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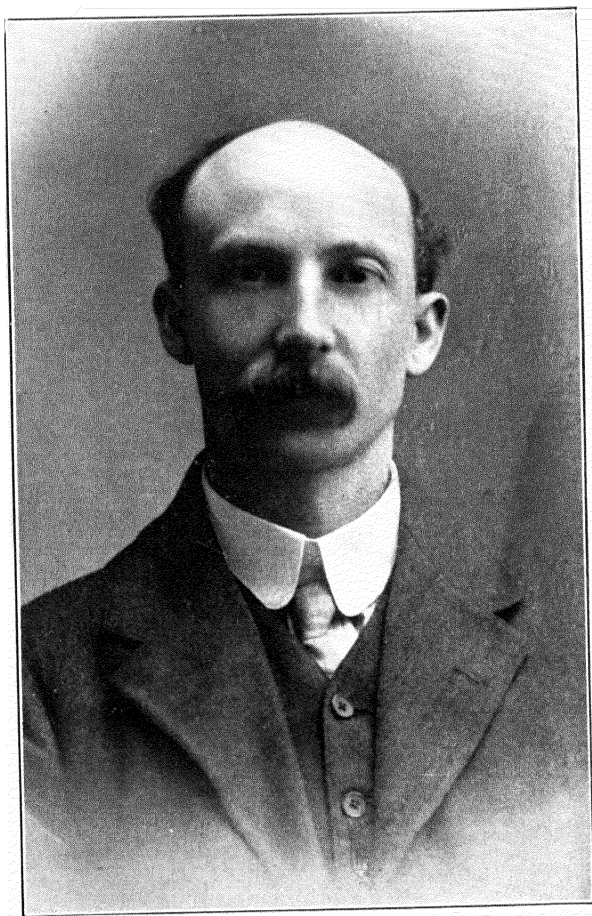
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SANE TRADE UNIONISM

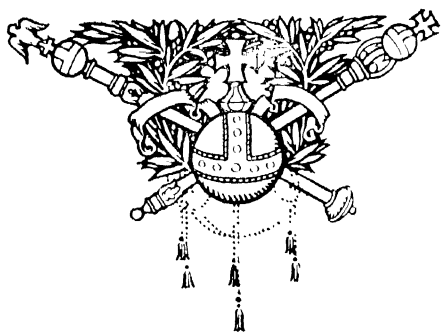


W. L. Osborne



SANE TRADE- UNIONISM,

By
W V OSBORNE
of the Osborne Judgment



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Sane Trade Unionism

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

Many of those who have come into the Trade Unions in recent years, not always with the object of helping forward the great principle of collective bargaining as between employer and employee, but often with the view of diverting their funds and machinery from a purely industrial to a political purpose, have shown no great respect for the veterans who have grown gray in the service of their fellow-workers, giving untold effort, patience, courage, and self-sacrifice to overcome the enormous difficulties that had to be faced in the early days, and who are now justly proud of the splendid structure that has been so painfully and laboriously built up.

Perhaps no movement ever started so heavily handicapped and yet reached such a high measure of success. Trade Unionism began to take shape on the threshold of the nineteenth century, and, outlawed by Parliament,

prosecuted by the authorities, persecuted by the employers, beset with enemies on every hand, unable to turn to the courts for justice or protection, only the boldest dared to identify themselves with the new propaganda.

Where the already existing laws were found insufficient to destroy this 'revolutionary' movement, Parliament was ever ready to forge new weapons. The magistrates who administered these Acts were almost wholly drawn from the employing class, and served out law but not justice to their own Trade Union employees, and the prisons were filled with British workmen who had often committed no more serious offence than to discuss the question of their wages with each other.

Yet notwithstanding all these difficulties, before the close of the century Trade Unions had not only gained legal sanction, and won special privileges and immunities from Parliament, but had become the most powerful organisations in the industrial world, whilst their beneficial influence in raising the workmen's standard of living was almost universally acknowledged.

Trade Union principles, so far as combined action for the purpose of bettering the conditions of labour can be called by that name,

have existed through all ages. It was natural for persons dissatisfied with the terms of their employment to talk and act with others for the purpose of improvement. Such action was generally spontaneous, and embraced neither organisation nor policy.

When the various industries were carried on in the houses of the employers, and the workmen formed part of the household, eating at the same table and working at the same bench as the master, one union or guild protected the trade interests of both; but when these relations between employer and employed ceased to exist, and the workmen associated together, the question of concerted action soon arose. This was recognised as far back as 1417, when the tailors in London were forbidden to dwell apart from their masters because they formed combinations which might have proved inconvenient to their employers.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the whole face of industrial England was changed by the application of machinery to the industrial arts, which gave a new impulse to trade and manufactures, and enabled this country to pour her products into all the markets of the world. In 1764 the quantity of

raw material imported was only 3,870,392 lbs.; in 1800 it was 56,010,732 lbs.

As the cottage worker with his hand-loom could not long stand the competition of machinery, the factory system established itself firmly, and trade became represented by vast accumulations of capital on the one hand and large bodies of labour on the other. The close relation previously existing between master and man dropped out, and labour, to protect itself, formed its own unions.

So successfully were these being established that the employing class became alarmed, and in 1799 Parliament, which saw in these unions more than an industrial organisation, was easily prevailed upon to pass the Combination Act, which made all combinations illegal. In the following year, this Act was reaffirmed and strengthened, so that every combination for obtaining an advance in wages, or altering the hours of work, or decreasing the amount of work, or preventing any person employing whomsoever he might think fit to employ, or preventing workmen hiring themselves, or attempting to induce workmen to leave their work, was declared illegal. It was also declared illegal to attend any meetings called to advance any of these objects, or to spend

money for the furtherance of such purposes or any of them, and imprisonment for three months could be inflicted by the justices for offending against the Act.

The object was to keep the rate of wages entirely in the hands of the employers and to crush all attempts at opposition. The drifting of rural labourers into the town owing to their displacement from the land by the Enclosures Acts, tended to lower wages, whilst the heavy burden of taxation resulting from Continental wars, together with the high cost of provisions, added to by the Corn Laws, made the lot of the worker deplorable in the extreme.

In 1817 weavers' wages dropped to five or six shillings per week, whilst wheat was selling at nearly £5 per quarter. One thousand Carlisle weavers petitioned the Prince Regent that they might be transported to Canada because they were starving, and this notwithstanding that they were in full work. The House of Commons made some inquiry into the 'cruel privation and intolerable burdens' of the Leicester framework knitters, but made no suggestions for their relief.

In default of any restrictive legislation, children of six were forced to work fifteen and sixteen hours a day, rarely permitted to sit

down, and given but two half-hours to eat the scanty food that was allowed them. In Derby the children were employed when so small that they could reach the looms only by having pieces of wood fastened to their feet, whilst punishment was often meted out to those who did not work fast enough.

When a Bill was brought before Parliament in 1818 to make nine the minimum age, and ten hours a day the maximum for labour, the House of Lords limited its scope and raised the hours of labour to twelve. It took fourteen years more to pass a very mild Factory Act restricting the employment of children between nine and thirteen to half time, and over thirteen to sixty-nine hours a week. No wonder that thousands of the child slaves perished, or that those who grew up were often weak, sickly, and deformed. Little children were conveyed to the factories before the sun rose, and taken back long after it had set.

The demand for labour thus created by the factories rendered the ordinary house accommodation utterly inadequate, and in the absence of building bye-laws, or regulations of any kind, thousands of little hovels were erected in gardens or on any vacant space, whilst several families were crowded

into larger houses. These new slum districts contained no water supply or sanitary arrangements, the ventilation was poor, with little light or air, and the poor people died in such numbers that at one time the death-rate in towns exceeded the birth-rate.

Under these wretched conditions it is not surprising that the severity of the law could not stamp out the Trade Unions. The legal prosecutions, which were of common occurrence, only served to prevent their healthy growth, and drove the members into violence and sedition. Secret societies sprang up in connection with nearly all trades. Midnight meetings were held in fields and outbuildings, the records were buried, and members were sworn in by secret oaths. The leaders when discovered were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment; but in spite of this the organisation continued to flourish, and as their power could not be used in lawful manner it was used unlawfully.

