitimate objects of unions as defined in the Trade Union Acts of 1871 and 1876, and that they were thus ultra vires. This struck at the very basis of the Labour Party's independence, and made the prospect of a second election distinctly unwelcome. It also had a second effect, and this was to cause the Labour Party and the unions to devote much of their independent activities during the year towards securing a reversal of the

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1 J.R.MacDonald to the Master of Elibank, 13 April, 1910. Elibank Papers. N.L.S.MSS 8802, ff 51-2.

2 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1910, pp 51-9.

judgement. As early as 7 January the Labour Party had begun to draft a bill to provide for the payment of M.P.'s which would offset one of the most unwelcome implications of the decision. Sometime between January when this bill was drafted, and April when the budget was again passed in the commons, MacDonald wrote to Lloyd George saying that unless the government introduced a bill or resolution providing for the payment of members, or allowed time for the Labour Party to introduce its own bill, he would withhold party support from the budget.[1] The Liberals in fact talked out a resolution on this matter but Asquith kept Labour hopes high by his sympathetic reception of a deputation in the summer. As the year went on the campaign to reverse the law lords' ruling became more important, and by August the Labour Leader was terming it "the question of questions."[2] The annual party campaign was devoted to an anti-war drive and to the reversal of the Osborne judgement, "the one thing of supreme and overwhelming importance."[3]

A third argument against taking action over unemployment concerned the effect of government legislation, either passed or promised, on the Right to Work Bill. Some seem to have felt that the bill was no

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1 J.R.MacDonald to D.Lloyd George, undated. Lloyd George Papers. C/5/11/1A.

2 Labour Leader, 26 August, 1910.

3 Ibid., 7 October, 1910.

longer relevant in the light of the legislation passed since it was first drafted. Snowden took this view and one critic claimed that his acceptance of national unemployment insurance was tantamount to selling the Labour Party's birthright for a mess of pottage. "It is absurd for Mr. Philip Snowden to assert, as he does, that the Labour Party's Right to Work Bill is conceded in the above reform (insurance) unless he holds the view that 7s. or 8s. is a living wage for operatives . . . ."[1] In July, Henderson repeated his statement about the government taking out the Right to Work Bill in penny numbers, this time to the G.F.T.U.'s General Council.[2] Earlier he had said that the cause of the unemployed would be pressed, even though so much had already been done for them, seeming to imply that really it was no longer a major priority.[3] George Roberts was another who in his election manifesto suggested that the bill had largely been conceded, but Grayson was highly critical of all such assertions. The bill, he claimed, was so revolutionary that no capitalist government would touch it, and claims of the type made by Roberts and Snowden were absurd.[4] Even so, government legislation had certainly

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1 Trades and Labour Gazette, February 1910, p 3.

2 G.F.T.U., Annual General Council Meeting, July 1910, pp 28-32. In Proceedings and Reports, 1909-1910.

3 Labour Leader, 25 February, 1910.

4 Clarion, 29 April, 1910.

made it necessary to re-draft the Unemployed Bill. As MacDonald said: "Much of the Bill has already been adopted by the Government, and . . . much more of it, owing to the passing of the Development Act, has been withdrawn from the sphere of legislation and placed in that of administration."[1] Even Hardie was compelled to admit the necessity of re-drafting the measure.[2]

Thus, given the necessity for re-drafting, the lukewarmness of some party members such as Snowden, and the general sense of priorities held by most party leaders at the beginning of the year, it is not surprising that the bill did not even appear on the party programme for 1910, first place going to the Trade Union Bill designed to offset some of the effects of the Osborne judgement. In any case, unemployment was not particularly pressing, for the new boom had pushed the unemployed index down to 5.7% in February, the lowest figure since November 1907.[3] In June, Hardie admitted that "the Unemployed Question had ceased to attract that amount of attention it claimed during the depression."[4] The lack of urgency is clearly seen in the fact that it was not until April that the joint board

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1 Labour Leader, 4 February, 1910.

2 See his speech to the joint board. Joint Board, Minutes, 22 June, 1910. In G.F.T.U., Proceedings and Reports, 1909-1910.

3 Table 1.

4 Labour Leader, 3 June, 1910.

appointed a sub-committee of Shackleton, Hardie, MacDonald, and Appleton, to begin the work of re-casting the bill. In June MacDonald explained again that the re-drafting had been made necessary by the government's own legislative activity.[1] The following week Hardie also admitted that the bill had been overtaken by events, for it was felt necessary, he said, that the work of the labour exchanges and of the development commissioners should be co-ordinated; that maintenance should be provided through the Board of Trade in the form of insurance administered by a trade unionist where the recipient was a unionist; and finally, that work should be supplied to those out of work by the local authorities.[2] Although the new bill was drafted by the end of July the joint board was still discussing its terms in October. At a meeting of the G.F.T.U., for example, John Ward pointed out that the proposed reconstruction would increase the power of the labour exchanges, and that the clause providing for a government unemployment subsidy to trade unions would allow a government department to make regulations affecting, and in some cases controlling, a union.[3] The federation drew up a list of amendments but, perhaps

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1 Joint Board, Minutes, 15 June, 1910. In G.F.T.U., Proceedings and Reports, 1909-1910.

2 Ibid., 22 June, 1910. In ibid.

3 G.F.T.U., M.C.Minutes, 27 October, 1910. In ibid., 1910-1911.

due to the distraction of another general election, the issues were still unresolved at the end of the year, the Labour Party delegates on the joint board being instructed at a party meeting held on 19 December, to oppose the amendments.[1]

Despite the disinclination of most labour leaders, perhaps with the exceptions of Hardie and Jowett, to prosecute actively the "right to work" claim in 1910, it still had massive popular support in the working class movement. A resolution was moved at the I.L.P. conference condemning the attitudes of both MacDonald and Snowden towards the bill and although it was withdrawn at the last moment, the conference did pass a resolution demanding that the measure be kept before the country.[2] At the T.U.C. conference in September Will Thorne, who had failed to move the amendment on the King's Speech, claimed that if they did not soon bestir themselves "there was little chance of their bill becoming law."[3] When a "right to work" resolution was moved at the special T.U.C. meeting convened in November to discuss the government's unemployed programme, it was unanimously passed with shouts of "agreed."[4]

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1 Infancy of the Labour Party, II, p 166. 19 December, 1910.

2 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1910, p 84.

3 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1910, p 196.

4 T.U.C., Seventh Quarterly Report of the Parliamentary Committee, p 19.

In June trade unionists had been accused by one socialist writer of being indifferent to the fate of the Right to Work Bill, in the belief that "it does not concern them directly", and certainly it is difficult to avoid the impression that for many the "right to work" had become a rather emotive cry, a labour shibboleth, and a declaration of faith rather than a positive and immediate programme of action.[1] This was why Justice accused the special union meeting, noted above, of having no intention of carrying out any of the resolutions.[2] Perhaps this was not true of all trade unionists, for at the 1910 annual congress J.C.Gordon, who was a socialist, had successfully carried a resolution stating that insurance would do nothing for the unemployed and demanding immediate facilities for the passage of the Right to Work Bill.[3] David Shackleton seems to have seen it rather as a political lever. He pointed out at the November conference that if the conference resolution was passed - that the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 be extended until an Insurance Bill was introduced - the government might be able to argue against the "right to work" that the conference had agreed to do nothing until the insurance principle had been established. He moved successfully

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1 Trades and Labour Gazette, June 1910, p 2.

2 Justice, 19 November, 1910.

3 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1910, p 192.

that the words "or the principle of the right to work has been established" be inserted.[1]

It was also clear that the Right to Work Bill was being increasingly challenged by the minority proposals of the poor law commission. In February, for example, J.Edwards, had expressed the hope that the bill would be amended to include these proposals.[2] Of the nine resolutions on unemployment submitted to the Labour Party conference in January, five mentioned the "right to work", two in conjunction with the poor law proposals. Three of the six resolutions on the recommendations of the minority report made specific reference to unemployment.[3] The ardent supporters of the "right to work" were alarmed by the decision of the I.L.P.'s N.A.C. to devote the annual summer campaign to propagating the minority report's suggestions for dealing with poverty, destitution, and unemployment.[4] Typical was the comment of Richard Robinson who wrote to say that he hoped the poor law campaign would not detract from the "right to work."[5] Such fears were apparently widespread and must have

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1 T.U.C., Seventh Quarterly Report of the Parliamentary Committee, pp 17-9.

2 Labour Leader, 11 February, 1910.

3 Labour Party, Annual Report, 1910, pp 6-7.

4 I.L.P., Minutes and Reports from Head Office, 24 May, 1910.

5 Labour Leader, 24 June, 1910.

produced much criticism, for in July the N.A.C. found it necessary to issue a public statement justifying the choice of subject for the campaign. The council, it was stated, had chosen what it regarded as the most suitable topic, even though it was appreciated that some would disagree with the choice.[1]

The main stress of the campaign was on unemployment, and it was backed by the Webbs' committee which offerred free leaflets, articles, etc. It was this same committee which had been behind the earlier introduction in the house of commons of the Prevention of Destitution Bill of which George Roberts had said, probably much to the alarm of the "right to work" supporters, that "it is really the first endeavour to thoroughly analyse the cause and effects of unemployment and to provide a solution."[2] However, when the I.L.P. campaign culminated in a two day conference in October, a resolution demanding that the minority report proposals be implemented was only passed when it was amended to include a clause demanding the "right to work."[3] This was doubtless at the demand of those such as the Woolwich Trades and Labour Council, which had sent two delegates with strict instructions to insist on the introduction of the Right to Work Bill.[4] The

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1 Labour Leader, 8 July, 1910.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, XVI, 819. 8 April, 1910.

3 I.L.P., Report of a conference on destitution and unemployment (London, 1910), pp 19-21.

4 Woolwich Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 25 August, 1910.

tendency to drop the bill in favour of the minority poor law report, particularly among sections of the I.L.P., caused the Clarion to say, early in 1911, that it was about time trade unionists and socialists made up their minds "to sit on one of two stools."[1]

This intense poor law campaign on the part of the I.L.P., although not supported by the party's M.P.'s, provoked a hostile reaction from the Social Democrats who, it will be remembered, had not approved the minority report. In September a two day debate was arranged between George Lansbury and Harry Quelch, the second day being devoted to a discussion of whether working men should support the minority report's unemployment proposals. Quelch argued strongly against, and it is interesting to note that among the reasons he gave was that the report made no mention of the need to secure the "right to work."[2]

In spite of the fact that Quelch emphasised the support given to the "right to work" principle by the S.D.P., the party had done little to advance it during the course of the year. The London Right to Work Committee, firmly in Social Democrat control since 1909, organised a demonstration in Trafalgar Square in February to protest against

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1 Clarion, 17 February, 1911.

2 See Justice, 1 October, 1910.

labour exchanges, and in May a circular was issued attacking them. This decline in the S.D.P.'s activity was not, for once, linked to financial hardship, for although in April the executive arranged with the L.C.C. for the various branches to collect in the public parks, a self-denial campaign launched in the autumn had brought in £437-4-8d by November.[1] By Christmas the required £500 had been raised, the first time in the party's history that a specified sum had been subscribed, and one is tempted to suspect the anonymous benificence of Lady Warwick, although there is no direct evidence.[2] The real reason behind the Social Democrats' inaction was simply that unemployment had fallen drastically as the British economy, stimulated by a boom in shipping and increasing demand in the empire for manufactured goods, moved into a phase of expansion. The party's leading agitators were dispatched in October to spread propaganda in the areas of industrial discontent, Williams to Barrow, Jones to Clydeside, and Greenwood to South Wales.[3] Although an impromptu "right to work" demonstration took place in Trafalgar Square in November none of the Social Democrats -or in the euphemistic phrase

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1 Justice, 19 November, 1910.

2 Ibid., 7 January, 1911.

3 S.D.P.News, November 1910, p 3.

of the Morning Post "no-one of any public reputation" - took part.[1]

The low level of unemployment may also explain why so many of the Labour Party candidates in the general election of December 1910 failed to mention the "right to work", for by December the unemployed index had fallen to 4.6%.[2] Only 36% of them gave a place to the "right to work" in their manifestoes, and 27% failed to mention unemployment at all.[3] This compared with the 79% who made the issue of the house of lords' veto the most important matter, and the 81% who mentioned the Osborne judgement, perhaps a reflection of the Labour Party's general interests throughout the year, as well as of the declining enthusiasm for the Right to Work Bill.[4] This is also suggested by the fact that of the thirteen who had mentioned the bill in their January manifestoes and who now omitted it, eleven - Hall, Henderson, Glover, Walsh, Wilkie, Thorne, Roberts, Hodge, Parker, MacDonald, and J.Johnson - were M.P.'s.

(ii)

During the course of 1910 the labour organisations gave considerable attention to the problems presented by the new labour

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1 Morning Post, 21 November, 1910.

2 Table 1.

3 Table 4.

4 Blewett, The British general elections, p 590.

exchanges. Generally, the Social Democrats condemned them out of hand, and Hyndman claimed that they were "a fraud, instituted in order to give places to the fuglemen of the Liberal faction . . . ."[1] S.D.P. members of the L.T.C. secured the passage of a resolution condemning the exchanges, and on 19 February the London Right to Work Council organised a protest meeting in Trafalgar Square. At this meeting Jack Williams claimed that the exchanges were merely vote-catchers, while E.Friend, a socialist member of the vellum binders, asserted that they were fraught with dangers to the workers.[2]

This attack was maintained by the S.D.P. right through the year. In part it was pure polemic, but there were plenty of administrative errors to provide them with ammunition. Such mistakes were inevitable. Beveridge told his mother that "every few minutes we get telegrams . . . one simply daren't leave the machine alone any more than one would a locomotive."[3] Stephen Tallents, who was drafted into the administration from another branch of the civil service, wrote later that "the new service, I gathered, was having much difficulty . . . the office was falling into disorder and public

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1 H.M.Hyndman, Tariff reform and imperialism (London, 1910), p 17. See also Justice, 12 February, 1910: ibid., 19 February, 1910: ibid., 26 February, 1910: ibid., 26 March, 1910: ibid., 23 April, 1910: Social Democrat, XIV (February 1910), pp 77-8: ibid., XIV (March 1910), pp 122-3.

2 Justice, 26 February, 1910.

3 W.H.Beveridge to his mother, 24 January, 1910. Beveridge Papers. L, I, 205.

disrepute."[1] With this situation at head office it was hardly surprising that there were many mistakes at lower levels. The Social Democrats published many examples, seizing eagerly, for instance, on the experience of one of their members who had walked eighteen miles for a job recommended by an exchange only to find that the vacancy was already filled.[2] The other labour organisations were also anxious about such early administrative difficulties but adopted a more constructive approach. For example, the G.F.T.U., after consulting with G.R.Askwith, industrial adviser to the Board of Trade, asked its member unions to report to them any cases of irregular conduct.[3] These were then to be forwarded to the Board of Trade by the G.F.T.U. The executive of the Labour Party asked all local labour societies if there were any particular points which should be raised in a debate on the exchanges to be held in the commons in July.[4] T.U.C. leaders such as James Haslam appealed for moderation, asking that due allowance be made for the growing pains of a new administrative system.[5]

Many labour representatives were still concerned by the effect of

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1 S.Tallents, Man and boy (London, 1943), p 178.