The violence of the law was met by violence, and unpopular managers and employers lived in constant fear. All kinds of outrages became common, so that neither life nor property was safe. Much as this may be deplored, it cannot be wondered at, when workmen were made criminals for merely discussing the condition

of their employment. At last it was admitted that repressive legislation could never restore order, and the Combination Laws Repeal Act, passed in 1824, removed all criminal liability from combinations for advancing or fixing the rate of wages, or altering the hours or quantity of work imposed either by statute or common law.

Immediately after the passing of this Act the employers set on foot a formidable agitation for its repeal, and when Parliament met in the next year a Government inquiry was demanded and granted. The evidence, however, went so strongly in favour of the workers that instead of repealing the Act of the previous year, further liberty was granted. Two new offences, molestation and obstruction, were created, and these afterwards formed the basis of numerous prosecutions, whilst members of Trade Unions were still liable to prosecution for conspiring in combination.

In 1832 Trade Unionists were indicted for illegal combination under the 1825 Act, merely for notifying their employers that a strike would take place. In 1837 five Glasgow cotton spinners were convicted for conspiracy. In 1846 the officers of the Steam Enginemen's Association were indicted for conspiracy. In

1835 six poor men in Dorsetshire took part in an endeavour to form an Agricultural Labourers' Union. They were arrested and tried at Dorchester for administering an unlawful oath, and notwithstanding their ignorance of having committed any offence, they were found guilty, and each sentenced to seven years' transportation.

The persecution of the leaders, and the failure of numerous strikes, together with the inevitable wastage that follows in the train of all warfare, more especially industrial warfare, greatly lessened the activities of the Unions, and for a few years they made little advancement in labour matters, though they were by no means idle. The worker began to recognise that so long as he was voteless he would be unable to obtain much assistance from Parliament.

The Unions were therefore merged into the Chartist movement, which was attracting a great deal of public notice, and their leaders became the most active spirits in that political upheaval. Although this movement did not obtain immediate success, yet by petitioning Parliament, holding large meetings, and in other ways calling attention to the need for reform, the Chartists created a lasting

impression on the country, and made reform merely a question of time.

The Chartist movement at an end, the Unions reverted to their industrial policy, and a great revival of Trade Unionism followed. Political experience had taught them that the policy of confining their Unions to certain districts was an unwise one. It allowed members of their own trade—and Union men—to be used against them in times of strikes, whilst it prevented any really effective protest being made against the cruel legal persecutions, or concerted effort being taken to obtain an alteration of the law.

A National Association of Trade Unions was formed, to which the majority of Unions were affiliated. Many trades gathered their local unions together into one national union under the title of Amalgamated Societies. The Engineers were amongst the first to adopt this policy, and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was established in 1850, with definite and valuable provident benefits attached, in addition to the ordinary trade purposes. It thus gave its members an inducement to retain their membership even though they might have no

dispute or dissatisfaction with their employers.

The rules of this society became a model for many others, and thus commenced a new era in Trade Union organisation. The employers held anxious meetings to discuss what they considered the dangerous and rapid advance the unions were making, and resolved upon concerted action in case of labour trouble. Having arrived at this decision, the more aggressive spirits became eager to test their new weapon against the forces of labour, and an opportunity arose in 1858, when the building trades presented new demands. The trouble began with one firm, and within a few days every master builder in London had locked out his men, some 25,000 being thrown out of employment. This struggle was generally regarded not as an effort to resist the particular demands put forward, but rather as a war on the whole principle of Trade Unionism.

The result was a surprise to both sides, money rolled in, and public sympathy went so strongly on the side of the men that the employers' attack was beaten. The result proved beyond all doubt that Trade Unions had their roots too firmly fixed for any

combination of capital to destroy. The lesson was not lost upon Parliament, for in the next year an Act was passed, modifying the offences of molestation and obstruction created by the act of 1825, and legalising peaceful persuasion to induce workmen to abstain from working, in order to raise wages.

The striking success obtained in both industrial and political fields greatly encouraged not only the leaders but also their followers. Trade Councils were formed in many of the largest towns, including London, which became a centre of Trade Union activity. Thus after upwards of half a century of persecution and perseverance, Trade Unions were firmly established upon a basis closely corresponding with those organisations as we know them to-day.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUGGLE FOR A LEGAL STATUS

STUNG by the bitter memories of the past and encouraged by its present success, organised labour refused to remain longer helpless and unrecognised. Working men began to understand the rights and privileges of citizenship, and to realise that no real industrial advancement could be made so long as they were without the most valuable weapon—the Vote.

At every step they had been hedged in by repressive laws, and they determined in future to have some share not only in shaping the laws, but also in holding the scales of justice on an even balance as between employer and employed. The recent re-organisation of their unions on national lines enabled them to conduct their agitation on a basis sufficiently wide to embrace the whole country. Important meetings were held throughout the manufacturing districts, and Mr John Bright became a leader of this new reform movement.

Throwing himself into the work with his accustomed zeal, he used all his eloquence and force in denouncing the then existing state of representation, and advocated a radical measure of reform. The employers perceived clearly that the demand for a vote was but a means to an end—the complete legalisation of the Trade Unions. They therefore offered a most strenuous resistance, and feeling ran high on both sides when the Reform Bill was introduced into Parliament in February, 1859. A few weeks later the Bill was defeated and the Government resigned.

Nothing daunted by this reverse, the reformers laboured even more strenuously, and another Bill was introduced in 1866. This also was defeated, and the pent-up passions of the people broke out in violence and rioting. The following year, however, saw their efforts crowned with success, and the great reform measure which gave the town workers—and organised labour had little existence outside the towns—household suffrage, conditional upon the payment of rates, was passed through both Houses of Parliament.

The employers, angered beyond measure by the loss of their influence at the polls,

resorted to the lock-out; the men retaliated with the strike, and hostilities became extremely bitter. It was well understood by all parties that labour would use its new political power for the purpose of freeing the Unions from legal restraint.

Their opponents decided upon a flank movement, and a cry was raised that the Unions were not only hampering trade and destroying the general prosperity of the country, but were encouraging crime, with the object of intimidating employers and workmen who opposed them, and a strong demand arose for a Government inquiry into the conduct and constitution of Trade Unions.

To the unbounded surprise of the country generally the Unions supported this demand, and a Royal Commission was appointed in 1867, though it did not report until 1869. Neither money nor effort was spared to prejudice and thwart the cause of labour; but although it was easy to prove that many acts of excess had been committed, it was also shown that the hostile and vindictive actions of numerous employers had given great provocation to the Unions, whilst their peculiar legal disabilities had tended

not to restrain but to incite them to acts of violence.

Throughout the inquiry labour had a clear and definite purpose—the legalisation of the Unions, from which no argument or effort could induce it to move. The Unions came before the Commission to defend their conduct, in fact their very existence; but before long the whole position altered to such an extent that they became the plaintiffs appealing for equality before the English law, so that the Unions of masters and men might meet on equal terms. The employers who had demanded the inquiry for the purpose of attacking the Unions, were actually forced to defend their unequal privileges.

Bribes and inducements of every kind were held out to workmen to give evidence against their Unions; but the employers, fortunately for their opponents, were divided among themselves. Some who regarded repressive measures as likely only to accentuate the evil, desired merely to restrict the present powers of the Unions, whilst others, more aggressive, sought to make all strikes illegal and to re-enact the old combination laws.

In the midst of this struggle the Unions met with a serious reverse in the courts. It

had been generally concluded that the Trade Union Funds were protected by the Friendly Society Act of 1855, which provided that a society established for a purpose not illegal, by depositing its rules with the Registrar of Friendly Societies, might have disputes among its members summarily dealt with by Justices of the Peace. But, when Trade Union funds were embezzled by an official of a branch of the Boilermakers' Society, it was held that Trade Unions being an illegal association so far as they were in restraint of trade, were outside the scope of that Act, and their funds were therefore wholly at the mercy of dishonest officials.

It was no crime to rob these Unions, in fact, as they were illegal associations. Existing contrary to the common good, it was really a praiseworthy action to do anything to retard their growth and destroy their security. The decision was appealed against, and the case came before the High Courts, where four judges upheld the previous decision. It was further declared that 'A society whose main object was that of a Trade Union and the support of members on strike was not within the protection of the law, itself being in existence for an illegal purpose.'

This decision was received with alarm and consternation throughout the Unions, whilst all fair-minded men admitted that the position created was an impossible one, the more so as it applied equally to the provident and trade funds of a Union, thus striking a deadly blow at the best form of thrift. This decision was brought to the notice of the Royal Commission and doubtless exercised some influence on their report. Parliament immediately passed an Act permitting Trade Unions to prosecute defaulting members, but as it did not provide for the recovery of funds it was wholly inadequate, and in the next year, 1869, Trade Union funds received the full protection of the law.

This Act was received with great satisfaction by the workers, as it not only protected the union funds, but constituted the first step towards legal recognition, and rendered it almost impossible for the Royal Commission to issue a report directly hostile to the legal recognition of the Unions.

This judgment having been disposed of by Parliamentary action, attention again centred around the Royal Commission, and its report was anticipated with keen interest,

although the employers felt that their case had largely broken down and that the inquiry which was to have exposed and checked the Unions had only succeeded in justifying their existence.

The report of the Commission was received with satisfaction far beyond the ranks of the Unions, when it was learned that it recommended the legalising of Trade Unions. Not only was the country weary of the long drawn out struggle with all its bitterness, but many people felt that since it was impossible to destroy these associations by restrictive laws, it was better to control them as legal bodies, rather than to allow powerful organisations with vast accumulated funds to be outlaws whose business was largely conducted in secrecy.

The majority report recommended that Trade Unions should be given the status of an ordinary incorporated body, which would have brought them under the common law of the land. The Unions, however, were fortunate in having Mr Frederick Harrison as one of the Commissioners. Together with Mr Tom Hughes and Lord Litchfield, he presented a minority report which recommended that Trade Unions should be given

some legal status, and that they should not be held to be illegal merely by reason that they acted in restraint of trade; but that the Courts should have no power to interfere with their internal arrangements or to enforce contracts as between the Unions and their members.

It had been strongly urged before the Commission that the Unions should be compelled to separate their provident and trade funds, but this was just as strongly opposed by the Unions, who insisted that the benevolent purposes of a Union must be regarded as secondary and subordinate to the trade purposes. They urged that the strength of the Union and the confidence of its members rested on the power of the Union to employ the whole of its funds in support of trade ends. They objected to any separation of funds as being calculated to paralyse the efficacy of the institution, and tantamount to a proposal to suppress Unionism by statute.

This view was supported by the minority report, and the Legislature has always purposely avoided this question, leaving the Unions full discretion in the use of their funds, provided only that they are used for the purpose of their declared objects. Thus

the efficiency of the Union as a fighting force has been gained at the cost of a corresponding insecurity of the provident benefits.

Notwithstanding that Parliament itself had appointed the Commission, it was most reluctant to act upon its recommendations, and in order to expedite matters a further movement was instituted. Demonstrations were held in London and other centres, leaflets and pamphlets were printed and circulated, and every possible pressure was brought to bear on Members of Parliament, who, whilst flinching from open opposition, attempted to shelve the whole business.

A bill, however, was prepared by the friends of the Unions, and when it became no longer possible to evade the direct issue, the Government introduced a bill in accordance with the recommendation of the minority report. This passed through both Houses in 1871, and has since been known as the Charter of Labour.

The chief provisions of the measure were : To define Trade Unions and to give complete protection to their funds, books, and other property. To allow them to register, and

hold land to the extent of one acre, and personal estate to any amount. To allow their trustees power to bring and defend actions in regard to such property. To provide that they should not, by reason merely that they were in restraint of trade, be deemed illegal, so as to render any member of such Union liable to criminal prosecution for conspiracy or otherwise.

Further provision was made for the protection of the Union funds. The Act passed in 1869 was repealed, but section four of the new Act provided that members should have no recourse to the law for the purpose of enforcing their benefits; thus the Union was protected against dishonest members, but the members could obtain no redress when their Union deprived them of benefits for which they had paid and to which they were entitled.

So long as the Unions confined themselves to their original purpose and remained merely an industrial brotherhood, no severe hardship was felt by this insecurity, as there was no reason why the benefits should be withheld; but when, later, the Unions engaged in controversial subjects on which the members profoundly disagreed,

the insecurity of benefits became a cruel injustice.

The Unions so far as they acted in restraint of trade still remained illegal at common law, and, in order to prevent the Courts being called upon to enforce agreements illegal at common law, section four provided that nothing in the Act should enable any Court to entertain any legal proceedings instituted with the objects of directly enforcing or recovering damages for the breach of any of the following agreements :—

Any agreement between members of a Trade Union as such, concerning the conditions on which any members for the time being of such Trade Union should or should not sell their goods, transact business, employ, or be employed.

Any agreement for the payment by any person of any subscription or penalty to a Trade Union.

Any agreement for the application of the funds of a Trade Union to provide benefits to members, or to furnish contributions to any employer or workman not a member of such Trade Union, in consideration of such employer or workman acting in

conformity with the rules or resolutions of such Trade Unions, or any agreement made between one Trade Union and another, or any bond to secure the performance of any of the above-mentioned agreements. But it was further provided that nothing in the section should be deemed to constitute any of the above-mentioned agreements unlawful, and in order to remove such agreements still further from the jurisdiction of the Courts it was provided that the Friendly Societies Acts, 1855 and 1858, the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, 1867, and the Companies Acts, 1862 and 1867, should not apply to any Trade Union.

A remarkable position was thus created, and a Trade Union placed in a position differing altogether from any other association. It became neither a corporation nor an individual, nor a partnership between a number of individuals; yet it is a legal entity, of which the law can take no special cognisance as a collective body, but which can own property and can act by its agents, and, although not a corporation, has had given to it the essential qualities of a corporation. It is deemed to be within the law when claiming protection for its property,

but illegal and wholly outside the law when sued for breach of contract.

Trade Unions are peculiar to themselves, there being no analogy in any other form of associated life; therefore the remarkable position in which they were placed, really at their own request, was undoubtedly the best for their purpose. Yet the anomaly whereby these bodies claim the privileges of lawful associations, and at the same time repudiate contracts and agreements on the ground that they were illegal associations, was contrary to all settled principles of law, and led to much confusion and difficulty whenever their affairs came before the Courts.

It was hoped that the legal position of Trade Unions had been finally settled, but peace did not long prevail; prosecutions again became general and the old bitterness was revived. The Courts held that, although strikes were not in themselves illegal, they might be pursued by illegal means, and the laws relating to conspiracy, molestation, and obstruction were rigorously pressed against the strikers.

The Government, having so recently devoted considerable time and attention to

this question, was not prepared to admit its failure by initiating further legislation ; so the Unions, with the object of forcing its hands, entered upon another campaign, which grew stronger and more effective at the approach of the general election, when two Trade Union candidates were returned to Parliament.

It now became impossible to withstand the demand for further relief, and the year 1875 saw the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the enactment of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, the chief provisions of which were :—

That an agreement or combination by two or more persons to do or procure to be done any act in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute between employers and workmen shall not be indictable as a conspiracy if such act committed by one person would not be punishable as a crime. It also legalised peaceful picketing by providing that attending near the house or place where a person resides, or works, or carries on business, or happens to be, or the approach to such house or place in order merely to obtain or communicate information, should not be deemed unlawful.

In the following year a further Trade Union Act was passed, but being chiefly of a formal nature it had little effect on the legal position of organised labour. Thus after three-quarters of a century spent in hard fighting and bitter suffering, the Unions were free from the oppression of the law. During the struggle their members engaged in violence and disorder, often either induced or supported by the Unions themselves, and the imprisonment that followed was not always undeserved.

It is not surprising that large bodies of men associated together for a praiseworthy purpose—the betterment of themselves, their wives and children, and the making provision for periods of incapacity—were driven to some excess when they found the law, which they had no share either in making or in administering, always stretched against them. It was not so much that the worker rebelled against the laws, as that the law made war on organised labour.

Such laws could have no moral force, and the man who fell a victim to them lost no social standing amongst his fellows; imprisonment, indeed, was regarded as the hall-mark of sincerity, and gave him a higher position in the movement. It is the duty

of statesmen to see that the laws by their severity on the one hand or laxity on the other do not provoke disorder or rebellion, while the proper sphere of government should be to maintain order, and to protect life and property.