2 Justice, 26 February, 1910.

3 G.F.T.U., Forty-third Quarterly Report, March 1910, p 4. In Proceedings and Reports, 1909-1910.

4 A copy of this cicular is in Woolwich Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 14 July, 1910.

5 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1910, p 49.

the exchanges on wage levels, fearing that wages would be depressed. Clynes asked in March if an exchange would supply a man to a job offered at 28/- per week, if it had previously been paid at 30/- a week, it being apparent that employers could easily offer jobs to other applicants if it was rejected at a particular wage.[1] The demand was still made by rank and file members of the labour movement that union rates should be the rule for all jobs placed with a labour exchange, even though Churchill had said that this was not possible. But this was still one of the demands made by the London Right to Work Committee, and the L.T.C. repeated the request at a meeting held in the autumn.[2] At the T.U.C. conference in September Shackleton defended the decision of the parliamentary committee not to press this claim on the government by arguing that it was not reasonable for them to ask for the right to regulate wages when the T.U.C. only represented some 2,000,000 men out of a total labour force of 11,000,000.[3]

At this gathering Shackleton also pointed out that it was the parliamentary committee which had decided that exchanges should remain open during trade disputes, although this had created several

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, XV, 715. 18 March, 1910.

2 Justice, 28 May, 1910. The meeting of the L.T.C. was reported in Trades and Labour Gazette, November 1910, pp 9-11.

3 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1910, pp 163-65.

practical difficulties.[1] In June, for example, the executive of the gasworkers reported that "already we have had cause to complain of the action of the Glasgow Exchange in sending thirteen blacklegs to take the place of our members on strike at Leadhills."[2] Clynes claimed during the commons debate on the new machinery that some employers had been aided by exchange managers in time of dispute, and in July the L.T.C. demanded that an order be issued immediately to prevent the exchanges from carrying on between employers and applicants when a strike was in progress.[3] Despite their original wish to keep them open the parliamentary committee realised that there was a need for some safeguards, and in August a T.U.C. deputation secured a promise from Buxton, who had replaced Churchill at the Board of Trade, that union officials should be provided with a printed schedule on which to inform managers about disputes. Buxton went further, saying that he would consider the whole matter again if any evidence came to light to show that the unions were being harmed by the exchanges remaining open during strikes and lockouts.[4]

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1 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1910, pp 163-65.

2 N.U.G.W. & G.L., Biennial Conference Report, June 1910, p 4.

3 Clynes made his claim in Hansard, 5th Series, XIX, 1871-78. 25 July, 1910.

4 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1910, pp 76-7.

The Social Democrats were eager to supply such evidence and in September published a letter written by the manager of the Bradford Exchange.

> 'Dear Sirs,
>
> Since the Labour Exchange opened on February 1, 1910 there have been two disputes in the Woolcombing Industry and during the progress of both these unfortunate occurrences, some Employers applied to the Labour Exchange for men, and in both instances we were prepared to help them all we could . . . .
>
> May I appeal . . . that I may be favoured with your orders for men, women, boys and girls, seeing that we were prepared to help your trade during troublesome times, I believe some reciprocation of our efforts may be shown . . .
>
> A.Heaton
> Manager ' [1]

Hyndman seized on this as "irrefutable evidence" as to the nature of the exchanges, and the S.D.P. decided to print Heaton's letter as a propaganda pamphlet.[2] The local trades council, however, was content to write to the Board of Trade, and was informed by Askwith that the circular had been issued without the knowledge, consent, or approval of his department. Heaton was suspended pending a full inquiry, a sentence which Harry Quelch thought rather hard as it was the system rather than the man which had produced the letter.[3]

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1 Quoted in Justice, 24 September, 1910.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 1 October, 1910. Strangely, Heaton was a trade unionist and a member of the Bradford Branch of the I.L.P.

Although the only national labour organisation apart from the S.D.P. to take up this incident was the G.F.T.U., many questions were asked in the house of commons about the antecedents of the exchange managers, and Clynes said that this was because many of them seemed over-anxious to fill their vacancies.[1] The T.U.C. was sufficiently concerned about the managerial appointments to ask for information about the necessary qualifications and requirements, and in September Askwith informed them that of 190 managers, assistant managers, and divisional officers so far appointed, 56 had been trade union officials, 5 were described as "other workmen", and 14 had previously worked in bureaux set up under the 1905 Unemployed Workmen Act.[2] By December "Casey" was claiming that the government had done its best for the unemployed problem by "finding positions of trust for scores of Trade Union officials at the Labour Exchanges."[3] Few, however, went so far as the Social Democrats in asserting that Churchill was using the top administrative posts to provide pensions for his friends, although Tillett did say that preference was being given to university men, public school men, and political favourites,

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, XIX, 1871. 25 July, 1910. See also Hardie's question in ibid., XVI, 433. 6 April, 1910: and Hodge's in ibid., XVIII, 195. 2 June, 1910.

2 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1910, p 77.

3 Labour Leader, 2 December, 1910.

in that order.[1]

Generally however, there was little inclination among most trade unionists to share the dogmatic hostility of the Social Democrats, although there was obviously much discontent with the every-day running of the exchanges. This helps to account for the seeming paradox between the massive vote in favour of a T.U.C. resolution that they were working in a manner inimical to union interests, and the fact that Beveridge was able to tell an international conference on unemployment that British trade unionists had in general accepted the advantages of the system.[2] Possibly too, there was some difference of opinion between union leaders and the rank and file members who were, after all, most affected by the exchanges. Certainly, many of the union secretaries encouraged their members to utilise the new system, and only Ben Tillett of the national leaders continued to oppose them, claiming in his annual report that they had been a total failure.[3] On the other hand, many local trades councils seem to have

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1 Dockers Record, March 1910, p 5.

2 W.H.Beveridge, "Labour exchanges in the United Kingdom", Conference Internationale du Chomage, Rapport No. 26, September 1910.

3 D.W.R.G.W.U., Annual Report, 1910, p 5. Encouragement to use the exchanges was given by the following, for example. O.B.S., Annual Report 1910, p xliv: U.S.B.I.S.S.B., Monthly Report, April 1910, p 12: A.A.O.C.S., Quarterly Report for quarter ending 30 April, 1910, p 5: A.S.E., Annual Report, 1910, p vi: N.A.U.L., Quarterly Report for quarter ending 26 March, 1910, p 4: N.U.B.S.O., Monthly Report, February 1910, p 104: A.S.C.J., Annual Report, 1910, p ix: A.S.S.A., Annual Report, 1910, p 4.

invited exchange officials to outline the new machinery to their members and seem to have been anxious to derive benefit from it. Thus Mr.Jeffs, manager of the Woolwich Exchange spoke to the local trades council at its own request.[1] The degree of dissatisfaction with the exchanges seems also to have varied from area to area. For some reason London was particularly bad, and two small London based unions, the French polishers and the coach makers, both wrote to the T.U.C. saying that the exchanges were performing no useful function at all.[2] At the special conference held to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the L.T.C. in the autumn, all the London delegates attacked the exchanges, although it is worth noting that most of the London speakers were also Social Democrats. Representatives from Birmingham and Nottingham, however, all stated that they had little cause for complaint.[3]

Many of the complaints about the administration could obviously have been avoided had the advisory committees been appointed earlier, as Shackleton pointed out at the T.U.C. congress in September.[4] Indeed, T.U.C. leaders and the Labour M.P.'s had been anxious to get the committees established, and this was one of the matters raised by

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1 Woolwich Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 17 November, 1910. Some other trades councils which did this are mentioned in Trades and Labour Gazette, March 1910, p 11: ibid., April 1910, p 5: ibid., June 1910, p 11.

2 T.U.C., P.C.Minutes, 16 November, 1910.

3 Trades and Labour Gazette, November 1910, pp 9-11.

4 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1910, p 163.

a T.U.C. deputation which saw Buxton on 1 March. Two days later O'Grady asked Buxton in the house when he intended to set up the committees, and in April the Board of Trade began to ask the various interested parties to submit the names of nominees.[1] When Brace demanded to know why there had been such a long delay he was told that much negotiation had been necessary, but that now this was nearly completed.[2] Several were set up before the end of the year, and the main complaints came now from the N.F.L.A. When he saw the list of people who were to serve on the committee established in London, Collison said that

> 'a perusal of the names alleged to be representative of the working classes discloses the same Government partiality for organised labour displayed in the appointments to the Labour Departments of the Board of Trade . . . . Everyone of the representatives appointed . . . to represent workmen on the Labour Exchanges is a prominent paid official of the Trade Union Party, or a recognised leader of the Socialists.'[3]

The association's annual conference passed a resolution approving the exchanges but calling for free labour representation on the committees.[4] The fact that the free labourers had approved the system was cited by

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, XIV, 978. 3 March, 1910.

2 Ibid., XVII, 1184. 14 June, 1910.

3 Morning Post, 1 August, 1910.

4 The conference was reported in The Times, 1 November, 1910.

the S.D.P. as fresh evidence that it was working in the interests of the employers and against those of the workers.[1] One more attempt was made by the N.F.L.A. to draw attention to its claims for representation when early in 1911 Mr. Peto demanded to know why so many places had gone to trade unionists when there were 800,000 men in the N.F.L.A., and 10,000,000 who were not in unions at all. Churchill replied that relevant experience was the only qualification necessary, but added that there was no satisfactory way of finding representatives for non-unionists.[2]

Criticisms of the labour exchanges continued to be made right up until the outbreak of war in 1914, but by 1911 they had become fairly mild. Speaking for a T.U.C. deputation to the Board of Trade in February 1911, William Mosses said that their suspicions were directed against the administration rather than the actual regulations. Buxton replied that there were only two classes of complaint - those based on bad administration, which would inevitably decrease as time went on, and those founded on unsubstantiated rumour.[3] By January 1911 nine of the advisory

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1 Justice, 15 October, 1910.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, XXI, 281. 8 February, 1911.

3 T.U.C., Eighth Quarterly Report of the Parliamentary Committee, pp 48-50.

committees had been set up and a further four were in the process of being formed.[1] Only Tillett really continued to deny the advantages of exchanges, claiming at the triennial meeting of the dockers union that as far as the dock trade was concerned they were a failure.[2] But at the T.U.C. assembly in September 1911 the resolution on labour exchanges dealt only with the grievances of those who were actually employed in them. When some delegates complained that this did not go far enough the grouping committee explained that they had only been allowed by the general purposes committee to construct a composite resolution from those sent in.[3] The result suggested that those resolutions which were submitted must have been fairly mild.

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, XXI, 581. 9 February, 1911.

2 Dockers Record, June 1911, p 9.

3 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1911, pp 190-92.

Chapter 8. The National Insurance Bill.

When the Labour Party met to draw up its programme at the beginning of the 1911 parliamentary session the Trade Union Bill still had first place. Second was the re-drafted Right to Work Bill, although Barnes stated that this was only likely to get as much attention as the Labour members were able to obtain for it.[1] The S.D.P., however, seemed more keen than ever to see the measure passed, afraid that the cause of the unemployed would be forgotten in the concern over the constitutional issue and female suffrage. Five days after parliament opened on 31 January, 1911, unemployed demonstrators led by Social Democrat agitators again marched on the house of commons. A few meetings were organised outside London but the unemployed, whose numbers were less than in the previous few years anyway, did not respond very well, and Justice had to admit that attendance at the London demonstration was only "fairly good."[2]

Although the Labour Party was committed to introducing its Unemployed Bill, its members were unlucky in the ballot, and early in

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1 Reynold's Newspaper, 5 February, 1911.

2 Justice, 11 February, 1911.

the session the government requisitioned all the available time until 24 March. Thus it was decided that O'Grady, supported by Will Thorne, should move a "right to work" amendment on the King's Speech, saying that the proposed unemployment insurance would not cover the unskilled workers, who were most in need of protection, and pointing out that the Labour Party had been given a direct mandate to press its own bill by the annual party conference. Strictly speaking, this was not true, for, as Harcourt claimed, the Right to Work Bill as introduced in 1909 contained no mention of a reduction in the hours of labour or the creation of a labour ministry, both of which had appeared in the unemployment resolution at the Labour Party conference, again indicating the tendency to flirt with the poor law report. O'Grady made a bad blunder in claiming that the Development Bill contained all the proposals made by labour men in the past twenty five years, because this laid him open to the charge that the amendment was thus not necessary at all.[1] It was noticeable that several of the Labour Party leaders such as MacDonald and Barnes, took no part in the debate and this was interpreted in some circles as proof that they felt the amendment to be unrealistic.[2] MacDonald, in fact, did imply that it had been moved purely for tactical reasons

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1 For the debate see Hansard, 5th Series, XXI, 586-660. 10 February, 1911.

2 For example, by the Morning Post, 11 February, 1911: Standard, 11 February, 1911.

when he stated that the debate had been useful in showing that the Labour Party was not necessarily going to be satisfied with the government's insurance proposals.[1] Fred Jowett considered that it had been a waste of time, as there was no hope of the amendment passing except in the unlikely event of Conservative support - which would have alienated all their wealthy supporters.[2] George Roberts and Wardle still felt that the constitutional issue was far more important and should be dealt with first.[3]

During the debate several of the Liberals who had previously voted with the Labour Party on its various unemployment amendments and bills, stated that they thought the government's legislative programme had removed the need for the passage of the Right to Work Bill, and they did not vote for the present amendment. Even more significant was the fact that for the first time a member of the Labour Party, W.Johnson of Nuneaton, voted against the party on an unemployment issue. Thus it was hardly surprising that in March George Lansbury, recently elected to parliament for the first time, should claim that the Labour Party had no pledge to the "right to work" at all.[4] Certainly there had already been indications that the

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1 Labour Leader, 17 February, 1911.

2 Ibid., 10 February, 1911.

3 Roberts in the Typographical Circular, March 1911, p 1: Wardle in the Railway Review, 17 February, 1911.

4 Labour Leader, 24 March, 1911.

value of the Right to Work Bill was being questionned, particularly by certain sections of the I.L.P., and this impression is heightened by a long debate which took place in the correspondence columns of the Labour Leader.

This began with a letter from a writer signing himself "Lux", who argued that the maintenance clause had only been included in the bill because socialists realised that as things currently were, work could not be found for the unemployed. He went on to say that if the rates were increased to provide the maintenance stipulated in clause three of the bill, spending power would be reduced and unemployment would rise. He also argued that afforestation and similar projects envisaged by the Development Bill and welcomed by so many working men would create just as much unemployment as they eradicated, because they would merely divert capital from one enterprise to another.[1] This provoked seven replies in the following week's edition, some of which suggested, significantly, that maintenance should come through insurance.[2] A week later G.D.Benson wrote to say that no-one had grasped the basic point which "Lux" was making - that the provision of maintenance would divert money from other projects and create new

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1 Labour Leader, 24 February, 1911.

2 Ibid., 3 March, 1911.

unemployment. "I am afraid", he concluded, "that the I.L.P. will have to overhaul some of its cherished notions and subject them to a very close scrutiny."[1] In a follow-up letter, Benson argued that if the problem was really one of the direction of capital, as most writers seemed to agree, then the answer to unemployment did not lie in a Right to Work Bill.[2] The discussion lasted until 19 May when the editor declared it closed, some forty eight letters having been published. None of the writers had mentioned the recommendations of the poor law minority report, and it would seem that there was now a substantial section of the I.L.P. which considered the Right to Work Bill irrelevant to the unemployment problem, irrespective of the alternative suggestions contained in the minority report. One writer, for example, who termed the minority report's suggestions "superficial and inadequate, and of a kind which make new problems whilst they solve the old ones", added that the Right to Work Bill had been for

> 'educational purposes and introduced as a kind of quarry . . . from which Governments could dig solid blocks of unemployed legislation . . . . The demand for maintenance is translated into a scheme of insurance against unemployment: the demand for work leads to development schemes . . . . It forces the state to assume

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1 Labour Leader, 10 March, 1911.

2 Ibid., 5 May, 1911.

> responsibilities which compel it to readjust the economic system which results in poverty. That is the value of the Right to Work claim. It belongs to those great creative agencies which result not in better administration or any other palliative, but in fundamental economic changes which are organic and are therefore permanent in their value . . . .' [1]

In the light of such attitudes it was not surprising that when Hardie took advantage of the ten minute rule to introduce the Labour Party Unemployment Bill on 10 May, it passed barely noticed and made no progress, perhaps also overshadowed by the magnitude of the Insurance Bill introduced a few days previously by Lloyd George. The influence of the minority report was very apparent in the re-drafted bill, for Hardie affirmed that the "underlying feature of the Bill is that great undertakings of public utility and Government contracts are arranged in advance", and certainly the bill now envisaged, as the minority report had suggested, that the government should plan its work over a ten year period.[2] It was significant that Hardie stressed this aspect of the bill, for the two main principles of the older versions, the "right to work" and local rate finance, both remained. The new bill also showed the impact of the government's legislation, as the local unemployment committees were now to be geared to the

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1 Socialist Review, VI (April 1911), pp 87-8.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, XXV, 1219. 10 May, 1911.

labour exchanges and to the Board of Trade, instead of the Local Government Board. The Social Democrats, who had welcomed the original bill in 1907, were very contemptuous of the recast measure, Quelch claiming that it was so tame that the government could almost accept it if the "right to work" clause was replaced by one dealing with insurance.[1]

During the newspaper controversy about the Right to Work Bill many writers had emphasised the need to equalise the distribution of wealth by means of a minimum wage, and to attack unemployment by reducing the hours of work. These ideas, of course, had never died out entirely and had appeared fairly regularly at T.U.C. conferences. During the trade depression of 1908 correspondence columns of trade union journals, especially those connected with the building trade, were full of suggestions for combatting unemployment by abolishing overtime and reducing working hours, but the hours question had lost much of its impetus since the great battles of the 1890's.[2] In 1908 the Labour Party had used a parliamentary motion on the eight hour day for purely tactical purposes. Disillusionment with the possibility of securing a general eight hour day was reflected to some extent in the way in which individual trades had agitated for a reduction of

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1 Justice, 20 May, 1911.

2 See, for example, A.S.C.J., Monthly Report, November 1908, p 728: O.B.S., Trades Circular and General Reporter, December 1908, p 10: E.T.U., Eltradion, November 1908, p 698: A.A.O.C.S., Quarterly Report, October 1908, pp 3-5: N.U.G.W. & G.L., Quarterly Balance Sheet, 26 December, 1908.

hours within their own particular industry, a tendency which Clynes criticised at the 1910 congress. But the demand for a general eight hour day doubtless received some stimulus from the poor law report and the Webbs' crusade to popularise it. Early in 1911 a member of the Bradford I.L.P. wrote to the Labour Leader saying he was pleased to see that there were signs that at last the eight hour movement was beginning to revive, and even as he wrote the printing trades were striking for a forty eight hour week.[1] At the Labour Party's 1911 conference Thorne secured the unanimous passage of an eight hour resolution, and Ben Riley, a member of the I.L.P.'s N.A.C. and also an officer in the Labour Party, stated that after the Osborne case and the "right to work", this was the most pressing matter for the labour movement. "We want", he said, "to regain some of the spirit of the early nineties."[2] Third on a list of motions for which the Labour Party ballotted in 1911 was one for a thirty shilling minimum wage, and although the Liberals talked it out, the I.L.P.'s summer campaign was devoted to an hours and wages campaign, both frequently presented in terms of their value in preventing unemployment, but also as concessions which would help to reduce the high level of

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1 Labour Leader, 24 February, 1911.

2 Ibid., 17 February, 1911.

industrial unrest. Although it was planned to hold a series of eight hour day demonstrations in the autumn, this did not prove possible, partly because the Labour members had already made prior engagements, but mainly because there was an extra autumn session of parliament.

(ii)

This autumn session was made necessary by the delay in normal business brought about by the government's desire to deal finally with the house of lords, and partly by the fact that one of the measures waiting to be pushed through was the immensely long and complicated Insurance Bill. Labour organisations had been discussing unemployment insurance ever since it was first considered by the government in 1908-1909, but during 1910 interest had lapsed somewhat, much to the concern of at least one trade unionist who predicted that if the labour movement did not soon wake up it would find that it had no say at all in the structure of any scheme produced by the government.[1] But although union interest in 1910 had centred mainly on the Osborne case and the problems presented by labour exchanges, the parliamentary committee of the T.U.C. had kept in touch with the Board of Trade about the projected Insurance Bill all through the year. The September congress passed a resolution demanding certain

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1 O.B.S., Trades Circular and General Reporter, October 1910, p 17.

safeguards in any scheme in order to protect the integrity of the unions, but outright opposition was as yet limited to only a few, such as Lansbury. Speaking at Abedare in March 1910, Lansbury defied Buxton to produce any scheme which would effectively insure the casual labourer and intermittently employed man against unemployment.[1] Tillett said that insurance was merely "playing with a tragedy."[2]

Consultations between the government and the T.U.C. continued into the new year and after T.U.C. leaders had consulted with Lloyd George on 9 January, the Prime Minister informed the King that it had been decided to merge the schemes for insurance against ill health and against unemployment into one bill.[3] It was later alleged that this decision was taken as a result of labour pressure, the union leaders feeling that unemployment insurance, on which they were particularly keen, would have a better chance of passing if it was part of a larger measure.[4] In view of the time sequence noted above, this certainly was possible, and the decision was taken without regard for the considerable difficulties it caused to the civil servants responsible for drafting the bill, for the separate measures were at

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1 Labour Leader, 11 March, 1910.

2 B.Tillett, A brief history of the dockers union (London, 1910), p 44.

3 H.H.Asquith to the King, 20 January, 1911. Asquith Papers. Vol 6, ff 1-2.

4 The allegations were made by The Times, 10 May, 1911.

different stages of development.[1]

It was not until 4 May that Lloyd George outlined the joint scheme in the house of commons, and he spoke for so long on part I of the bill, which dealt with health insurance, that he had little time to discuss part II, which dealt with unemployment. But he did announce that the scheme would cover workers in engineering, ship building, building, and construction. Contributions were to be 2½d each from the worker and his employer with the state adding 25% again of the total thus contributed. Employers were to be able to compound their contributions. Benefits were to be paid for fifteen weeks, at 6/- a week for building workers, 7/- for engineers. There was to be no benefit for men who were sacked for misconduct, or who were put out of work by a trade dispute, nor in the first week of unemployment for any man. No-one was to be able to claim more than one week's benefit for every five weeks of contributions. Men were to be paid through their union, which would then claim the requisite amount from the central fund. Non-unionists were to be paid through the medium of the labour exchange. The Chancellor closed his speech by admitting that he did not pretend that "this is a complete remedy", and he appealed to the house of commons to "help the

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1 See, for example, the complaints about this made by H.Llewellyn Smith to S.Buxton, 24 January, 1911. Buxton Papers.

Government not merely to carry this Bill through but to fashion it; to strengthen it where it is weak, to improve it where it is faulty."[1]

Initial labour reactions were generally favourable, although it should be remembered that in many cases their comments referred to the whole bill, not just to the unemployment section. The general consensus, as expressed by men like Gill, Crooks, and new members Goldstone and J.H.Thomas, was that it went as far as could be expected, was a good bill, but needed amendment.[2] Hardie's first reaction was that it was "a very good bill", although he felt that more workers could have been covered by part II.[3] W.Johnson and Williams, both miners themselves, were resentful that miners had not been included in the unemployment section, a strange attitude as miners were not nearly as badly affected by unemployment as many other workers.[4] Others who thought the unemployment scheme too restricted included Appleton of the G.F.T.U. and Snowden, who also felt that the contributions were too high.[5] Lansbury argued that no-one earning

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, XXV, 609-44. 4 May, 1911.

2 See Standard, 8 May, 1911: Reynold's Newspaper, 7 May, 1911.

3 Daily Mail, 5 May, 1911.

4 Daily Telegraph, 6 May, 1911.

5 For Appleton's view see ibid., 5 May, 1911. Fpr Snowden's see Labour Leader, 12 May, 1911.

less than 25/- a week should have to contribute, while Jowett expected part II to be dropped because it was so weak.[1] W.T.Wilson opined that the benefits were too small.[2] Another who sounded a discordant note was Thorne, who was afraid that the "right to work" would be obscured by the Insurance Bill, a significant fear in view of MacDonald's assertion in the house of commons that it did, in fact, concede the principle of the "right to work" to some extent.[3]

Shortly after Lloyd George's parliamentary statement the details of part II of the National Insurance Bill were publicised by means of a supplementary press statement, and at once itemised criticisms were formulated. As already indicated, both Hardie and Snowden had inquired as to why the scheme did not cover more workers, and this was of particular concern to the general labourers, whose general council was instructed to press very strongly for their inclusion.[4] Similarly, many speakers at the dockers' triennial delegate meeting were concerned that dock labourers had been more or less excluded from unemployment insurance.[5] In fact, Buxton argued strongly in the

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1 Labour Leader, 12 May, 1911.

2 Daily Mail, 5 May, 1911.

3 Thorne expressed his fears in the Labour Leader, 12 May, 1911. For MacDonald's assertion see Hansard, 5th Series, XXV, 657. 4 May, 1911.

4 N.U.G.W. & G.L., E.C.Minutes, 14 May, 1911.

5 Dockers Record, June 1911, pp 7-8.

cabinet for their inclusion, claiming that this would promote decasualisation, and also make the measure more defensible in parliament.[1] But he was obviously over-ruled, perhaps because of the extra cost involved. This question of cost was evidently causing Lloyd George some concern, for at one time he was thinking of reducing the state contribution under part II of the bill to 1d per insured man, plus the administrative expenses.[2] Thus when the question of the bill's scope was raised in parliament by Labour M.P.'s it was pointed out by government speakers that it already covered one third of the adult male working population, the rest being either in unions which paid unemployment benefit or employed in trades which were not prone to unemployment. In addition, it was argued that the plan was experimental and that before it could be extended more actuarial information had to be gained, an argument with which Roberts, for one, fully concurred.[3] In any case, provision was made for other trades to opt into the unemployment insurance scheme.

Many criticisms were also made of the clauses relating to the qualifications for and restrictions on benefits, especially that which

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1 Unemployment insurance: memorandum, 16 March, 1911. Buxton Papers.

2 Buxton said that this was "endangering the scheme", and added that there "would be great disappointment, therefore, if the proportion of the State's contribution . . . were now reduced. . .(it) would also make the scheme unworkable." S.Buxton to D.Lloyd George, undated. Buxton Papers.

3 Typographical Circular, June 1911, p 10.

stated that an insured worker would get no money if he was off work because of a trade dispute, although, of course, he might not be directly involved. Buxton told an S.D.P. deputation which raised this point with him that the clause had been included because the government did not want the unemployment insurance fund depleted by industrial actions with the result that nothing was left for those who were genuinely unemployed.[1] When this matter was brought up at the special conference arranged by the joint board in June, Henderson informed the delegates that the Labour Party intended to put down a suitable amendment. This was duly moved during the report stage in November by Wilkie, who claimed that the non-payment of benefit should be restricted to those directly concerned in a dispute by virtue of it being between their own employer and their own trade or grade. In his reply Buxton repeated that the unemployment fund was for depressions, not strikes, and added that such an amendment would encourage strikes. In any case, he doubted whether it would be possible to demarcate the various trades successfully. Lansbury, Duncan, O'Grady, and Clynes ignored Buxton's comments and all spoke for the amendment, the latter affirming that if it was not allowed

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1 The Times, 13 July, 1911.

then "the Bill will commit an act of the gravest injustice to a poor and suffering class."[1] But it was defeated by 146 votes to 69.

Another clause which came in for much adverse comment was that which stipulated that no benefit would be paid to any who refused work at a "fair wage." This term was not defined and many trade unionists feared that it would be used to penalise men for refusing jobs which did not carry a union wage rate, and would thus result in the union rates being pushed down. This point was made in the manifesto on the Insurance Bill issued at the end of June by the Fabian Society.

Yet a further source of discontent was that the proposed level of benefits was different and this was felt, not unnaturally, by the building trade workers who were scheduled to get the lower rate of 6/- per week. The initiative in trying to get this changed came from Matkin, the secretary of the A.S.C.J., who wrote to the various building unions urging them to press for equal benefits, and he enclosed with his letter figures to show that over a three year period building unions had paid out more in unemployment benefit than engineering unions.[2] The joint board conference also decided that it

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1 For this debate see Hansard, 5th Series, XXXII, 801-52. 30 November, 1911.

2 M.U.O.B., Monthly Trade Report, June 1911, p 21.

was inconsistent to have unequal benefits when the contributions were the same in both cases. In July Buxton told representatives of the building trades federation that he would assist any amendments of this clause which were permissible in the light of the bill's financial limits.[1] When the bill reached committee W.T.Wilson, himself a building worker, moved that payment be made at a flat rate, and on behalf of the government Buxton accepted this, although he strenuously opposed an attempt to reduce the waiting period during which no benefit was payable from one week to three days. The cost involved, he said, would be so great that the benefits would all have to be reduced in order to finance it.[2]

Others thought that some differentiation should be made in contributions between better and lower paid workers. This was particularly apposite to general labourers and it was one of the amendments which the general labourers council was urged to press on Buxton.[3] The N.A.C. of the I.L.P. resolved to support the principle that no-one should contribute who earned less than £1 a week.[4] The joint board's report on the Insurance Bill suggested that employers

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1 O.B.S., Trades Circular and General Reporter, August 1911, p 7.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, XXXI, 2108-20. 16 November, 1911.

3 N.U.G.W. & G.L., E.C.Minutes, 14 May, 1911.

4 I.L.P., Minutes and Reports from Head Office, 31 May, 1911.

who paid low wages should take a larger share of the contribution, but at the conference Will Thorne introduced a motion which would have exempted lower paid workers from making contributions altogether. This however, was ruled out of order by Henderson, who said that a resolution moved the previous day by Mary Macarthur to exempt sweated workers from making contributions under part I of the bill also applied to the unemployment section now under discussion.[1]

The ability of employers to compound their contributions also created considerable discontent in labour circles. Gill said in the commons that it hardly seemed fair for employers to have this right but not the workers, and added that if employers did compound for some men, the rest would always be liable to dismissal.[2] The labour conference decided to oppose this clause, agreeing that if it was passed, they would agitate for the workers to be able to compound as well, for it was feared that compounding by employers would lead to short time and under employment. When asked by a deputation from the engineering trades if the men could compound, Buxton replied that it was designed to make employers regularise employment. As only they had the ability to do this it would be difficult to extend the

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1 Labour Leader, 30 June, 1911.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, XXVI, 451-96. 25 May, 1911.

principle to the workers.[1]

It was also feared that the scheme would have an adverse effect on the whole structure of unionism, although the labour alliance was generally prepared to accept this risk, provided that amendments were made in the bill to safeguard the unions. It was in an attempt to protect the unions that the joint board claimed that unemployment benefit should be paid through them. The report even went on to suggest that the scheme might be beneficial for the unions. There was nothing, it said, to prevent an employer making adjustments in wages so that the whole burden of the plan fell on the workers, and non-unionists would soon realise this and join a trade union in order to protect their wages.[2] Despite this optimism Beatrice Webb expressed a widespread fear when she said of unemployment insurance that "if it is carried through, it will lead to increased control of the employer and the wage earner by the state."[3] W.T.Wilson thought that if employers were to be allowed to make deductions from wages then it would be almost impossible to persuade men to join a union, and he argued that the bill should be dropped for a year to give sufficient time for it to be fully considered by all the affected parties.[4]

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1 A.T.S., Amalgamated Toolmakers Monthly, July 1911, pp 10-13.