Yet here we had employers entering Parliament not for the general betterment of the country, but rather to crush all effort at betterment on the part of their own workmen. Violence and brutality on the part of the workers were always to be regretted, and often injured the cause, but the real offenders were those members of Parliament who by their partisan votes brought the law into contempt.

CHAPTER III

THE CONSTITUTION AND DEVELOPMENT

A GREAT responsibility rested upon the Unions to justify by their conduct the confidence which Parliament had reposed in them. At the outset they were heavily handicapped by the cloud of suspicion hanging over them, many even of the workers refusing to join them, in the belief that they were revolutionary bodies.

The leaders fully realised that the justification urged in the past for acts of violence and intimidation could not be put forward now. The Unions as such not only refrained from lawless actions but used every effort to restrain their more hasty members. Regrettable deeds, however, were by no means things of the past, although they were few as compared with those of previous years, and happily tended to decrease.

The Unions had claimed the right to associate as they pleased, and it ill became them now they had succeeded in that claim

to interfere with and intimidate those who differed from them. Violence in connection with trade disputes must be condemned by all right-thinking people, but in common fairness it should be remembered that strikes, like other kinds of warfare, always stir the worst passions in human nature, and on both sides cause feelings to run high. Even well-trained and disciplined soldiers, under the constant supervision of their officers, will at times, acting under great provocation, break away and commit acts of excess.

The leaders of the Trade Union movement were saddled with the task of leading vast numbers of uneducated and undisciplined men through bitterly fought strikes. The Unions, therefore, instead of being blamed for the wrongful acts of individual members, should be credited with the restraining and wholesome influence they so often and so effectively used.

Now that the struggle for legal recognition was over, the Unions were able to settle down to the improvement and development of their organisation. Membership increased rapidly, and a better system of organisation led to greater influence and

power. There was now no attempt at secrecy, and as the objects and purposes of the Unions became widely known, suspicion was gradually dispelled. The management was on democratic lines, the leaders merely carrying out the expressed wishes of the members. Weekly or fortnightly meetings enabled the men to meet together to discuss their conditions of employment and to know and respect each other.

These meetings, conducted in a formal and orderly manner, had a value far beyond the direct purpose for which they were held; they trained men to think and speak, and also to submit to the discipline of associated life, thus often providing the workers' only effective means of fitting themselves for the duties of citizenship. The Unions could be of use only so far as they represented the majority of the workers in any particular trade, and for this reason all controversial subjects were excluded. Some societies went so far as to embody in their rules fines to be inflicted upon those who introduced political and religious subjects into the discussions of their branches.

The more general practice was to include

in the by-laws fines for those who persisted in disobeying the chairman; and as these subjects were excluded from discussion, those who persisted in introducing them found the punishment less direct but just as effective. So rigidly were the Unions confined to purely industrial purposes that men of all shades of political and religious faith met on common ground and worked together for the general good.

Generally speaking each Union had a central office under the control of a general secretary, controlled in his turn by the Executive Committee, which met periodically; in some cases monthly, in others quarterly.

Alteration of rules rests with the annual general meetings, at which also the policy to be pursued is outlined. The Executive Committee and the delegates to the annual meeting are elected by the members by means of a voting paper. All questions affecting the members' employment or the management of the society are discussed by the members at the branches, which pass resolutions for the guidance of the Executive Committee. The management of the branches or lodges rests entirely with

the local members so long as they keep within the rules of the Association.

It was commonly urged against the Union officials that they were paid agitators whose chief purpose was to stir up strife. No more unjust accusation was ever made against a body of low-paid, over-worked, and loyal men. For example, the members of a local branch often had some purely local grievance of a petty nature, which constant brooding over magnified into large proportions. Then the Unions were urged to sanction a strike, which would certainly have taken place had the local branch possessed the power to call it and to use the common fund. The officials always found it more difficult to restrain these local outbursts than to initiate a general movement for improved conditions. It is no exaggeration to say that the officials used far more strenuous effort in preventing strikes than in promoting them.

Trade Union officials were generally either not paid, or paid very badly. In most branches only the secretary was paid, and his salary often worked out at a shilling or two per week, whilst the duties were most exacting. The services of the other branch

officials, and of those doing temporary work on behalf of the branch, were usually unpaid. It was a point of honour with what is known as the Old Trade Unionist not to make a profit out of any service rendered to the cause. Economy was the watchword of the Unions, and was practised in every way, so that the workmen's pence went for the purpose for which they were contributed—to improve the conditions of employment and to provide benefits.

The Act of 1871 had provided that the rules should disclose the whole of the objects for which the Unions existed. It therefore became customary to place the objects immediately in front of the ordinary rules. The following is an extract from a rule book of that period, which is a fair sample of the majority:—

‘The objects of the society shall be to improve the condition and protect the interests of its members; to endeavour to obtain and maintain reasonable hours of duty and fair rates of wages; to promote a good understanding between employers and employed, the better regulation of their relations, and the settlement of disputes between them by arbitration, or, failing arbitration, by

other lawful means; to provide temporary assistance to members when out of employment through causes over which they have no control, or through unjust treatment; to provide legal assistance when necessary in matters pertaining to the employment of members, or for securing compensation for members who suffer injury by accident in their employment occasioned by the negligence of their employer, or those for whom their employer is liable; to aid the young orphan children of all members; and to use every effort to provide for the safety of railway work and of railway travelling. Also to provide a grant of money in case of members permanently disabled or killed by accident, or when by reason of old age they cannot follow their regular employment. Also to enable such members as voluntarily desire it to provide funds for their relief in sickness or temporary disablement, and for their respectable interment.'

The objects herein set out were the only objects known to the Unions at that time, when they had no political or ulterior purpose. The members were not then split up into sections or cliques as now, when each section is attempting to use the common

funds and machinery for its own petty ends. A well established principle was that all business of the branch or lodge should be transacted at the lodge meetings, and important business only after notice had been given.

Any attempt to control by cliques, or by what was known as hole-and-corner meetings—the unofficial meeting of a few members to take concerted action for the purpose of carrying out a certain policy, was condemned as unmanly and dishonourable. Class war was never advocated within the Unions; the system by which capital and labour became joint partners in industrial affairs was never challenged; the Unions devoted their energy to the welfare of their own trade, and though fighting employers for better conditions, had no quarrel with the existing state of society.

During the four or five years after the passing of the Trade Union Acts, 1871, trade was in an exceptionally flourishing condition, and as the various works were running at full pressure labour was in continual demand. Increased output and increased prices created large profits, and the demands of the workers for a fairer share of the fruits of their labour led to numerous strikes.

As usually happens during trade disputes in which labour proves successful, there was a large influx of members, while many new Unions came into existence. Wages rose, hours of labour were lessened, and the general condition of employment improved in various ways. This wave of prosperity was followed by one of depression, trade declined, prices fell, and a general attempt was made to lower wages. Almost every trade was involved in costly strikes, both masters and men being to blame for the disastrous results.

The masters saw in the decrease of trade, and the consequent increase of unemployment, an opportunity to crush the Unions, and to deprive the workers of their recently gained advantages. The workmen failed to understand the elementary principles of political economy, which should have taught them that neither they nor the employers could control the markets of the world. As they could not cheapen the cost of raw material nor add to the selling price of the finished article, only the margin between these two points could be claimed as wages for either capital or labour.

If wages are pressed to such a point as wholly to wipe out profit, one of two things

must happen : either the extra wage is added to the selling price and passed on to the consumer, or, in a competitive trade where the increased cost cannot be passed on, the industry is destroyed and capital and labour both suffer. In the first case, as the worker is the largest consumer, labour pays.

On the other hand, if capital seeks to maintain its profits on falling prices, it can be done only by exploiting labour and bringing about disputes that must be disastrous to both sides. Had employers and employed recognised these simple facts, the principle of collective bargaining might have provided an easy and safe solution to a difficult position. Unfortunately no such wise counsel prevailed, and bitter struggles spread suffering and distress throughout the land.

Many of the old Unions were shaken to their foundations; not only their trade, but their provident funds were exhausted, whilst several of the less firmly established societies never recovered from the shock. The employers fared little better; many hitherto prosperous firms became bankrupt, whilst it took others years to recover their former position.

Disastrous as the struggle was, it provided valuable experience, which proved of service in future years. It also tested the weak points in the Unions, and showed the lines on which their strength could be developed. The combatants had learnt to respect each other, the value of collective bargaining was fully demonstrated, and the principle of a standard wage established.