2 The joint board report was printed in The Times, 25 May, 1911.

3 B.Webb Diaries, 13 May, 1911. Passfield Papers. I, 1, Vol 25.

4 A.S.C.J., Monthly Report, July 1911, p 304.

Victor Grayson went even further, claiming to see behind the bill "a sinister capitalist purpose . . . it will anihilate your power to fight your employers by strike, or any other form of open aggression."[1] His view was shared by Leonard Hall who warned that the bill's chief purpose was "to put an end to trades unionism as a fighting or even defensive force in the nation."[2]

For men such as Grayson and Hall the weaknesses in the unemployment insurance scheme were sufficient to warrant outright opposition to it. But the trade union leaders and most of the Labour M.P.'s were generally prepared to accept it provided that its defects could be amended. The only working class organisation which came out solidly against the bill was the S.D.P., and they were supported by the Fabian Society and the discontented elements on the left of the labour alliance. Even before the bill was announced in the King's Speech some Social Democrats were advocating a campaign to show trade unionists "the hidden significance of this astute capitalist move."[3] The L.T.C. passed a resolution on 11 May which stated that there was nothing outlined in the bill which would deal satisfactorily either with unemployment or destitution.[4] The

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1 The Times, 31 July, 1911.

2 Newscutting, September 1911. B.S.P. Papers. F 4.

3 Justice, 14 January, 1911.

4 Trades and Labour Gazette, June 1911, p 4.

parliamentary correspondent of Justice expected the unemployment proposals to be dropped because they were "mean, petty, and ridiculous."[1] This opposition was based mainly on the premise that insurance was not the right way of approaching the unemployment problem. It was argued that it did nothing to reduce the level of unemployment, but merely kept a worker at subsistence level until such time as the capitalist required him again. The real solution was thought to lie in the provision of self supporting work, which no capitalist government ever dare provide. This was the gist of a critical report prepared on behalf of the S.D.P. executive and signed by Tillett, Jones, Quelch, Knee and Scurr.[2] The Social Democrat-led-London Right to Work Council produced a pamphlet written by Fairchild who said it was ominous that the employing classes had given such a warm welcome to the bill.[3]

The Social Democrats were also opposed to the contributory basis of the Liberal scheme, and they found allies within the labour alliance, for members of the I.L.P., and also of the Fabian Society, were against the workers making contributions. Despite the general approval given to the bill by Labour M.P.'s and labour organisations,

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1 Justice, 13 May, 1911.

2 Ibid., 3 June, 1911.

3 Ibid., 29 July, 1911.

often within limits noted above, the I.L.P. annual conference, which had met shortly before the introduction of the bill, voted in favour of a non-contributory scheme.[1] The hostility of the Fabian Society was also based mainly on objections to the contributory system, and the executive decided to organise an active agitation against it. This campaign was to be launched with the issue of a manifesto, and in May Sidney Webb wrote to Sanders, urging him to speed up its production, and adding that "I hope the Fabian Society is not going to be as disgracefully incompetent over the Bill as the Labour Party has been."[2] Inside the parliamentary Labour Party the struggle against the contributory principle was led by George Lansbury, and on 24 May he wrote triumphantly to Webb that at a party meeting a resolution to abolish payments from lower paid workers was moved with the result that

> 'we have cut the party exactly in 2 halves. Snowden came down absolutely on the side of a non-contributory scheme. There is more talk among our labour men against the bill . . . now Snowden has come down on my side it is much better.' 3

He attributed this partly to the effect of the Fabian manifesto which had been sent to the Labour M.P.'s shortly before. Although Lansbury

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1 I.L.P., Annual Report, 1911, p 91.

2 S.Webb to W.S.Sanders, 17 May, 1911. Fabian Society Collection. Part A, Box 4. Correspondence from S.Webb.

3 G.Lansbury to S.Webb, 24 May, 1911. Passfield Papers. Section II, 4e, ff 33-4.

did not indicate in his letter who his supporters at the party meeting were, one can postulate that in view of their subsequent conduct, they included O'Grady, Jowett, Thorne, Hardie, as well as Snowden. W.T.Wilson certainly shared Lansbury's opinions about the need for lower contributions.[1] It is worth noting too, that both Pointer and Walsh voted with Snowden against the money resolution, which sanctioned the financing of the scheme, on 6 July.[2] On the other hand, the trade union leaders were in favour of the bill, particularly the unemployment section. Buxton told Beveridge on 26 May, two days after Lansbury had written to Webb, that he had just spent part of the morning discussing part II of the bill with the union leaders, and that most of "their difficulties and objections had already been met in the Bill and that they were agreeably surprised to find how carefully it had been drawn and thought out."[3]

The dispute between the labour supporters of the bill and those who wanted a non-contributory scheme raged all through May and June. At the beginning of June the S.D.P. executive issued its statement claiming that the whole cost should be borne by the employers.[4] The

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1 See A.S.C.J., Monthly Report, June 1911, p 247.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, XXVII, 1462. 6 July, 1911.

3 S.Buxton to W.H.Beveridge, 26 May, 1911. Beveridge Papers. L, II, 218a.

4 Justice, 3 June, 1911.

L.T.C. wanted the workers' contributions provided from a tax on trade profits, and this was repeated by the S.D.P. deputation which saw Buxton on 12 July.[1] In an article in Justice Thorne claimed that the state contribution would come from taxes, the employers' from increased prices, so that in reality the whole cost would be borne by the workers. He suggested that the workers' premiums should come from a supertax on incomes of over £300 a year.[2] On the other side, Clynes said that it was necessary to have premiums if the plan was going to be anything more than a glorified system of relief works, while the joint board also decided in favour of a contributory bill, feeling that the workers could hardly claim any say in the control of the machinery if they didn't make any financial contribution.[3] As chairman of the Labour Party MacDonald laid down official party policy in a long article in the Labour Leader, arguing that as the Labour Party was committed to abolishing low wages it was not consistent to be continually asking the government for doles and low or non-contributory insurance schemes, which would simply perpetuate them. Lower paid workers would regard themselves as the objects of state charity and fail to join with their fellows in order to improve

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1 Trades and Labour Gazette, July 1911, p 4.

2 Justice, 27 May, 1911.

3 A.T.S., Amalgamated Toolmakers Monthly, June 1911, p 19.

their conditions.[1] This was immediately attacked by Snowden, who condemned it as "unadulterated, sixty year old, individualism."[2] If state aid to raise the standard of life was wrong and degrading, as MacDonald suggested, then logically he ought to have opposed also free meals for needy children and also old age pensions. It might not be possible to secure a non-contributory bill, Snowden added, but their principles demanded that they should strive for one.[3]

These differences all came out at the special conference organised by the joint board for 20 and 21 June. Here, elements of the I.L.P. tried to push through a resolution making deductions from wages illegal. MacDonald opposed this, largely on the grounds that the German trade unions, which had been the subject of several investigations by members of the Labour Party and the T.U.C., found a contributory system advantageous, and he carried the conference with him by 223 votes to 44.[4] It was, as one union journal pointed out, "perfectly obvious" that "in relation to the trade unions of the country . . . they have not to deal with a non-contributory scheme."[5] Lansbury viewed MacDonald's stand with horror and he appealed for an

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1 Labour Leader, 9 June, 1911.

2 Ibid., 16 June, 1911.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 23 June, 1911.

5 A.S.E., Monthly Journal, July 1911, pp 5-6.

agitation be set on foot to change the conference's decision and to oppose the bill.[1] His appeal practically coincided with the issue publicly of the Fabian manifesto. The Social Democrats eagerly took up Lansbury's appeal. although there is no evidence that they worked with the Fabians or the dissenting members of the I.L.P. "If British workmen will stand for this fraud bill . . .", thundered one, "they will stand for anything."[2]

MacDonald was not, of course, without support, as the voting at the joint board conference indicated. At least half the Labour Party in parliament, according to Lansbury's letter to Webb, were even against the abolition of contributions from lower paid workers, and it would seem certain that these same men would be opposed to a non-contributory plan. E.R.Pease supported MacDonald, even though his own Fabian executive was against the measure. C.M.Lloyd, one of the leading lecturers for the National Prevention of Destitution Committee (which had replaced the National Committee to promote the break up of the Poor Law), told Beatrice Webb about the attitude of Pease "who, as you know, is strongly in harmony with the Labour Party Executive view."[3] There was also some support from members of the I.L.P.'s

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1 Labour Leader, 30 June, 1911.

2 Justice, 1 July, 1911.

3 C.M.Lloyd to B.Webb, 6 November, 1911. Passfield Papers. Section II, 4e, f 150.

N.A.C., for Harry Duberry, one of its members who opposed the bill, invited Herbert Bryan to a Fabian protest meeting, saying that "the more I study the blessed thing the less I like it. Of course it will upset the official element on N.A.C. but we need not consider that."[1]

The split in the Labour Party ranks became even more apparent when the committee stage of the Insurance Bill began and the financial resolution covering both sections was debated. It made provision for payment by the state of 2/9 of the health benefits, and 1/3 (more than originally announced) of the total contributions made under the unemployment scheme. Snowden promptly said that he understood this would be the only chance they had of proposing an increase in the size of the state's contribution, and he then argued strongly in favour of non-contributory schemes for both health and unemployment sections. But he took only eight other members into the division lobby with him.[2] When the financial resolution reached its report stage the following day, Jowett moved to abolish all contributions, withdrawing his amendment when he had explained that it was merely a way of registering a protest.[3] MacDonald's acceptance

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1 H.Duberry to H.Bryan, 13 July, 1911. Herbert Bryan Papers. General Correspondence, Section Va, f 17.

2 Hansard, 5th Series, XXVII, 1390-1462. 6 July, 1911.

3 Ibid., 1483. 7 July, 1911.

of the resolution was severely criticised by those who claimed that it would now be impossible to move later that the state share of the contributions be increased. He replied to his critics by submitting a memorandum, later published, to the Labour Party. In thus trying to justify his action he pointed out that by constitutional practice only a minister could move a resolution imposing a cost on the state. Lloyd George had stated that whatever benefits were paid under part I of the bill the state would provide 2/9, and would pay 1/3 of the total contributions made under part II. Thus increases in the benefits could still be moved and the party was "as free to raise our points and move our amendments as we were before the Money Resolution was carried."[1] Snowden replied in the Labour Leader, claiming that this statement was "a tissue of misstatements from beginning to end", and adding that there was now no possibility of increasing the proportion of the state's contribution.[2] Certainly, there was now no chance of abolishing workers' contributions, which was probably what really infuriated Snowden, but he went on to claim that on 6 July nobody had known that even amendments to increase the benefits would be accepted, as this had not been pointed out by the

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1 J.R.MacDonald, "Facts relating to the action of the Labour Party . . . on Thursday, July 6th", Infancy of the Labour Party, II, p 204.

2 Labour Leader, 21 July, 1911.

Speaker until 7 July. "It is dishonest", he concluded, "for the Labour Party to shield itself behind a construction of the Money Resolution which nobody held when the Labour Party voted . . . ."[1]

That Snowden had so little support in the division lobby suggests that by the beginning of July few of the Labour M.P.'s were prepared to support a non-contributory scheme, and certainly were not willing to jeopardise the whole bill by voting against the money resolution. Beveridge told his mother in August that the union leaders were particularly anxious to pass the unemployment section, as they had been all along.[2] Not many of the I.L.P. were apparently prepared to risk splitting the Labour Party, and some felt that as M.P.'s they should stick loyally to the decision of the joint board conference. MacDonald's own keeness for the measure probably had several explanations. For one thing, he was generally closer to the unions in his politics than to the I.L.P., and his awareness of the union leaders' hopes may have influenced his own attitude. Secondly, he seems genuinely to have believed in a contributory system, claiming to have written an article some fifteen years previously arguing for workers' contributions for an unemployment insurance scheme.[3] Perhaps,

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1 Labour Leader, 21 July, 1911.

2 W.H.Beveridge to his mother, 6 August, 1911. Beveridge Papers. L, I, 205.

3 Hansard, 5th Series, XXVII, 1442. 6 July, 1911.

too, he was still hankering after office and wished to ingratiate himself with the Liberal leaders. He had already accepted one offer of office in 1910 in a projected coalition government but this had fallen through.[1] He was still in very close touch with the Liberal ministers, however, and had written in very intimate terms to the Master of Elibank at the beginning of the year to the effect that "I am to take that blessed Chairmanship after all . . .I want very much to see you."[2] In July, Lord Riddell noted in his diary that one day when he called at Downing Street he "found L.G. holding a conference on the Insurance Bill in his garden. Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour leader, and some Government officials were seated with him under a tree."[3] According to W.A.Colegate, secretary of the Prevention of Destitution Committee, there was a strong rumour circulating in August that MacDonald was soon to get office.[4] But the most likely reason of all for MacDonald's attitude to the Insurance Bill was that he was still concerned about the effect of the Osborne judgement on the unions and the Labour Party. Before the

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1 See M.Hamilton, Arthur Henderson a biography (London, 1938), pp 73-4.

2 J.R.MacDonald to the Master of Elibank, 3 February, 1911. Elibank Papers. N.L.S. MSS 8802, f 178.

3 Lord Riddell, More pages from my diary, 1908-1914 (London, 1934), p 21.

4 W.A.Colegate to B.Webb, 18 August, 1911. Passfield Papers. Section II, 4e, f 72e.

end of the session he arranged a pact with Elibank that the Labour Party would back the Insurance Bill if provision was made for the payment of members, which would offset the worst political effect of the case.[1] Lloyd George introduced a government resolution calling for the payment of members on 10 August.

Negotiations between the government and labour representatives continued all through the summer, Beveridge observing on one occasion when he had spent the day "reasoning about Unemployment Insurance with the Labour Party (that) they were really very reasonable and pleasant, and will be helpful."[2] But MacDonald's opponents were still active as well and spent the summer attacking the bill. At the end of July the I.L.P. and the Fabians held a joint protest meeting, despite Labour Party attempts to forstall it by inquiring whether the Fabian Executive had a mandate to participate in such a meeting.[3] One of Mrs. Webb's friends described the scene at the rally.

> 'Philip Snowden was led on by the enthusiasm of his audience to say more against the Bill than he ever imagined he could. In fact he was horrified himself and tried to hedge but the applause ceased at once and he went back to denunciation and wound up with a dramatic appeal. Lansbury was great and bellowed in fine style.' 4

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1 See the Master of Elibank to D.Lloyd George, 5 October, 1911. Lloyd George Papers. C/6/5/5.

2 W.H.Beveridge to his mother, 15 August, 1911. Beveridge Papers. L, I, 205.

3 See Fabian Society, E.C.Minutes, 21 July, 1911.

4 M.Reeves to B.Webb, 3 August, 1911. Passfield Papers. Section II, 4e, f 64a.

The Social Democrats also kept up their opposition but still did not join with the Fabians and the I.L.P. In July, for example, Fairchild published his pamphlet under the auspices of the London Right to Work Council, claiming that the scheme should be free.[1] At the T.U.C. meeting in September S.D.P. members, backed by some of the I.L.P. rebels moved a resolution against a contributory system but were convincingly defeated by 940,000 votes to 325,000.[2] Despite this opposition, however, some of its supporters, perhaps swayed by the T.U.C. vote, were losing heart by the end of September. C.D.Sharp, editor of Crusade, wrote despondently to Beatrice Webb that the only effective thing they could now do "would be to get at the Trade Unions."[3]

The T.U.C. vote may have influenced MacDonald as well. At all events he was sufficiently confident of his following in the Labour Party to write to Elibank at the beginning of October:

> 'I need not reassure you that the statement I made to you about the attitude of the Party on the Insurance Bill before we separated in the summer holds good. The party came to its decision, and its decision will be carried out by the officers loyally and faithfully, in spite of what two, or at the outside three, members may do to the contrary.' 4

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1 Justice, 29 July, 1911.