This last was of enormous importance, especially in contract work, where the ability to estimate the cost of all material, including labour, is essential. It prevented the good employer being dragged down by a selfish one, which could only have tended to a decreasing wage, until the bedrock of subsistence was touched. The standard wage was also of value when entering upon new contracts, preventing any higgling between workman and master, as each knew what to offer and accept.

It is continually urged against the Unions that they wish to enforce one rate for all workers, so that old and young, efficient and inefficient, receive the same wage, and the employer is unable to reward the ability of a superior workman. It is further urged that such a system tends to squeeze the aged and less efficient out of employment.

The Unions have never endeavoured or desired to compel employers to pay a uniform wage to all men. They merely lay down the minimum and leave the employers to grade the men according to their ability. But the minimum has generally resolved itself into the maximum, which on the whole is inevitable, for the employer who graded his men would be cut out by the selfish employer, and the standard wage would lose its value. It has been urged that the Unions should permit the aged and less efficient to make special bargains according to their capability.

Simple as this plan may appear to those who put it forward, it bristles with difficulties. Who is to be the judge of efficiency? Were the opportunity afforded, some employers would engage only those who would accept the reduced wage. A man out of employment might accept the lower wage, but directly he got settled would endeavour to obtain the full wage, and disputes and strikes would follow. By such exceptions, too, the whole principle of a standard wage would be endangered, and the effectiveness of the Unions impaired.

No more important service could be rendered to Trade Unionism than to point

out how the problem of the aged and really inefficient can be met without destroying the principle of the standard wage. Arrangements have already been made to meet the different cost of living in different districts, and to a certain extent the Unions have provided for those of their members unfortunate enough to lose their employment. It is a pity that men over a certain age, say 60 years, cannot accept a lower scale on condition that only a certain percentage of such men is allowed, in the same way as the number of apprentices is restricted. In piecework men are paid by the result, and the same difficulty does not apply.

In some trades men work by the task, performing a certain amount for an agreed wage, all over that being paid for extra. With a little patience this system might be adapted to meet the case of the less efficient, but it could apply only to special trades, and might be open to abuse. Even at present the difficulty is largely met by a little consideration and tolerance on both sides.

The activities of the Unions reached far beyond the questions of hours and wages. Without identifying themselves with party politics, they succeeded in using their influence

and power for the purpose of promoting measures of a purely industrial nature, and the Statute Book contains numerous Acts established mainly through Trade Union effort. It had long been considered a grave injustice that persons injured in the course of their employment should be unable to obtain compensation from their employers. Men were often compelled to accept unnecessary risks or leave their situation, with the probability of remaining unemployed for long periods. When accidents occurred, the workman and his dependants suffered; whilst the employer who gained all the advantage in the saving which accrued from the use of old and faulty plant, suffered no monetary loss.

Thus the country was burdened with maimed men, and with the widows and orphans of those who had been killed through the greed or carelessness of employers or their representatives. The Unions were spending thousands of pounds annually out of their funds, and they decided that instead of paying accident grants to the victims, and doling out benefits to their dependants, it would be better to prevent this industrial slaughter. It was obvious that the only way to induce

proper care in all employments was to penalise carelessness. The Unions therefore demanded an Employers' Liability Act, and in default, started a campaign throughout the country, in which the railway men took a leading part.

The movement was conducted with considerable vigour, and in the elections of 1880 its most bitter opponents in both parties lost their seats. An Employers' Liability Bill was immediately introduced and carried through both Houses of Parliament. The Act, through loose drafting, was far from effective, and workmen had still to accept known risks common to their particular employment.

Compensation could not be recovered for injuries received through the action of a fellow-workman, nor for an accident caused through faulty plant of which the workman knew but had not complained, although in some cases complaints would have meant dismissal.

Owing to the ineffectiveness of the Act, a fresh agitation was begun, and in 1893 Mr Asquith, the then Home Secretary, introduced a Bill which met the demands of the Trade Unions, but party politics barred its

progress. A bitter fight, with 'contracting out' as the storm centre, was waged, and on this point both sides were obdurate, although subsequent experience has shown that compromise was possible. The measure was lost, and with it the whole principle of employers' liability. When the subject came before Parliament again, about four years' later, it was in the form of Workmen's Compensation, which has since been extended so as to cover practically all accidents, even where the employer is entirely blameless, and the accident wholly attributable to the victim's carelessness.

It is often asserted that Trade Unions are actuated only by monetary considerations and have no higher purpose. How unfounded is the charge is proved by their efforts in fighting for and obtaining measures for the extension of citizenship. Every Reform Bill in the nineteenth century was largely won by Trade Union effort; whilst measures for the protection of life at sea, and in mines, factories, workshops, and on railways, are mainly due to Trade Union action.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRIUMPH OF LABOUR

So rapid was the progress of Trade Unionism, that, as a purely industrial movement, it had reached its highest point before the close of the nineteenth century, even during the lifetime of many veteran members who could well remember the old Combination Laws. Even now few people realise how far the labour army had advanced in that short time. Freed from the taint of out-lawry, the Unions had by their conduct and good generalship largely lived down the suspicion and hostility previously encountered, and were able to develop their action without serious opposition.

Formerly persecuted and banned by the law, they were now almost universally respected, while the Trade Union Congress was freely recognised as the chief authority on labour matters, and its Parliamentary Committee was always able to obtain recognition from the Government of the day.

As a system of organisation the movement

became almost perfect. The members were attached to local branches or lodges, each under local control, these, in turn, being all subject to the central office for general administration. The central office was in charge of a general secretary, whose duty it was to hold the scales evenly as between the different branches, and who was of necessity something of an autocrat.

In order to modify the secretary's power, the assistant secretary, Executive Committee, organisers, and all other officers were appointed either by the direct vote of the members, or at the annual meeting, the delegates to which had been elected by the members. For local purposes the branches affiliated themselves to Trades Councils, and consequently the members of one Union became cognisant of what was happening in all other Unions.

This arrangement also formed a convenient method of communication, and permitted the Unions in any given district to act together if their common interests were endangered; but nothing in the constitution of those councils admitted of interference with the internal affairs of any Union, or compelled the members of any trade to submit to

outside control. The Unions as a whole were in turn affiliated to the Trade Union Congress, which acted in national affairs as the Trades Councils did in local matters.

Thus the Unions, without sacrificing any measure of self-government, were always in a position to act in concert for the purpose of promoting measures in their favour, or for resisting any effort aimed against them.

The machinery thus set up was of enormous value for settling disputes that arose between branch and branch, or Union and Union, whilst it formed a ready means for the collection of evidence. The Parliamentary Committee could easily get into touch with individual members by sending a circular to the central office of the affiliated Unions, whence it would be forwarded to the local branches and dealt with at their ordinary or specially summoned meetings, according to the importance of the subject.

In order to strengthen the local branches, District Councils, consisting of the branches of a particular Union in any given district were formed, and these Councils were able to press their views upon their Executive Committee. The whole machinery was so finely set that for the purpose of supporting

or opposing any movement the entire labour army by this system of loose affiliation could be brought into action in a few days.

It was generally admitted that the Unions represented the best class of workmen. As these societies stood solely for industrial purposes there was nothing to offend the conscience of the independent and self-respecting man, who might be an adherent of other causes, but, on the other hand, there was much to attract him.

In most trades admittance to the Unions was obtained only on production of evidence that the applicant had successfully passed through his apprenticeship, thus excluding those who had merely picked up some branches of the trade, and who were known as handy men. The Union card became recognised as the hall-mark for the good workman, on account of which numerous employers preferred Union men. It was a common occurrence for a member who by ill-conduct had brought the Union into contempt, to be arraigned before his branch, whilst out-of-work benefits were withheld if his actions were found to justify his dismissal from his previous employment. In those and other ways the Unions, conscious

that the best answer to foreign competition was good workmanship, did much to encourage capable workmen.

The provident funds established by most societies encouraged the members to be thrifty and to practise self-help. They improved the moral standard of the members by the enforcement of such rules as the following, which were common to the unions:—

‘A member incapacitated from work by the effects of immorality or drunkenness, or by reason of injuries received in an illegal quarrel or combat, shall not be entitled to sick allowance for the period of such incapacity.