2 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1911, pp 204-08.

3 C.D.Sharp to B.Webb, 20 September, 1911. Passfield Papers. Section II, 4e, f 103c.

4 J.R.MacDonald to the Master of Elibank, 4 October, 1911. Elibank Papers. N.L.S.MSS 8802, f 334.

His resolve was further strengthened when, after a long discussion, a censure motion on him and his policy over the Insurance Bill was withdrawn in the N.A.C. of the I.L.P. He won this particular struggle because some of the council's members - those referred to by Duberry as "the official element" - had always felt that a contributory scheme was acceptable.[1] Others, such as Ben Riley, thought that as the I.L.P. members were a minority in the Labour Party they should be loyal to its majority decisions. Possibly, too, some of MacDonald's opponents were unwilling to risk further party dissension after the events of the summer, when some forty dissident I.L.P. branches had broken away to form, in alliance with the S.D.P. and the Clarion movement, what ultimately became the British Socialist Party. It is not clear how close the struggle within the N.A.C. on the censure motion was, nor who opposed MacDonald, but there were present four men at least who probably argued against him - Jowett, Lansbury, Duberry, and MacLachlan.[2]

Three days after this discussion took place MacDonald wrote again to Elibank, informing him of how the Labour Party intended to act in the coming session, and suggesting also how the government should conduct its business. The whole tone of the letter bespoke of very

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1 See p 389.

2 I.L.P., Minutes and Reports from Head Office, 6 October, 1911.

close co-operation, almost "rigging."

> 'I strongly advise you to adopt the same methods as you did before the summer. It will be a very hard job, but I believe you can do it. I am sorry to say that there will be one or two men whom I cannot control, but disagreements between you and the Party as a whole on the Bill will be on very few points, and upon these we can have businesslike discussions, and then divisions. I shall also be willing always to support you on any reasonable application of the closure . . . .' [1]

He followed this by issuing a public statement saying that the Labour Party intended to support the Insurance Bill when the autumn session of parliament began. This, said the Daily News, dispelled the impression created by Snowden and Hardie, who had told a Labour candidate in a Scottish by-election that the measure was a mere opiate designed to keep the workers asleep, that the party was split.[2] According to C.D.Sharp, this statement finally killed all effective opposition to the bill.[3] The Labour Leader claimed that there was now "nothing for the advocates of the non-contributory principle to do but make the best of it . . . ."[4] Opposition was weakened even more

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1 J.R.MacDonald to the Master of Elibank, 9 October, 1911. Elibank Papers. N.L.S. MSS 8802, f 337.

2 Daily News, 10 October, 1911.

3 C.D.Sharp to B.Webb, 28 October, 1911. Passfield Papers. Section II, 4e, f 134.

4 Labour Leader, 20 October, 1911.

by the very favourable report on unemployment insurance issued by the actuary appointed by the Labour Party to investigate the whole bill. He reported that it would be advantageous for trade unions to join the scheme because the administrative costs would be borne by the state, and they would save, as the contributions were small compared with the benefits, which the unions would no longer have to pay.[1] What popular discontent remained was largely among the lower paid workers, and although there was some resentment at the way MacDonald had acted the general feeling, according to one observer, was "steadfastly in favour of the Labour Party Alliance."[2]

The Social Democrats and the Fabians kept up their opposition, but it was half hearted. The Labour Party rebels still refused to toe the official party line, although according to The Times their position was made extremely difficult by alleged attempts on the part of the B.S.P. to persuade them to group themselves into a representative body to act with the B.S.P.[3] It was true that the Labour Party stand on the Insurance Bill had influenced some of those who had broken away during the summer, Leonard Hall, for example,

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1 Westminster Gazette, 14 October, 1911.

2 C.M.Lloyd to B.Webb, 6 November, 1911. Passfield Papers. Section II, 4e, ff 148-50.

3 The Times, 27 October, 1911.

terming it "the last straw, that breaks the camel's back."[1] However, these allegations were immediately denied by H.W.Lee, secretary of the provisional B.S.P. committee.[2] He did admit that the new party supported the rebels, and certainly Fairchild, now a member of the B.S.P., wrote to Lansbury encouraging him to continue the fight and claiming that "it will be the driving under of English Socialism if MacDonald's policy on this bill is adopted."[3] Harry Quelch took a more sanguine view, saying that the whole thing was a storm in a teacup and that there was no chance of anyone leaving the Labour Party.[4]

When parliament re-assembled it was agreed that the unemployment part of the bill should be discussed in grand committee, although Lansbury opposed this, asserting that there would be no opportunity to reject the measure if this was done. Only O'Grady, Jowett, and Thorne supported him, however, and the grand committee began its work on 2 November. The rebels made a further protest during the third reading, claiming that people could not afford the contributions and that therefore both parts of the scheme should be non-contributory.

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1 Newscutting, September 1911. B.S.P.Papers. F 4.

2 The Times, 28 October, 1911.

3 E.C.Fairchild to G.Lansbury, 25 October, 1911. Lansbury Papers. Section IV, f 231.

4 Justice, 4 November, 1911.

But on 6 December, 1911, the third reading of Unemployment Insurance passed in the house of commons, 324-21.[1]

After a year of internal dissension and negotiation what had the Labour Party achieved? Benefits had been made uniform; contributions from young workers had been reduced; some concessions had been granted in the clauses relating to disqualifications from benefit due to involvement in trade disputes; changes had also been made in the clauses concerning the standard of work offered to unemployed workers; the worst paid workers were exempted from contributions. The net result of these changes was an increase in the state contribution of £100,000, twice as much, said the Labour Leader, as the transport workers had gained by their recent strike, and readers were invited to draw the appropriate conclusions.[2] Snowden promptly pointed out that this was misleading, as the extra money given by the state was coming from an estimated surplus on contributions, not from any increase in the proportion of the cost borne by the state.[3] The rebels then made a last defiant gesture by issuing a manifesto, signed also by Hardie, who had abstained on the third reading, which explained that while they had been in general sympathy with the bill's

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, XXXII, 1419-1530. 6 December, 1911.

2 Labour Leader, 24 November, 1911.

3 Ibid., 1 December, 1911.

objects but felt that its principles were unsound. Among the objections which were listed to part II was the contributory principle because it compelled men to pay for a safeguard against something for which they were not personally responsible. They also felt that the price of the benefits was too high in terms of the contributions.[1] But this was the last sign of their revolt and it was indicative of labour's general acceptance of the insurance principle that the Labour Leader could state that the bill had given them something from which to start.[2]

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1 Labour Leader, 15 December, 1911.

2 Ibid., 8 December, 1911.

Postscript. 1912-1914.

The coming of unemployment insurance in 1911 was the last major development in unemployment legislation before the first world war changed beyond all recognition the dimension of the problem with which it was designed to deal. In the immediate pre-war years unemployment bulked less large in the working class interest, partly because attention was concentrated on political and industrial unrest, and partly because, except in the building industry, these were years of prosperity. A boom had started in 1910 and its influence was felt in nearly all sectors of industrial activity, particularly in the export industries. There were signs of deceleration in 1913, due mainly to European and American reactions against the feverish trading of the previous two years, but even by mid-summer of 1914 the unemployed index still stood at only 2.4%[1]

Something else which absorbed much working class effort was the problem of dovetailing the union organisations into the insurance schemes. This involved a great deal of difficult work, and at least one union general secretary expressed relief that his members had decided against opting into the unemployment scheme because of the

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1 Sayers, History of economic change, p 42.

extra work entailed.[1] This burden was made even heavier by the fact that those unions covered by unemployment insurance were also those which made the largest membership increases during this period. In the O.B.S. membership went up in 1912 - by 2165 - for the first time in many years.[2]

This increase perhaps suggests that the principle of insurance had been widely accepted by rank and file trade unionists as a method of tackling unemployment. Many Labour Party members shared this opinion and in reviewing the outlook for the 1912 parliamentary session Ben Turner said that he had "not much to say about the new Insurance Act. It is now law, and our business should be to make it an Act of usefulness."[3] Their acceptance was doubtless aided by the fact that no less than 26 trade unionists, including Appleton, Davis, Bowerman, Chandler, Gill, Mosses, Sexton, and Turner himself, were appointed to the advisory committee which was to administer the act.[4] In 1913 W.T.Wilson moved a reduction on the civil service estimates in order to initiate a discussion on unemployment insurance, saying that he was "not opposed to Part II of the Act", and that his criticisms

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1 N.A.U.L., Quarterly Report for quarter ending 30 June, 1913, p 4. See also H.J.Fyrth & H.Collins, The Foundry Workers (Manchester, 1959), p 159.

2 O.B.S., Annual Report, 1912, p iii. On this point generally see H.Pelling, Politics and society in late Victorian Britain (London, 1968), p 153.

3 Labour Leader, 26 January, 1912.

4 Ibid., 12 April, 1912.

would "be concerned only with its administration."[1] Certainly in parliament the Labour members appear to have been far more interested in the measure's administration than in reversing its principles. Thus Snowden wanted to know, for example, if a man would lose his benefit if prevented from working by the weather.[2] Questions of this nature also appeared frequently at labour conferences and at the 1913 meeting of the T.U.C., Albert Hayday successfully moved a resolution calling for minor amendments in part II of the act.[3] Earlier in the year the parliamentary committee had taken a deputation to the Board of Trade to discuss administrative problems, such as the failure of the authorities, when forwarding cheques of benefits, to send details as to the names of branches and members of the society on whose behalf payment was being made.[4] When difficulties such as these eventually produced a government amending bill in 1914 the main criticism made by the Labour members was that it did not go far enough, thus implying acceptance of the insurance principle.[5]

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1 Hansard, 5th Series, L, 1323. 24 March, 1913.

2 Ibid., XLII, 1599. 18 October, 1912. See also questions from Snowden in ibid., XLVI, 1546. 10 January, 1913: O'Grady in ibid., LI, 1174. 9 April, 1913: Thorne in ibid., XLVIII, 958. 12 February, 1913.

3 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1913, p 303.

4 Ibid., pp 97-8.

5 Hansard, 5th Series, LXI, 183-239. 15 April, 1914.

There were, of course, still those who wanted the scheme to be made non-contributory, and others who wanted the financial arrangements altered. The 1912 T.U.C. unanimously passed a resolution calling for the abolition of contributions made by casual workers earning less than 10/- a week, and for graduated contributions from those receiving less than £1.[1] Tillett was still urging his members at the end of 1912 to press the Labour Party to agitate for a free plan, while Thorne secured the passage at the Labour Party conferences of 1913 and 1914 of resolutions demanding a universal non-contributory unemployment insurance scheme.[2] On neither occasion, however, was there any discussion.

Despite the general acceptance of the Insurance Act and the prosperous state of the economy between 1912 and 1914, the labour movement did not lose all interest in other methods of approaching unemployment. Although parliamentary affairs were dominated by the questions of home rule and the dis-establishment of the Welsh Church, the Right to Work Bill was re-introduced in 1912 and, with the new title of the Prevention of Unemployment Bill, in 1913 and 1914. This

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1 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1912, p 220.

2 Labour Party, Annual Report, 1913, p 106: ibid., 1914, p 125. For Tillett's appeals see D.W.R.G.W.U., Annual Report, 1912, p 13.

latest version showed even more clearly the influence of the poor law report, for it was now divided into two halves, the first of which was an almost verbatim copy of Harcourt's bill to establish a ministry of labour as recommended by the minority report. But the bill never got beyond a first reading in 1912 or 1913, while in 1914 it was withdrawn. Nor were any of the bills ever backed by the same sort of extra-parliamentary effort as the 1908 version had been. "Right to work" resolutions still appeared at labour conferences, although it is significant that the executive of the Labour Party resisted all attempts to commit it to a vigorous parliamentary policy to get the measure through.[1] Obviously, the idea still had many advocates among labour's rank and file, and when W.C.Anderson moved an unemployment resolution at Leicester during the I.L.P.'s poverty campaign of 1912, it was amended from the floor to include the demand for the "right to work."[2] A similar thing happened at Bristol in December.[3] The Social Democrats, on the other hand, seem to have lost all interest in the idea and concentrated instead on the industrial unrest. Almost symbolically, Jack Williams retired at the beginning of 1912, and when

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1 Labour Party, Annual Report, 1913, pp 92-3.

2 Labour Leader, 14 November, 1912.

3 Ibid., 5 December, 1912.

the London branches of the S.D.P. held a conference at the end of November on the subject of "Remedies for Unemployment", the "right to work" was not even on the agenda.[1] At the first annual conference of the B.S.P. the executive was instructed to draw up fresh proposals for dealing with the problem.[2] The London Right to Work Council seems to have disappeared, its last recorded action being to issue a pamphlet, entitled Lloyd George and unemployment insurance: exposure.[3]

The demand for an eight hour day was also much to the fore in the pre-war years, and in 1912-1913 a series of demonstrations on this topic was arranged by the T.U.C. In parliament Thorne introduced an Eight Hour Bill, later warning that there was not much hope of it passing "unless many of our friends change their style of voting when a general election comes round."[4] It should be emphasised, however, that this demand was no longer made with reference exclusively to unemployment, which was low. Hardie said at Newcastle in 1912 that "it was doubtful whether, even in the carrying trades, an eight hour day would do much to absorb the unemployed."[5] It was linked very

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1 Justice, 2 December, 1911.

2 B.S.P., Annual Report, 1912, p 4.

3 It was advertsied in the Trades and Labour Gazette, January 1912, p 8.

4 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1913, p 174.

5 Labour Leader, 26 December, 1912.

closely with agitation for a minimum wage, and it was hoped that together these two reforms would do much to allay the prevalent labour unrest, popularly believed to be due to poor living and working conditions. In 1910-1911, for example, food prices were 9% higher than they had been in 1900, although wages had not risen at all.[1] Thus a minimum wage amendment on the King's Speech in 1912 was moved with reference not to unemployment, but to "the existing industrial unrest arising from a deplorable insifficiency of wages . . . ."[2] It is interesting to note that this stress on the eight hour day came in a period of high employment. Henry Pelling has argued that low unemployment, high unrest and militancy were characteristics of the periods of good trade 1888-1891, 1896-1901, and 1910-1914.[3] Another interesting parallel is the emphasis placed on the eight hour day in all three of these periods. The I.L.P. was also advocating an eight hour day and a minimum wage as part of its joint crusade with the Fabian Society against all forms of poverty. But here again unemployment was played down, for, as C.D.Sharp told Mrs. Webb, "there is really nothing new to say about Unemployment, at all events until

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1 Figures cited by G.D.H.Cole, British working class politics, 1832-1914 (London, 1941), p 210.