‘A member guilty of fraud against the society, or proved guilty of felony, shall lose all claim to the sick and all other benefits, and be liable to expulsion from the society.’

These funds, instituted for the purpose of attracting new members, and of holding the society together in quiet times when otherwise there might not have been much inducement to retain membership, grew to enormous dimensions, and not only saved men from the demoralising effect of rate aid, but provided various benefits and superannuation which otherwise would not have been obtainable. The benefits varied somewhat in the

different Unions, but those most common were provision against death, accident, sickness, and old age.

In most branches it was customary to maintain a small emergency fund, in some instances known as the Benevolent and in others as the Brotherhood Fund, kept up partly by a very small but regular contribution, and partly by voluntary payments. This money was utilised for paying the subscription of distressed and unemployed members, and for grants and loans to members in difficulties. The widows and orphans of deceased members always had the first claim on the charity of the branch. The benevolence of the Unions extended far beyond their own members, and their banners and regalia were always well to the fore in demonstrations and parades on behalf of hospitals and other charities, while they were ever liberal in assistance to Unions whose funds were exhausted in trade conflicts.

From the passing of the Trade Union Act of 1871 to the end of the century the money distributed in benefits, as distinct from strike pay, amounted to millions of pounds. Above all, the Unions were real brotherhoods to which individual members

could turn for sympathy and assistance. The worker in search of employment was often compelled to leave his native place and to settle in some distant town, where in case of death the widow and orphans had to rely altogether upon the kindly service of the branch secretary to help and advise them in their troubles.

Amidst these numerous activities, however, the primary object, collective bargaining, was never forgotten. The Unions were what their common name implies, Unions of workers in any particular trade, with the main object of improving their conditions of employment and protecting their trade. Strikes were regarded as a regrettable necessity to be entered upon only as a last resort, and even then to be restricted to as limited an area as circumstances would permit.

At times whole trades were involved, but an effort was generally made to keep at work as many men as possible, who out of their earnings would contribute to the support of those fighting to uphold the standard wage. In order to cut off this support and to exhaust the Union funds more quickly, the employers often extended the area by means of the lock-out, thus carrying the

conflict into districts where no grievance existed. Such conduct on the part of the employers, often wholly unjustifiable, spread distress far beyond their own trade. It was a form of Syndicalism which was to be copied later by the workmen and to find expression in the sympathetic strike.

Perhaps the most creditable achievement on the part of the Unions was the suppression of violence and disorder in connection with strikes, which was now almost a thing of the past. The Dock Strike of 1889, which chiefly concerned casual labourers, a class of men unskilled, untrained, and undisciplined, was carried through without any outbreak of violence, and tens of thousands of strikers marched through London streets as orderly as an army of soldiers, a thing which would have been impossible without Trade Union influence. Yet some people still spoke as though Trade Unionism and rebellion were synonymous terms. A Union might do ninety and nine praiseworthy acts without evoking comment, but a single wrong action committed by an irresponsible member raised a storm of indignation.

Some opponents are never tired of reiterating the accusation that Trade Unions

encourage their members to do as little as possible for their wages. A more groundless charge was never formulated. A favourite motto for inscription on the Union banners is 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work,' which exactly describes the Union policy. The fact that fully forty per cent. of their members are engaged on piece work, whilst many Unions would be prepared to strike to retain that system, should prove sufficient answer to such a charge.

It would be impossible for a Union to enforce a policy of restriction of output unless it was embodied either in its general rules or its by-laws, and these have been searched in vain for such evidence. Where anything has appeared to give colour to this suggestion, a perfectly satisfactory explanation is generally forthcoming. For example, the plumbers have prohibited their members from using their bicycles when travelling in their masters' time, but the explanation is simple.

If this practice were permitted the amount of time saved in getting from the workshop to the place of work would induce masters to employ only cyclists, and the bicycle would become a regular part of the plumber's kit.

The best answer to these accusations, however, was the growing confidence in the policy of the Unions by employers and the public, manifested particularly during the Dock Strike, 1889, when public subscriptions to the strike funds from home and abroad amounted to upwards of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

Great exception was formerly taken to labour-saving machinery, and some men thought that by injuring the machines, or in any way lessening the output, they would provide more employment for their fellows. But the workmen soon learnt that only by the aid of machinery could they expect to meet foreign competition successfully, and that by cheapening the finished article they increased the demand, and so created more employment. They now sought to share in the advantage derived from the lessened cost of production by increased wages and fewer hours of labour.

Most Unions prepared and circulated periodical reports amongst their members, showing the alterations in hours and wages in different districts, the numbers of unemployed, the places where employment could be found, the result of voting on various

subjects, reports of conferences and meetings, and various other interesting and valuable information, which kept the members fully advised of all matters affecting their trade.

Defence and not Defiance was the key-note of Trade Union action. The leaders, recognising and respecting the employers' position, had no desire to interfere with the management of their business, nor to dictate to them as to whom they should or should not employ, so long as men were not victimised because of their Union membership. Both time and friction were saved by treating with the Union officials, especially where the workmen were numerous, as one agreement served for all in that particular trade, and the society was expected to see that their members submitted to the agreement loyally. Where the men were unorganised, each worker, being his own agent, could accept the conditions of working so long as they suited his convenience, and repudiate them when he pleased. In large industries Trade Unionism meant order—non-unionism, Anarchy.

Well might the captains of organised labour look back upon their work with pride and pleasure. They had succeeded

beyond their highest expectations. Starting with labour demoralised by evil conditions and bad laws, they had struck off the legal shackles, link by link, till every restrictive law was gone, and had afterwards utilised the law to protect and even foster the Unions. Wages had been increased, whilst hours of labour had decreased, female labour had been regulated, child labour restricted, and in most trades almost abolished. The general standard of life had been raised. By adding to the prosperity and happiness of the workers—the largest section of the community—the general position of the nation had been improved.

The toiler, raised from serf to citizen, enjoyed a fuller and fairer share in the government of his country, with all that that meant in better housing and sanitation, and a correspondingly longer life. Laws had been passed to protect the life and limb of the worker, to penalise carelessness and greed, and to compensate the victims. Education laws gave poor children an opportunity to climb higher up the social ladder.

By admitting to membership only capable workmen, the Unions had done much to uphold the high standard of British workmanship. By encouraging thrift, discipline,

and self-restraint, they had made better husbands, fathers, and citizens. By the principle of collective bargaining, they had put the two parties to an industrial contract on a more or less equal footing. They had found a position without regulation, order, or method, and had converted it into order and uniformity as regards sanitation in factory and workshop, wages, hours, protection of machinery, fines and deductions from wages, and general working conditions.

They had built up an organisation that, while a model for the whole industrial world, enabled statesmen and Parliament to obtain accurate information for the purpose of further legislation. They had largely triumphed over violence and disorder, replacing the weakness of individual passion by quiet confidence in united strength, and by impressing upon their followers the lesson that brutality can only defeat the object of those who use it.

This remarkable achievement had been gained by courage and perseverance on the part of the workers, and by forethought, self-sacrifice, pluck, and ability on the part of their leaders—men who were an asset to any nation and of whom our race may be justly proud. Difficulties might impede

and retard their efforts, but could not act as a permanent barrier. All this progress had been made on truly democratic lines; there was no attempt at autocratic or tyrannical leadership, neither was any effort made to use the movement for personal or party ends.

CHAPTER V

DANGERS AHEAD

THE remarkable success of Trade Unionism was attended by what we might call an inevitable danger, since it naturally invited the hatred of its opponents, and the jealousy of less successful organisations. An even more vital danger lay in the fact that self-seeking men saw in its splendid machinery enormous possibilities for promoting their own political theories. Calumny, abuse, and flattery were showered upon the Unions, while every art was used to seduce them from their original purpose.

Although the majority of large employers now regarded the Unions with friendly eyes, and recognised the value of the uniformity of agreements, a section remained jealous of their growing power, and resented their

claim to bargain on an equality with the employers. This section, though comparatively small in numbers, was not likely to hesitate in the attempt to check and if possible destroy organised labour.

The Unions, however, found a more serious danger in the politicians who desired to use their machinery on behalf of their respective parties. The majority of the labour leaders were Liberal by conviction, and the Liberal party sought to cement the friendship between Liberalism and Labour by including one of its leaders (Mr Henry Broadhurst) in the Government, by raising others to the magisterial bench, and by consulting the Unions on all labour questions.