2 Labour Leader, 23 February, 1912.

3 Pelling, Politics and society, pp 150-51. It should be noted, of course, that the demand for the eight hour day also spanned the period of depression between 1891-1895.

the Insurance Bill has been in operation for some time."[1]

Finally, it can be observed that the T.U.T.R.A. vanished in the pre-war years. Its performances in the elections of 1910 had probably increased the scepticism of its highly placed critics, and the comparative decline of the tariff reform controversy after 1910 meant that the basis of its appeal was dangerously narrow. This, at least, seems to have been the conclusion reached by the association's executive at a meeting held in August 1911. It was thus decided to convene a national conference and to invite delegates of other working class organisations, notably of the Conservative Labour Party, in order to discuss future policy.[2] Walter Osborne, of Osborne judgement fame, addressed several meetings of the national executive, and in November a joint committee was formed to draw up a constitutional framework for a new Conservative Labour Party, which was to have tariff reform and the maintenance of the Osborne decision as two of its main planks. This work was completed by April 1912 and The Times announced that "Mr. O. Locker-Lampson will be responsible for the new organisation . . . ."[3] In December 1913, certain resolutions at the annual conference of the Lancs., Cheshire,

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1 C.D.Sharp to B.Webb, 29 November, 1911. Passfield Papers. Section II, 4e, ff 179-80.

2 The Times, 10 October, 1911.

3 Ibid., 2 April, 1912.

and North West Counties Federation of the Tariff Reform League were proposed and voted upon solely by trade union members, indicating that, as a separate entity, the T.U.T.R.A. had ceased to exist.[1]

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1 The Times, 12 December, 1913.

Conclusions.

The Edwardian era saw a substantial change in the attitude of the state towards its unemployed. When the century began the worker who had no job usually had to rely on the relief dispensed by private charity, the poor law, or under the re-issued Local Government Board Circular of 1886. If he was a trade unionist belonging to a society which paid unemployment benefit, he could also turn to that. But by 1914 the state had openly admitted its responsibility towards those of its citizens who had no work by legislating for them. The break-through came in 1905 with the passage of the first piece of unemployment legislation, the Unemployed Workmen Act, and four years later the Liberal Government began to lay the foundations of a completely new approach by establishing labour exchanges. In 1911 the National Insurance Act brought approximately one third of all adult male workers into a state scheme of unemployment insurance. How far were these changes due to labour pressure and agitation?

There can be little doubt that the unemployed, organised or not, were capable of making a considerable nuisance of themselves.

The street marches organised in London by the S.D.F. produced much annoyance among shopkeepers and private citizens, as well as evoking some sympathetic reactions. In 1903 the King himself was sufficiently concerned by the processions to inquire of the Home Secretary what precautions had been taken to ensure peace and order. In the same year Keir Hardie showed evident signs of alarm that the marches would have an adverse effect on the public reaction to the inaugural conference of the National Unemployed Committee which he was helping to arrange. In 1905, when he himself was so exasperated by the government's continued procrastination over unemployment that he began to organise a series of provincial marches on London, there was great uneasiness in the press. On many occasions the sheer weight of numbers placed the police under severe strain, particularly in the very bad years, 1905 and 1908. Fear of the unemployed may help to explain the violence of some of the clashes which occurred, especially in these same years, in London and the leading provincial cities. On numerous occasions situations grew so ugly that troops were alerted.

The pressure brought to bear on government by various labour organisations on behalf of the unemployed also had a profound effect on the careers of two Presidents of the Local Government Board,

Walter Long and John Burns. Long seems to have had a genuine desire to help the unemployed, but was almost certainly pushed into drafting an Unemployment Bill far too radical for most of his colleagues by his frantic desire to avoid admitting that the state had a duty to the unemployed. Perhaps if he had had more time in which to prepare his measure, the result might have been different but, on his own admission, the pressure demanded a swift response. Despite the other circumstances which governed Long's removal to Ireland one is bound to ask whether there really was no-one else whom Balfour could have chosen as a replacement for George Wyndham?

Again, it seems that Burns' eclipse owed something to the sustained labour attack made on him after 1906. It is true that he was proud and stubborn, and in the control of reactionary officials at the Local Government who led him into the Poplar inquiry, which must have affected his standing with working men. But he cannot have been entirely devoid of ability or Campbell Bannerman, whose glittering cabinet testifies to his ability to choose men, would hardly have offered him a post in 1905, and certainly the bulk of the labour movement, with the exception of his former friends in the S.D.F., was prepared to give him a chance. In addition, he produced

a good piece of legislation in the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909. But his failure to find an adequate unemployment policy in the face of growing labour agitation brought him to the verge of resignation as early as 1906. By 1908 some of his cabinet colleagues were so alarmed by the effect of his inactivity on the government's prestige with the working classes that they tried, eventually with success, to push Burns out of his sole responsibility for the unemployed. By 1912 Alfred Mattison, the northern labour leader, could note in his diary that Burns was "a lonely man and . . . feels his loneliness. It has been noticeable during the past session that Burns has rarely been seen and certainly has not been heard in the house."[1] Burns' stock would surely not have fallen so low had his failure with unemployment not been so constantly high-lighted by labour pressure, both inside and outside parliament.

This pressure and agitation was also capable of compelling government authorities, both national and local, to take action in time of crisis. In 1904-1905, for example, much of the pressure put on the government to do something for the unemployed came from local authorities who were themselves being urged on by their own local unemployed, and it will be remembered that the S.D.P. claimed that

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1 A.Mattison Diaries, 14 January, 1912. Mattison Papers. Notebook B, p 11.

one hundred local authorities supported their demand for a special autumn session of parliament to be held.[1] Many of these local authorities were forced to provide extra relief works, and in 1903 the Conservative Government was sufficiently alarmed by the continued S.D.F. marches into London's west end to sanction an increase of police powers in the city. At the end of the following year the repeated emphasis placed on the question stimulated the Liberal leaders to look for an unemployment policy, partly because labour speakers constantly twitted them for not having one. In 1908 the Liberal Cabinet threatened to split over the Right to Work Bill, in which the Labour Party had successfully whipped up a considerable degree of popular interest, while growing pressure, both in organised demonstration and in widespread violence, provoked a major cabinet crisis in the autumn. The high level of unemployment was never in itself an adequate explanation of these various reactions. They came about because pressure was being carefully channelled inside and outside parliament, and because, on occasion, the civil forces of law and order came dangerously close to being overwhelmed.

However, on the national front, these were rather negative achievements in the sense that while the agitation produced results,

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1 See p 84.

it rarely secured the particular action which the labour movement was demanding. Thus in 1904, when virtually the whole movement had taken up the Social Democrats' demand for an autumn session of parliament, the only result was Long's London conference. Again, in 1905, labour demanded that the Unemployed Workmen Bill be passed, and although it did go through, it lacked the rate aid clause which had made it so welcome in the first place. In any case, the decisive factor here seems to have been the purely spontaneous Manchester riot, rather than the L.R.C. demonstrations. In 1906 the Labour Party asked that the government redeem its election promises by amending the 1905 Act but was fobbed off with an exchequer grant. From 1907 onwards the labour alliance and the S.D.F. concentrated on agitation to secure the "right to work", which was never conceded in the Edwardian period, despite the claims of some Labour M.P.'s that the government programme of 1909-1911 had provided it. In fact, this legislation owed virtually nothing, so far as its form was concerned, to labour ideas, although its inception was probably due to the constant labour demands for action. Nor was the pressure for an eight hour day, which was exerted from time to time, any more successful.

It was not really surprising that labour was unable to achieve its

positive aims as far as the unemployed question was concerned. For one thing, there was no permanent objective to bring any lasting ideological unity to a working class divided into unionist and non-unionist, skilled and unskilled, socialist and non-socialist. What was needed was some slogan behind which everyone would rally as they had done behind the demand for an eight hour day in the 1880's and 1890's. Neither the demand for an autumn session in 1904, nor the insistence on the inclusion of the rate aid clause in the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 fulfilled this requirement, and the general lack of unity was well illustrated in the great variety of solutions suggested in the labour election manifestoes of 1906. The Social Democrats, it is true, usually stressed the co-operative organisation of labour but this never appealed much to trade unionists, who tended to cling to the eight hour demand, pressed, ironically enough, by the only Social Democrat in parliament, Will Thorne. Eight hour day resolutions were passed with monotonous regularity at labour conferences and the Labour Party introduced bills and resolutions on the subject. But the spirit of the late nineteenth century was never re-captured and there was a great deal of suspicion on the part of ardent eight hour advocates about the good faith of the labour leaders, even though the T.U.C.

organised demonstrations in 1906 and 1907. Such suspicions were doubtless increased when the Labour Party used an eight hour resolution for purely tactical reasons in 1908, and they were expressed in two ways - the framing of eight hour resolutions dealing only with specific trades, and secondly, in the great welcome given to the new, more vigorous campaigns undertaken from 1911 onwards.

Tariff reform might possibly have provided such a unifying cry, but the disappearance of the T.U.T.R.A. in 1911 tells its own story. It is true that the association, despite the help given by the Tariff Reform League, never enjoyed any outside financial support and had to depend on the contributions of its chairman and the individual members, which could not have amounted to very much. Nor did it receive much moral encouragement from many of the wealthy supporters of tariff reform who tended to be suspicious of it, and Leo Amery said that "it never secured from Conservative headquarters the attention or support which it deserved."[1] But the chief reason for the demise of the association was undoubtedly that tariff reform never made any substantial headway with the working classes, which remained obdurately free trade or socialist. Individual branches of the T.U.T.R.A. seem to have flourished briefly and then collapsed.

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1 Amery, My political life, I, p 298.

Although 106 different branches are mentioned in the Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform only 31 appear more than once, and the general impression, certainly after the years of initial progress, is one of smallness. The Loughborough Branch, for example, had only 40 members at the beginning of 1909.[1]

The only cry which ever served to introduce this element of cohesion and unity into labour agitation for the unemployed was the "right to work", and the "right to work" movement was born, significantly, of suggestions made by both Social Democrats and I.L.P. members at the end of 1905. In the election of 1906 only a few Labour candidates referred to it, but by 1910 it had obviously become a deep rooted labour demand. The Labour Party's Right to Work Bill was favourably received by most sections of the labour movement, including the Social Democrats, and resolutions in its favour were regularly passed at all types of working class conferences. Precisely because it appealed to so many shades of opinion it produced considerable co-operation, particularly between the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. at local branch level, in the Right to Work committees.[2] Altogether 49 of these committees were mentioned in the press between 1905 and 1911, covering all the main provincial cities and most of

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1 Daily Express, 23 February, 1909.

2 This confirms the conclusions of Tsuzuki, Hyndman and British socialism, p 274.

the poorer London boroughs.[1] Some of the reports of these committees survive and it is clear that in the various localities they were very active.[2] But by 1909 the movement was beginning to break up for a number of reasons. The inception of the National Right to Work Council had been regarded with some suspicion by trade union leaders, and, although there was co-operation between unionists and socialists in drawing up the Labour Party's Right to Work Bill, the increasing influence of the Social Democrats on the national executive after October 1908 seems to have produced a reaction against the movement on the part of some provincial trade unionists as well as T.U.C. leaders. At about the same time the "right to work" was challenged, firstly by the alternative proposals of the minority report of the poor law commission, which attracted the support of a substantial section of the I.L.P., and secondly, by the announcement of a government legislative programme which satisfied many trade unionists who, like David Shackleton, had clearly regarded the Right to Work Bill as a sort of political lever. Once the lever had successfully compelled the government to act, these men devoted most of their energies to amending and improving the government's own ideas.

The appearance of this programme also deprived the Labour Party

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1 See Table 5.

2 The best collection is in the T.U.C. library.

of the support of the radical wing of the Liberal Party without which there was not much hope of securing the passage of the Right to Work Bill anyway. After 1910 it was highly unlikely that any Liberal would have risked bringing down the government by voting with the Labour Party on an unemployment issue. Indeed, the Labour Party was itself loath to raise the matter for fear of defeating the government. After 1910 unemployment declined and the Labour Party consequently never put the same effort into pressing the Right to Work Bill as it had in 1907-1908. The measure survived an intense examination of its basic underlying assumptions by members of the I.L.P. at the beginning of 1911, but the concept had no place in the joint I.L.P.-Fabian Society crusade against poverty. When it re-appeared in parliament in 1913 and 1914 the bill bore even more signs of the influence of the poor law minority report.

A second problem which hampered labour's efforts to realise its positive aims for the unemployed concerned the ability to organise and sustain pressure over a long period. This affected particularly the S.D.F. which never had any way of making its voice heard in parliament and thus had to depend on the threat of physical violence by bringing the unemployed out on to the streets. This presented

difficulties of administration. The Social Democrats only enjoyed real strength in London, Lancashire, and a few isolated towns, such as Northampton. This general weakness was well illustrated when the executive could only appeal for, rather than actually organise, provincial unemployed demonstrations in 1905 and 1906, both times with a notable lack of success. This inability to organise outside the capital was not only a matter of numbers. It sprang also from the fact that administrative power was heavily concentrated in London. After 1901 half of the 24 places on the national executive were reserved for London representatives.[1] Even in London the federation apparently preferred to work through what can only be termed "front organisations", such as the London Trades Council, the Central Workers Committee, and later, the Right to Work Council. Whether this reduced the administrative burden is doubtful, but it did provide the Social Democrats with organisations which, on the surface at least, were perhaps more attractive to trade unionists who tended to be suspicious of socialism.

Another problem which limited the Social Democrats' activities was the shortage of money for unemployment work, and this again prevented them from undertaking any sustained national campaign such

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1 W.Kendall, The revolutionary movement in Britain, 1900-1921 (London, 1969) p 13.

as that organised by the Labour Party in 1907-1908. The C.W.C. collapsed for want of funds, and had it not been for the selfless devotion of Williams and Greenwood, both of whom worked on occasion for nothing, the Social Democrats would surely have achieved less than they did. The party was only able to continue its agitation in 1908 due to the beneficence of Lady Warwick, and it seems ironic that so much of the agitation of 1908-1909, which so alarmed Liberals and Conservatives alike, was financed by a member of the society which it was designed to disrupt.

A further difficulty, which again affected particularly the S.D.F., was the apathy of the unemployed themselves, although this can be over-exaggerated as the activities of the land grabbers in 1906 and of the constant streams of hunger marchers in 1908-1909 indicate. But there can be little doubt that, certainly in London, the S.D.F. often found it hard to urge the unemployed to act. It became progressively easier as unemployment rose and affected trade unionists and others who were perhaps not prepared to suffer in silence. Perhaps this apathy was due to the curious and permanent optimism which Masterman noted, or it may have been the result of a certain mental dullness produced by months or even years of idleness.[1]

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[1] See p 26.

W.S.Sanders hinted at this when he wrote that men who joined the socialist movement were those who "still retained sufficient spirit to rebel; this lifted them out of the common ruck of their class, and gave them individuality."[1] Perhaps, too, there was an unwillingness to be exploited for political ends by an organisation with whose politics few workers agreed. Certainly many of the unemployed seem to have joined the marches and demonstrations in London simply because they provided an opportunity of money or food, although this presented the organisers with the additional task of keeping out the loafers and wastrels.

The I.L.P. was not free from these difficulties either. Its administrative problem, however, was the exact opposite of the S.D.F.'s in that it had strong provincial membership, particularly in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Scotland, but "in the South the party was and remained, extremely feeble . . . ."[2] The essentially regional structure of the I.L.P.'s National Administrative Council probably meant that it was easier to organise agitation on a national basis, although the various regions enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy. The party's weakness in London was to some extent offset by involvement in the L.R.C., but it may explain why attempts were made

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1 W.S.Sanders, Early socialist days (London, 1927), p 18.

2 R.E.Dowse, Left in the centre (London, 1966), p 5.

in 1905 and also in 1908 to harness the London strength of the S.D.F. in a concentrated push to get action for the unemployed.