The Social Democratic Federation was formed in 1881 with the object of socialising all the means of production, distribution, and exchange, abolishing private property, and establishing a system where each should have according to his wants and money should possess no value. Such a doctrine is fundamentally opposed to the whole principle of Trade Unionism, the basis of which is collective bargaining. The two parties were therefore diametrically opposed from the first, and much bitterness ensued, the

Socialists never ceasing to attack the Unions and their leaders.

Notwithstanding the considerable amount of energy displayed in pushing this revolutionary propaganda, they found it impossible to increase their organisation to an extent consistent with giving them any influence in economic or political movements. Their enmity and abuse had done Trade Unionism no harm ; but they became more dangerous when, for tactical reasons, they dropped their opposition and assumed a friendship for the purpose of spreading their doctrines.

The Independent Labour Party, more commonly known as the 'I. L. P.,' was formed in 1893 for the express purpose of permeating other organisations with Socialist doctrine. Recognising their own inability to organise, they sought to use the already existing societies, and on account of this earned the name of the political Cuckoos.

Their first step was to form a Socialist group within the various Unions and branches of Unions. They kept in touch with the central body, and meeting in secret conclave arranged their course of action. They attended regularly, and took a prominent part in the work of the branch, while the

ordinary member was often apathetic and irregular in attendance. Resolutions were prepared previous to the meetings, and the supporters were always ready to play their part, so that the organised minority easily out-manceuvred the unorganised majority.

Branch officers who had served their societies faithfully and well for years became victims to this campaign. The edict had gone forth to capture the official positions, and this was done in the most unscrupulous manner. At a private meeting of the Socialist section, nominations would be decided upon for the different positions, nominators and seconders would be arranged, and often a fierce attack would be made upon the holder of the coveted position. Canvassing would go on outside the branch, quietly, and in such an indirect manner as not to expose the real purpose. The candidate would drop all talk of Socialism, and in some cases even repudiate it. The person to be driven from office, being wholly unconscious of the coming attack, would make no effort to organise support.

For a seat on the Executive Committee, or for delegation to an annual congress, where it was necessary for the candidate to obtain support from a number of branches,

the Socialist groups in the different districts were kept in touch with each other through the central Socialist organisation. Their victory was rendered easier by limiting the number of candidates for any particular office, while the other members put forward numerous candidates, split their votes, and lost. Even after the election the plot was rarely discovered, all that was apparent being that an old officer had been replaced by a more active member.

Once in possession of the official positions the same means was used for the manipulation of the machinery. Important matters were placed either at the top or bottom of the agenda, so that they could be rushed through before many members arrived or after the majority of the ordinary members had left. By such means the Unions were gradually drawn from the pursuit of purely industrial to political objects. No opportunity was lost to advance the Socialist propaganda. The Trade Unionist was taught that the true function of the Unions was not collective bargaining as between employer or employed, but rather the waging of a class war by which the employer—the supposed enemy of the worker—was to be suppressed.

Society is to be divided into two groups, the class with some private property on the one hand, and the non-property owning class on the other, and these are to be pitted against each other in unceasing war until private property ceases to exist, and a monetary equality between all men is established.

Even if this revolutionary doctrine be advisable, it should have been pursued by an organisation formed for that particular purpose. To divert Trade Unions from their original aim, and compel the members to support objects which they believed wrong was not only dishonest, but it constituted a danger to the Unions, since it caused them to lose influence and power when negotiating with the employers.

So long as the Unions confined themselves to purely industrial affairs they could meet the employers on an equal footing; their bargain being merely for the rightful division of the profits as between the two partners—capital and labour.

When the Unions openly proclaimed that it was no longer their policy to bargain as between employer and employed, but rather to exterminate the former, who were

recognised only as the natural enemy of the worker, then an atmosphere was created which tended to make the true functions of Trade Unionism difficult if not impossible.

Trade Unions had hitherto been chiefly confined to the workers in skilled trades, and in mines and quarries. Where they had been extended to the ordinary unskilled workmen, they had rarely been successful. Not only were the latter class without effective means of collective bargaining, but they lacked the power of attracting public attention, and having no out-of-work pay could only suffer in silence, or seek such relief as was possible from the rates.

In 1886 and 1887 it was attempted to organise the unemployed and to demonstrate the extent of this terrible social evil, to remedy which little effort had previously been made. The movement was largely successful, and thousands of men marched through the streets of London compelling attention to their miserable condition. Rioting occurred in connection with the meetings of the unemployed in February, 1886, reports of which, greatly exaggerated, threw London into a state of alarm.

The Government prosecuted Mr John

Burns, Mr Hyndman, Mr Champion, and Mr Williams for sedition. Mr Burns, who elected to defend himself, took the opportunity to turn the dock of the Old Bailey into a platform for propagating his Socialist creed, and for drawing attention to the unemployed movement. The speech was not only largely reported in the daily press, but was afterwards published under the title of 'The Man with a Red Flag.' This was the best advertisement the movement had yet received, and it went forward with increasing energy, until in November of 1887 the unemployed and the police again came into collision, this time in Trafalgar Square. So serious did matters become that the soldiers were called out.

This movement had the effect of drawing the attention of unskilled workmen to the need for organisation, and thus prepared the ground for the great labour revolt in 1889. It also concentrated public opinion on the need for a shorter working day, so that surplus labour might be absorbed in the already existing industries, and thus led to the agitation for a legal eight-hour day, which became the first item on labour's programme for the next few years.

Both movements produced a profound effect upon the Trade Union position. The former brought into existence a new class of Unions, which might be termed Industrial Unions rather than Trade Unions. These taught the workman to look to Parliament for the regulation of the conditions of employment rather than to rely upon his Union as hitherto. These two factors were destined to bring about what was known as 'New Trade Unionism,' which changed the whole character of the Trade Union movement.

The most distressing feature in connection with the present industrial system is the vast amount of casual labour, which being the most helpless is consequently the worst paid. Against this double evil of intermittent and sweated labour, the memorable Dock Strike of 1889 was waged. Although the men were almost without organisation, and wholly without funds, they succeeded not only in obtaining an increased wage, but what was of greater importance, in bringing about a better system of organisation, which increased the number of permanently employed men in connection with the docks.

This success was only possible because

the sympathies of the general public, irrespective of class or creed, were all in the men's favour. This result produced such an effect upon labour generally that strikes became of common occurrence. The employers at once proceeded to improve and extend their organisations, and new associations and federations were formed. A remarkable body called the National Free Labour Association was established in 1892. It was supposed to be an association of free labourers who objected to Trade Union restraint and who desired to follow their employment in their own way. Such a desire deserved nothing but respect, as every man has a right to select the kind of association to which he will subscribe.

But Unionists suspected that this represented neither the object nor condition of the Free Labour Association. The real purpose of this body appeared to be to organise an army of professional strike-breakers—not of private individuals seeking to earn their own living, but purposely organised to interfere with the legal rights of others—who were to intervene in every strike regardless of the merits of the dispute.

This movement would be unworthy of

notice were it not for the effect it had on the course of organised labour. The Socialists were attempting to initiate their class war, and here was their strongest argument, and one they never failed to use: that the capitalists had already organised a standing army to fight them on economic lines. Labour leaders amongst their own members and on public platforms incited the passions of the workmen by speaking of the 'Free Labour Army' as the settled policy of the employers as a whole, which proved the hatred that capital bore to labour. It is safe to say that nothing in recent years caused so much permanent bitterness between employer and employed, with such disastrous effect to both, as this ill-starred army of Free Labour.

Another change which assisted the extreme agitator in his advocacy of class was the growing tendency of classes to segregate. In bygone times masters and men worked and lived under one roof. Under the factory system, with its greater concentration of capital, the working master gradually dropped out, but the employer generally managed his own business, and had a personal knowledge of his own workmen, while both resided

in the same district and recognised each other as neighbours.

With the tendency to control trade and industry by Joint Stock Companies, managed by officials, the close relationship previously existing between employer and workmen gradually ceased, while each gradually drifted to separate residential districts. The shareholders of a company and the employees never meet in relation to their respective positions in the business, whilst the directors are scarcely known even by sight to many of the workmen.