The connection with the L.R.C. provided the I.L.P. with a link with the trade unions, which meant that financially things were easier when it came to organising demonstrations for the unemployed in times of economic distress. In spite of this it seems unlikely that the I.L.P. would have been able to finance the demonstrations of 1905 had it not been for the timely intervention of Joseph Fels. On the other hand, the I.L.P. inspired National Right to Work Council had no difficulty in raising the large sum necessary for the conference on unemployment and destitution held at the end of 1908. That the labour alliance did enjoy certain general administrative and financial advantages over the S.D.F. is suggested very strongly by the fact that it was the Social Democrats who approached the I.L.P. in 1905 with the suggestion of joint action, and who suggested a joint conference on unemployment to the T.U.C. in 1907.

To a considerable extent the success of any unemployment agitation depended also on securing publicity, for, as Masterman once wrote "it is scarcely too much to assert that the unemployed problem, as it appears to the decent citizen, depends almost entirely on the vigour

with which the rival newspapers set themselves to reveal the condition of poverty in the cities."[1] The best example of the importance of press coverage came in 1905 when the remarkable L.R.C. effort in the summer was totally ignored by the national press. In some ways the Social Democrats enjoyed an advantage in this respect in that they were prepared to sanction more violent methods of agitation which naturally attracted more attention in the press. The leaders of the labour alliance, on the other hand, also appreciated the need for a favourable public opinion and were often alarmed by what they considered to be the excesses of the S.D.F. in 1905 and 1908. Hardie, for example, laid great stress when planning his marches in 1905, on the need to enlist a good class of worker.

This question of publicity was partially resolved for the labour alliance by the appearance of a strong body of labour representatives in parliament in 1906, and the Labour Party certainly succeeded in making the phrase "the right to work" a very well publicised one.

> 'Whatever view one may take of the aims of the Labour Party, one cannot deny that they have succeeded in a way never before realised in focussing the attention of Parliament and the nation upon the . . . growing seriousness of the problem of unemployment. . . . '[2]

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1 C.F.G.Masterman, "The unemployed", Contemporary Review, LXXXIX (January 1906), p 106.

2 G.W.Bailey, "The right to work", Westminster Review, CLXX (December 1908), p 618.

But until 1910 the Labour Party was hampered by its numerical insignificance in parliament and its inability to push through its legislative programme, even with radical support. The Eight Hours Bills never made any progress, and once the Right to Work Bill was denied a second reading the party had to fall back on the policy of educating public opinion, which was neither very exciting nor very rapid. Also, of course, it could not ignore the general topics of public interest and concentrate solely on the unemployment issue, a fact which had provoked criticism even before labour entered parliament, when the I.L.P. leaders were attacked in 1904 for concentrating on tariff reform, allegedly at the expense of the unemployed.

All these various difficulties, which made it impossible for labour to realise its unemployment programme, produced within certain sections of the movement a growing frustration, which expressed itself in different ways. In the S.D.F. it resulted in a call for sheer physical violence in 1903, perhaps from people remembering the effect of the London riots of 1886 and 1887. In 1908 such militants welcomed the vigorous action of the Glasgow unemployed and the battle in Trafalgar Square over Stewart Grey. Harry Quelch was moved to utter

harsh threats against a ruling class which ignored the widespread evidence of poverty. As early as 1903 the frustration produced the demand for socialist purity from some I.L.P. members, and the N.U.C. collapsed partly because of the antagonism which existed in some circles to the idea of co-operation with radicals and Liberals. In the same year H.Wishart gained considerable support for his request for a distinctive socialist policy on unemployment to be adopted by the I.L.P. In parliament the frustration produced by the Labour Party's failure to achieve any results within the constitutional framework ultimately led to Grayson's outburst in 1908, which had the support of several I.L.P. branches, and also of Thorne and Jowett, although the latter did not agree with its timing.

Hardie was also disgruntled by October 1908 at the failure to secure anything more than endless government promises and the complacency which these produced in the trade union section of the Labour Party. He thus reverted to the tactics of 1905, when he had organised extra-parliamentary demonstrations to support his own stand in the house of commons, by entering into a short lived alliance with the S.D.P. The meeting of the National Right to Work Council at the end of July 1908 was in itself an expression of dissatisfaction by

several of the I.L.P.'s M.P.'s, but the new alliance clearly alarmed the trade union leaders who always tended to be suspicious of the socialists. For example, it will be remembered that in 1905 MacDonald expected trouble over the fact that the I.L.P. was finding most of the money for the summer demonstrations, and also that after the passage of the Unemployed Workmen Bill the trade union M.P.'s had shown little interest in the foundation of the National Right to Work Council.[1] Again, the C.W.C. had collapsed because it did not enjoy the financial support of the unions, and in 1907 the T.U.C. refused to co-operate with the London Trades Council on behalf of the unemployed. A year later the same body refused to participate in a joint conference with the Right to Work Council. Trade unionists were generally more moderate in their demands than the socialists, and, especially in the case of skilled workers, tended to seek for solutions within the union framework, such as government subsidies for unemployed funds, or the limitation of overtime work. There was little sympathy for the chronically unemployed and unskilled catered for by the Social Democrats, and in some cases there was distinct disdain for the street marches. Thus it was hardly surprising that Hardie's co-operation with the S.D.P. in 1908 did not last long. In the last

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1 See p 123 and p 142.

analysis his own chief concern was always the preservation of the labour alliance, even though he frequently expressed annoyance at the restrictive effect it had, being "sore at seeing the fruit of our years of toil being garnered by men who were never of us, and who even now would trick us out . . . ."[1]

In some ways this joint action with the S.D.P. represented the last united effort made by the small group of Labour M.P.'s who had constantly pressed for government action on behalf of the unemployed ever since the election of 1906. There was a larger group consisting of Hardie, Barnes, Seddon, Thorne, O'Grady, Clynes, Roberts, Summerbell, Snowden, Crooks, Hudson, Duncan, Curran, Wardle, T.F.Richards, Parker, Jowett, Henderson, and MacDonald, which pressed the government consistently in parliament. These were the men who stressed the subject in 1907, who backed the question campaign against Burns in 1908, and who supported Hardie when he introduced his own Unemployment Bill at the end of the same year. By and large, these men were socialists, with a few exceptions, and this study has illustrated the division between the trade unionists and the socialists in the Labour Party.[2] But within this group was a smaller sub-group - Hardie, Barnes, Jowett, Seddon, Thorne, O'Grady, Roberts, Summerbell, Curran,

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1 Quoted in Pelling, Short history of the Labour Party, p 21.

2 This is discussed in ibid., pp 18-34.

Richards, and later, Grayson - who were prepared to sanction more extreme methods of pressurising the government. They all appeared at various times between 1906 and 1908 in street demonstrations organised by the Social Democrats or the Right to Work Council and three of them, Hardie, Barnes, and Curran, were present at the meeting which set up the Joint London Right to Work Committee. Thorne and Jowett were apparently prepared to support Grayson in the use of extremist methods in the house of commons itself, while Thorne found himself in trouble for encouraging the unemployed to raid food shops. The rest of the larger group, however, were only willing to agitate within the limits imposed by constitutional and legal proceedures. Clynes and Crooks, for example, both stated specifically that they were against the use of violence. Thus the alliance with the S.D.P. was too much, not only for the union leaders, but also for many of the Labour Party's socialists. MacDonald and Snowden made it clear in very definite terms that they were strongly opposed to co-operation with Social Democrats.

Although the alliance with the S.D.P. seemed thus to highlight the difference between these two groups of Labour's socialist M.P.'s, they were largely obscured again by the complex events of the next

two years. The rising tide of criticism against the Labour Party, greatly encouraged by the Social Democrats, produced a reaction against co-operation even among those who had supported it, particularly when the Joint Right to Work Council joined in the attacks, and both Parker and O'Grady found themselves defending the party's unemployment policy. Snowden and MacDonald were diverted by the struggle for the budget, and they welcomed the government's own unemployment legislation, as did Roberts, Henderson, and Crooks. Thorne, O'Grady, and Barnes all thought that the political situation was sufficiently complicated without the Labour Party threatening to bring down the government over the unemployed question, particularly in view of their own vulnerable position created by the Osborne judgement. Four of the "militant group" - Curran, Summerbell, Seddon, and Richards - were defeated in the elections of 1910, and thus in that year only Hardie and Jowett were left to advocate a vigorous unemployment policy, irrespective of political considerations. But they were hampered by the fact that none of the others shared their sense of priorities and in any case the Labour Party's own major legislative proposal, the Right to Work Bill, had been outmoded by the advent of labour exchanges, development

commissioners, and the projected Insurance Bill. Not surprisingly, the task of revision proceeded somewhat slowly during 1910.

By 1911 the political situation had cleared to some extent with the passage of the Lloyd George budget in 1910 and, in the summer of 1911, the Parliament Bill. The immediate financial threat posed by the Osborne decision was offset by the government's decision to introduce the payment of M.P.'s, and the internal complexities within the labour movement had been considerably simplified by the breaking away of the recalcitrant I.L.P. branches during the summer to join with the S.D.P. in the new British Socialist Party. When these distractions of the past two years had thus died down, what was left of the "militant" group re-emerged to oppose the contributory principle of the Insurance Bill - Thorne, O'Grady, Hardie, and Jowett. They were joined by Lansbury, newly elected in December 1910, and by Snowden who, although he had reacted favourably to the government's suggestions for an unemployment insurance scheme, was not willing to accept its contributory basis, at least without a fight. This was therefore a group re-emerging, as far as unemployment policy was concerned, rather than a new cave of socialist rebels making a fresh appearance as both Pelling and Dowse have suggested.[1]

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[1] Pelling, Short history, p 22: Dowse, Left in the centre, p 17.

Thus labour achieved very little in a positive sense for the unemployed in the Edwardian period. Indeed, continued emphasis on the unemployment question may have served to weaken the labour movement, exposing as it did all sorts of differences of opinion and policy and promoting internecine strife. In addition, it provided some pointers to future developments. Notice first MacDonald's pragmatism, which provoked criticism from some of his Labour Party colleagues as early as 1906. In some ways it culminated in 1909-1911, when a combination of circumstances, notably the difficult parliamentary position produced by the election of January 1910, and the threat posed by the Osborne judgement, made it necessary for MacDonald to co-operate closely with the Liberal Government. It is possible that his attitude was not entirely disinterested, but in fairness to him it must be stressed that many trade unionists genuinely supported the budget of 1909 and the contributory basis of the Insurance Bill. MacDonald was the leader of an uneasy alliance and strove to give expression to the moderate political objectives of the majority, always distrustful of the Social Democrats and their supporters within the labour alliance.

Secondly, one can note the preoccupation of the S.D.F. with the

unemployed, a pointer to the 1930's when the Communist Party worked through agitators such as Wal Hannington to stir up the unemployed workers. The Social Democrats were the first to take up agitation after the Boer War in 1902, and Jack Williams kept up continuous meetings at Tower Hill throughout the period. In part, the motives of the Social Democrats were political as they wished to win the support of the workers for their movement. This explains why they were so eager to exploit any likely source of popular discontent, such as that provided by the land grabbers in 1906. Their efforts, however, were doomed to failure, partly for the reasons noted above, partly for their own narrow sectarianism and hostility to trade unionism.[1]

It is interesting to note finally, the similarity of tactics between the Edwardian Social Democrats and the later communists. The long distance march, epitomised in 1936 by the famous Jarrow crusade, was originally the idea of James Gribble, a Social Democrat who led the striking boot makers to London in 1905, and his example was followed by several other Social Democrats, notable the Liverpudlian, Gibbon, and Stewart Grey, as well as by Keir Hardie. The idea of marching workers into London's west end came from J.Hunter Watts and

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1 On this point generally see Kendall, The revolutionary movement, pp 23-62.

was later adopted by communist agitators in the 1930's.[1] Just as in this later period the communists operated through "front organisations" such as the National Unemployed Workers Committee, so in the years before the first world war their predecessors worked through the medium of such organisations as the London Trades Council, the Central Workers Committee, and later managed to take over the "right to work" movement.

Although there were these parallels between the unemployed problems of Edwardian Britain and those of a later generation there can be little doubt that the magnitude of unemployment in the inter-war years dwarfed that of the Edwardian period. But the sufferings of the unemployed between 1900 and 1914 were nonetheless real, though perhaps less well publicised than those of their post war successors, and were an ugly scar in society. Even in an age when men were becoming more aware of social problems many still seemed to regard the unemployed as statistical units demonstrating in the streets, completing distress committee forms, and later queuing at labour exchanges and receiving unemployment insurance money. It was perhaps the greatest contribution of the labour movement that it produced men such as Hardie, Grayson, George Barnes, Will Thorne, and Frank Smith,

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1 See R.Graves & A.Hodge, The long weekend (London, 1940), pp 403-06.

who injected into otherwise somewhat academic discussions a touch of passion and anger based on their own real knowledge of the humiliation and suffering which underlay the cold statistics of unemployment. T.S.Eliot wrote of his own contemporaries, but his words could well apply to the men whose misery Hardie and his friends toiled to relieve.

'No man has hired us.
With pocketed hands
And lowered faces
We stand about in open places
And shiver in unlit rooms.
Only the wind moves
Over empty fields, untilled
Where the plough rests, at an angle
To the furrow. In this land
There shall be one cigarette to two men,
To two women one half pint of bitter
Ale. In this land
No man has hired us.
Our life is unwelcome, our death
Unmentioned in "The Times".' [1]

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1 T.S.Eliot, Choruses from the Rock.

TABLE 1. BOARD OF TRADE UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS 1900-1911.

All trades: percentage of unemployed trade unionists

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1900	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.5	3.0	2.8	2.7	3.5
1901	4.0	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.9	3.7	3.7	3.8	4.6
1902	4.4	4.3	3.7	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.0	4.8	5.5
1903	5.1	4.8	4.3	4.1	4.0	4.5	4.9	5.5	5.8	5.8	6.0	6.7
1904	6.6	6.1	6.0	6.0	6.3	5.9	6.1	6.4	6.8	6.8	7.0	7.6
1905	6.8	6.2	5.6	5.6	5.1	5.2	5.2	5.4	5.3	5.0	4.7	4.9
1906	4.7	4.4	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.8	4.4	4.5	4.9
1907	4.2	3.9	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.7	4.0	4.6	4.7	5.0	6.1
1908	5.8	6.0	6.4	7.1	7.4	7.9	7.9	8.5	9.3	9.5	8.7	9.1
1909	8.7	8.4	8.2	8.2	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.4	7.1	6.5	6.6
1910	6.8	5.7	5.2	4.4	4.2	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.6	5.0
1911	3.9	3.3	3.0	2.8	2.5	3.0	2.9	3.3	2.9	2.8	2.6	3.1

Building Trades

1900	2.7	3.1	2.6	2.2	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.8	2.1	2.5	3.3	4.2
1901	4.7	5.2	4.7	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.9	3.1	3.5	5.2
1902	5.0	5.9	4.5	3.5	3.0	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.8	4.4	4.6	5.9
1903	6.4	5.5	4.1	3.4	3.3	4.2	3.8	3.6	4.4	5.7	6.3	7.7
1904	7.9	7.3	7.0	6.7	6.4	6.7	6.4	6.4	7.3	8.4	10.1	11.2
1905	11.2	10.8	8.5	7.9	7.2	7.2	7.0	6.7	7.3	8.6	8.7	9.6
1906	10.3	9.8	8.1	6.0	5.7	5.9	6.0	5.5	6.2	7.6	6.9	8.4
1907	9.0	8.6	6.8	5.5	5.5	6.1	6.1	5.6	6.9	8.1	9.0	10.9
1908	11.6	11.3	10.7	9.9	9.9	9.7	11.0	10.3	11.9	13.6	13.1	14.9
1909	15.1	13.9	13.3	11.4	9.6	10.9	10.4	10.1	10.9	11.3	10.4	12.9
1910	13.7	10.6	8.9	7.4	7.4	6.8	6.4	5.7	7.6	9.0	9.5	10.6
1911	9.9	8.3	6.5	5.1	3.5	4.2	3.9	4.0	2.9	3.1	3.4	4.9

Shipbuilding Trades

1900	2.0	2.9	2.5	2.1	1.6	2.1	1.8	2.1	2.4	2.6	3.6	3.7
1901	3.9	3.2	2.4	4.5	2.3	3.2	3.0	3.7	3.9	4.2	4.7	5.8
1902	4.7	5.2	4.2	5.2	6.4	7.7	6.6	7.4	10.9	12.6	13.0	14.0
1903	12.9	10.4	9.8	9.1	8.7	9.1	10.5	11.2	13.4	15.0	17.1	16.7
1904	14.4	12.6	11.8	12.7	13.1	12.9	12.9	12.9	15.3	16.1	16.6	16.4
1905	12.4	11.5	11.2	12.2	11.1	11.5	11.7	13.2	13.7	11.9	11.8	10.2
1906	7.9	6.9	5.6	5.1	6.0	6.4	5.7	5.6	6.5	10.4	13.6	11.3
1907	8.8	7.5	7.1	6.6	6.7	6.4	7.2	9.3	11.7	11.6	12.8	14.2
1908	15.1	20.0	21.4	23.1	26.0	22.9	22.2	25.1	26.6	26.2	25.2	24.7
1909	23.0	22.5	22.2	23.3	23.4	23.6	23.9	23.3	22.4	21.5	19.3	16.9
1910	16.1	14.6	13.2	10.7	9.8	7.6	8.5	9.1	15.0	20.1	21.9	12.2
1911	6.4	4.6	4.1	3.5	2.7	3.8	4.5	4.1	4.8	4.5	4.0	4.0

TABLE 1 CONTINUED.

Furnishing Trades

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1900	5.9	6.9	2.4	1.3	1.0	1.6	2.6	3.0	4.0	3.7	4.2	6.8
1901	7.3	6.4	3.6	2.5	2.2	2.7	3.1	3.5	3.2	3.6	4.2	5.9
1902	7.6	5.6	3.2	1.7	1.9	2.7	4.2	3.9	4.0	4.1	4.2	5.4
1903	8.1	6.3	3.6	1.6	1.7	2.2	4.2	4.3	5.0	5.8	6.9	9.8
1904	11.0	10.1	6.8	6.4	6.9	8.0	7.7	8.4	8.3	8.6	10.0	11.8
1905	13.5	11.1	5.4	4.4	3.8	5.9	7.4	6.5	6.5	6.9	7.0	9.9
1906	10.9	9.4	4.5	3.4	4.0	5.2	6.3	5.4	5.5	5.7	5.8	7.8
1907	8.5	6.9	3.4	2.7	3.3	4.1	5.4	5.6	5.9	6.7	7.9	11.4
1908	14.5	11.3	8.9	7.7	7.7	9.1	12.3	10.3	11.0	12.1	12.9	13.1
1909	13.9	11.6	8.5	7.9	6.6	9.4	10.3	10.9	11.2	11.3	10.5	13.0
1910	15.1	11.5	7.3	4.3	4.9	5.5	6.4	5.9	5.7	6.8	8.0	9.2
1911	9.2	5.7	2.5	2.2	2.3	4.4	4.7	4.9	4.0	3.3	4.0	6.0

Engineering Trades

1900	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.2	4.0
1901	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.7	3.9	4.5	5.8
1902	5.3	5.1	5.2	5.0	4.9	5.0	4.4	4.5	4.9	5.3	5.3	6.6
1903	5.6	5.1	4.6	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.9	4.2	4.8	5.2	6.0	7.7
1904	6.7	6.5	6.4	6.2	6.6	6.7	6.7	6.8	7.4	7.9	7.8	8.3
1905	6.9	6.4	6.1	5.9	5.1	5.0	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.0	3.6	3.7
1906	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.5	4.1
1907	3.2	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.0	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.1	4.5	4.7	6.3
1908	5.8	6.0	7.2	8.7	9.6	10.5	11.3	12.2	12.4	12.8	13.0	14.0
1909	13.1	12.8	12.6	12.4	12.5	12.1	12.1	11.3	10.8	10.3	9.5	9.8
1910	8.5	7.3	7.1	6.1	5.4	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.8	5.0	5.8	5.8
1911	3.9	3.3	3.3	3.2	2.8	3.1	3.3	3.8	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.2

Printing Trades

1900	4.4	4.4	3.4	4.0	4.4	4.4	3.7	5.7	4.3	4.8	3.0	4.7
1901	4.4	3.9	3.8	4.2	5.3	4.9	3.8	6.8	5.9	5.0	2.7	5.0
1902	5.8	4.7	3.4	4.1	4.8	4.5	4.4	6.3	6.5	5.3	2.9	3.7
1903	4.6	4.4	4.1	4.9	5.0	4.3	4.1	5.9	5.1	4.3	2.9	3.6
1904	4.3	4.0	3.1	4.1	5.4	4.9	4.0	6.1	6.2	4.7	3.4	4.8
1905	5.3	4.7	4.4	5.5	5.0	5.1	4.5	6.1	5.4	5.2	3.2	4.8
1906	5.1	4.7	3.9	5.2	4.7	4.1	3.5	5.5	5.2	4.9	3.3	4.7
1907	4.3	3.6	3.4	3.8	4.0	4.1	3.6	5.8	5.9	4.9	3.3	4.9
1908	5.0	4.8	4.0	5.6	5.2	4.8	4.6	7.1	7.2	5.9	4.2	5.7
1909	6.3	5.8	4.6	5.7	5.5	5.3	5.0	7.1	6.6	5.6	3.5	4.2
1910	6.3	5.4	5.0	4.5	5.1	4.8	4.1	5.7	5.7	4.6	2.2	5.3
1911	5.4	4.3	4.5	4.8	5.0	5.6	4.4	6.2	5.9	5.2	4.2	6.3

Figures taken from Board of Trade, Sixteenth Abstract of Labour Statistics (Cd.7131). British Parliamentary Papers, 1914, LXXX, pp 330-32.

TABLE 2. UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR ELECTION MANIFESTOS 1906.

Candidates	1905 Act must be amended – but not defined	Government to finance 1905 Act	L.G.B. rules to be removed	National works or schemes	Local council works	Ministry of Labour/labour department to be set up	Land reforms	Socialism	Co-operative organisation of the unemployed	Change in the hours of labour	Right to Work	Useful work to be found but not specified	The problem must be tackled	Miscellaneous suggestions	No specific mention
56 L.R.C. & S.W.R.C. Eight addresses are missing:- Brown, Gilmour, Holmes, Russell Williams, Robertson, Summerbell, Sullivan, Tillett	Conley, Henderson, Hill, Stanton Coit	Burgess, Crooks, Gill, J.Macpherson, Proctor*, T.F.Richards, Seddon, Thorne, Turner	Taylor, Thorne, Turner	Barnes*, Duncan, Fox*, Glover*, O'Grady*, Proctor, T.F.Richards*, Rose*, Sanders, Shackleton*, Smillie*, Stranks, Stuart*, Walsh, W.T.Wilson	Barnes, W.T.Wilson	Bowerman, Hill, Macpherson	Duncan, MacDonald, Mitchell	Fox, Glasier, O'Grady, Roberts		Burgess, Curran, Duncan*, Hudson, Parker, Sexton, Smillie, Stranks, Stuart, Walker, Winstone	Hill*, Hudson, Jowett, Roberts, Rose, Smillie, Wilkie	Clynes*, Jenkins, Kelley*, Macpherson, Parker, Winstone	Wardle*	Hodge	Hardie, Snowden
11 Lib-Labs	Richardson			Fenwick, Vivian		Steadman	Maddison			Bell, Burns, Richardson	Ward		Nicholls, Rowlands	Maddison	Bury, Havelock-Wilson
11 Miners apart from L.R.C. & Lib-Labs. Three did not issue manifestos:- Abraham, T.Richards, J.Wilson	Edwards	Wadsworth, Williams		Brace										W.Johnson	Hall, Haslam, J.Johnson
8 S.D.F.		Jones	Jones					Hartley, Kennedy	Gribble, Hyndman, Irving, Quelch, Williams	Hyndman, Jones					
5 other labour and socialist		Lansbury*		Belt, Lansbury, Newlove*	Belt*					Hobson*					Smith

This analysis is based on the collection of election addresses in the National Liberal Club. The classification of candidates is that adopted by G.D.H.Cole in his British Working Class Politics, 1832-1914.

An asterisk indicates that the solution thus marked was given first or second place.

TABLE 3. UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR ELECTION MANIFESTOS JANUARY 1910.

Candidates	Right to Work	Right to Work	Change in the hours of labour	Socialism	Ministry of Labour/labour department to be set up	Co-operative organisation of the unemployed	Poor Law Commission Minority Report	Development Bill	The budget of 1909	Labour exchanges and unemployment insurance	The problem must be tackled	No specific mention
81 Labour Party. One address is missing:- Pickles. One did not issue a manifesto:- J.Wilson.	Adamson Anderson Bowerman Brown Brownlie Cameron Crooks Curran Fox Glover Greenhall Hall Henderson Hodge* House* Hudson Hughes J.Johnson* Jowett MacDonald MacLachlan O'Grady Parker Roberts	Rose* Russell Williams Sexton* Shackleton Sharp* Shepperd Small Smillie Smith Stanton Coit Stephenson Stuart* Summerbell Taylor Thomas Thorne Walker* Walsh Wardle Whitehead J.Williams Wilkie W.T.Wilson	Adamson Barnes Brown Curran Henderson Hudson Jowett MacLachlan O'Connor-Kessack Pointer Shepperd	Barnes O'Connor-Kessack O'Grady Pointer Rose	Hughes Twist	Purcell	Anderson Barnes Curran Henderson Lansbury O'Connor-Kessack Parker Sanders Snell Stephenson Stuart	Barne Jenki J.Jo Point Stan Taylo	son r n Coit	J.Johnson Seddon T.F.Richards	Bowerman Brown Clynes Duncan Edwards Fox Gageby Harvey Hughes Jenkins W.Johnson Pointer Snowden Stanton Coit J.Williams P.Williams	Cameron Gill Hardie Macpherson T.Richards Stanley	Abraham Brace Hancock Haslam Sutton Wadsworth
11 Lib-Labs	Steadman		Burns					Stea n		Burns Maddison Richardson Rowlands Steadman		Bailey Burt Fenwick Nicholls Vivian Ward
11 Socialists Four addresses are missing:- Bannington Gee Hyndman Lapworth	Burrows Grayson Gribble Hartley Kennedy Quelch		Burrows Gribble Quelch	Burrows Gribble Quelch		Irving						

An asterisk indicates t unemployment was given first place i he manifesto.

This analysis is based on the collection of election addresses in the National Liberal Club. The classification of candidates is that adopted by Cole, British Working Class Politics.

TABLE 4. UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR ELECTION MANIFESTOS DECEMBER 1910.

Candidates	Right to Work	Change in the hours of labour	Socialism	Co-operative organisation of the unemployed	Poor Law Commission Minority Report	Government's own legislative programme	The problem must be tackled	No specific mention
57 Labour Party. Two did not issue manifestos:- J.Taylor J.Wilson	Bowerman Cameron Hardie Hartshorn Hudson Jowett McKerrell O'Connor-Kessack O'Grady T.Richards T.F.Richards Smillie A.Smith F.Smith Stanton Thomas Twist Wardle J.Williams W.T.Wilson	Pointer Thorne	Barnes Pointer Thorne		Badlay Gill Lansbury McKerrell Pointer Snell J.Williams	Bowerman Duncan Gill MacDonald Pointer Seddon Snowden Thomas J.Williams W.T.Wilson	Carr Clynes Goldstone Hartley House Parker Wilkie	Abraham Brace Crooks Edwards Glover Hall Hancock Harvey Haslam Henderson Hodge W.Johnson Roberts Stanley Sutton Wadsworth
10 Lib-Labs. One did not issue a manifesto:- Fenwick	Burns				Burns Maddison Rowlands		Bailey Burt Richardson Stevens Vivian Ward	
4 Socialists	Grayson			Hyndman Irving				Shaw

This analysis is based on the collection of election addresses in the National Liberal Club. The classification of candidates is that adopted by Cole, British Working Class Politics.

TABLE 5. RIGHT TO WORK COMMITTEES AND THEIR SOURCE OF REFERENCE.

London Boroughs	
Battersea	The Times, 6 November, 1908.
Bermondsey	Ibid., 5 November, 1908.
*Canning Town	Trades and Labour Gazette, September 1908, p 9.
Finsbury	Justice, 7 November, 1908.
Hackney	Ibid., 28 November, 1908.
*Hammersmith	Ibid.
Islington	Labour Leader, 30 October, 1908.
Lambeth	Justice, 27 February, 1909.
St Pancras	The Times, 23 December, 1908.
*Southwark	Justice, 19 December, 1908.
Willesden	Ibid., 21 November, 1908.
Woolwich	Woolwich L.R.A., Minutes, 24 November, 1908.
Provincial Committees	
*Aberdeen	Trades and Labour Gazette, October 1908, p 10.
Accrington	Justice, 2 December, 1905.
Arbroath	Ibid.
Barking	Ibid.
Birmingham	Ibid.
*Bradford	Trades and Labour Gazette, October 1908, p 10.
Bristol	Bristol Right to Work Committee, Annual Reports.
Bury	Justice, 2 December, 1905.
Coventry	Ibid., 24 October, 1908.
Croydon	The Times, 26 October, 1908.
Doncaster	Trades and Labour Gazette, November 1908, p 12.
East Ham	Justice, 2 December, 1905.
Edinburgh	Trades and Labour Gazette, March 1908, p 12.
Erith	Justice, 28 November, 1908.
Govan	Ibid., 2 December, 1905.
*Halifax	Trades and Labour Gazette, November 1908, p 12.
Leeds	Justice, 2 December, 1905.
Lincoln	Ibid., 27 February, 1909.
Liverpool	The Times, 26 October, 1908.
Longton	Justice, 2 December, 1905.
Manchester	Ibid.
Newark	Ibid.
Newcastle	Ibid.
Newport	Labour Leader, 6 November, 1908.
Nottingham	Justice, 2 December, 1905.
Oxford	Ibid.
Partick	Ibid.

An asterisk indicates that the committee came into being in response to Smith's appeal in 1908.

TABLE 5 CONTINUED.

*Reading	Justice, 24 October, 1908.
St Mary Cray	Ibid., 19 December, 1908.
Southampton	Ibid., 17 October, 1908.
Stoke	Ibid., 2 December, 1905.
Swansea	Ibid.
Watford	Ibid.
West Ham	Ibid.
Wigan	Ibid.
Wolverhampton	Trades and Labour Gazette, October 1908, p 10.
York	Justice, 2 December, 1905.

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A.S.O.C.S.	Annual Report.
	Quarterly Report.
A.S.R.S.	Annual Report.
A.S.S.	Annual Report.
	Quarterly Report.
A.T.S.	Annual Report.
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D.W.R. & G.W.U.	Annual Report.
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F.S.I.	Annual Report.
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G.F.T.U.	Proceedings and Reports.
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M.U.O.B.	Annual Report.
	Monthly Report.
N.A.F.T.A.	Annual Report.
M.F.G.B.	Annual Report.
N.A.U.L.	Annual Report.
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N.S.B.W.	Annual Report.
N.U.B.S.O.	Annual Report.
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