However well intentioned the officials may be, they are almost helpless. Labour is counted merely as an item in the list of raw materials, and a certain price, which must not be exceeded, is set down for each. There is little room here for personal encouragement or private benevolence. The successful official is the one who can show the best return at the end of the year, or half-year, and he is therefore often induced to cut the price of labour.

Under no circumstances can the paid manager have the same opportunity and liberty of fostering those intimate relations that should exist between master and man.

Few men on our railways know all the members of their own board of directors, and the vast majority could not recognise one. The chief officials are known only by sight, and appear to the men as haughty rulers whose only purpose is to maintain a rigid discipline and get as much work for as little pay as possible.

Many men would as soon look to the stones for sympathy and kindness as to their officials and directors, while everything that is done for their comfort and convenience is believed by many to conceal some ulterior purpose.

Only when the workmen come into direct contact with these officials do they recognise how mistaken have been their views, and how monstrous has been the picture drawn by some extravagant and self-interested agitator, who by such means injures the true interest of labour.

Like most other railways the Great Eastern has established, for the benefit of its staff, various funds which are managed jointly by representatives of the company and of the men. Nothing is more surprising to these representatives of the workmen than to find the uniform fairness and even kindness

with which they are treated by officials and directors alike.

Perhaps the greatest danger in the path of the Unions was the sheep-like attitude of the great mass of the workers. They did not think for themselves, but followed where others led. They joined Trade Unions with a vague idea that some benefit would result from their membership, but without having any real knowledge of the principle for which the Union existed. They sank their individuality and moved with the stream. If the crowd shouted they shouted, if a thing was popular, however silly, it was supported; however good, if it did not 'catch on' it was doomed. Previous to compulsory education men could think but not read, they could now read but not think. They read extravagant and impossible leaflets prepared for the credulous, without the ability to judge their value, or to see beneath the surface of the plausible statements put forward.

The workers thus became the easy prey of the astute mob orator, whose personal ends were best served by stirring up strife between class and class, or in their own words—by 'preaching the blessed gospel

of discontent.' These political adventurers were prepared to preach anything that paid, and it paid best to appeal to the suspicions and prejudices of the workers.

They sought to batten on the funds of the Unions and to use them for their own purpose. These men, being unable to join the old Trade Unions, which were open only to the workers of their trade, joined the unskilled labour Unions, which restricted their membership to no particular industry. The danger of men of this type inside the Unions, with no knowledge of, or interest in, the various industries, cannot be over-estimated.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

THE great revival of Trade Unionism which followed the settlement of the London Dock Strike of 1889 had not proceeded far before it became evident that the whole structure of organised labour, as it had previously existed, was threatened by a new force, which for want of a better name was

known as 'New Trade Unionism.' There was little resemblance between this new movement and the one it sought to supplant, except that, to outward appearance, the machinery remained the same.

New Unions were brought into existence, not only in trades hitherto unorganised, but also as a direct challenge to existing Unions. Much bitterness was engendered between the defenders of the old methods and the advocates of the new. The old leaders, many of whom were respected by all classes, and whose names were familiar to all workmen, were referred to as the 'old gang,' and made the subject of bitter attack by the new and inexperienced aspirants to power.

The old Unions were denounced as moribund benefit societies, while the new ones forgetful of past history, boasted that they were not benefit societies, but fighting machines. However, when trade again became depressed, and little prospect appeared of obtaining improved conditions, the members fell away, thus proving that past experience was not to be ignored. Provident benefits have since become more than ever popular, and in connection with the recent National

Insurance Act the Unions have joined in the general scramble to become 'Approved Societies.'

New Unionism had a deteriorating effect upon the character of the workmen, who, instead of being taught the advantage of thrift and self-help, and reliance on their Unions for the regulation of their conditions of employment, were now advised to appeal to Parliament for everything. No longer did the Unions impress upon their members the necessity of good workmanship for the purpose of defeating competition. In fact, they ceased to exert any good influence upon their members, and, in endeavouring to increase their membership, accepted inferior workmen.

The leaders had previously been largely drawn from the circle of local preachers; now, men whose chief recommendation was a glib tongue pushed their way to the front. No longer was it necessary to possess a competent knowledge of the trades they sought to dominate. They preached the omnipotence of Parliament, and a legal eight hours day was set in the forefront of their programme. The cry caught on, the enthusiasm of the workers ran high,

the subject was discussed in every lodge or branch; demonstrations and processions succeeded each other with rapidity and regularity, until they became of such common occurrence that they failed to attract attention.

For a time at least the inherent value of a well-organised demonstration arranged for the purpose of drawing public attention to some urgent and important matter was lost. Such well-known men as Henry Broadhurst and John Morley (now Lord Morley) lost their seats in Parliament because they declined to pledge themselves to support a general legal eight hours day. The Trade Union Congress became the storm centre of this conflict, and the eight hours question was put forward as the test of faith by the new party.

At Dundee, in 1889, the resolution pledging the Congress to an eight hours day was defeated, but persistent effort prevailed, and at Liverpool in the next year the following resolution was adopted :—

‘That, in the opinion of this Congress, the time has arrived when steps should be taken to reduce the working hours in all trades to eight per day, or to a maximum

of forty-eight hours per week; and while recognising the power and the influence of trade organisations, it is of opinion that the speediest and best methods to obtain this reduction for the workers generally is by Parliamentary enactment.

‘This Congress, therefore, instructs the Parliamentary Committee to take immediate steps for the furtherance of this object.’

The Parliamentary Committee of the Congress obedient to this definite instruction, prepared a bill which provided that ‘On and after the first day of January, 1892, no person shall work, or cause or suffer any other person to work, on land or sea, in any capacity, under any contract or agreement, or articles for hire of labour, or for personal service on sea or land (except in case of accidents), for more than eight hours in any one day of twenty-four hours, or for more than forty-eight hours in any one week.’

Even apart from the peculiar and impossible proposal it contained, it was the most remarkable bill that ever came before Parliament in the name of labour. Those who prepared it admitted they had done so only in obedience to the command of the Congress, and declared they were not responsible

for its proposals. The labour members in the House of Commons refused to support it. Congress carried the instruction by a majority of 38 out of 457 delegates present, whilst many trades openly expressed their determination to oppose such a measure.

As the advocates of this movement were able to cover the weakness of their case by vigorous speeches, their success in capturing Congress was hailed with delight, but the very success precipitated disaster. Whilst the claim for an eight hours day remained in abstract form, few workmen examined the proposal closely, but directly it appeared in the form of a bill those in the trades likely to suffer most became alarmed, and denounced the movement as strongly as they had previously supported it.

Above all, the new leaders were brought face to face with those natural and economic laws which they had sought to ignore, and the proposal collapsed. Rarely in the history of this country has a movement been carried on with such energy and enthusiasm and yet failed so signally. Within a few years of the introduction of the eight hours bill into the House of Commons the idea was so completely dead as to be spoken of

only in jest, and each workman was wondering how the others could have supported a cause so impossible. Not only did the eight hours movement fail, but the whole cause of organised labour suffered.

Contrary to the advice of experienced leaders, the men had been taught to expect impossible things, a most disastrous policy, for, when hopes are raised that cannot be realised, the enthusiasm of expectancy gives way to the depression of disappointment. This case proved no exception, membership steadily decreased, and many new Unions crumbled away before they had time to get firmly established. Others lingered on competing against the older Unions, a source of weakness rather than strength.

The upheaval of labour which had caused so much anxiety subsided, and with it the New Unionism which had embodied all the faults but few of the virtues of earlier Trade Unionism.

The collapse, however, did not occur until the whole course of organised labour had been changed, and seeds sown, which, under the fostering care of the Independent Labour Party and other Socialist bodies, became a permanent barrier against any return

to those methods and principles by which the structure of Trade Unionism had been so successfully reared.

The real difference between the past and present methods of the Unions is chiefly shown in the difference of the effect on individual character. Previously Trade Unionists took the highest interest in their trade and attempted to produce the best class of workmen. They relied upon thrift and self-help, and had confidence in their Unions. They were careful in the choice of their officials. They recognised the rights of capital and only demanded equal rights for labour. Whilst jealously guarding the rights to strike, they looked upon it as a double-edged sword, to be used only when all other efforts had failed. They valued it most as a power behind their negotiations with the employers, conscious that the possibility of a strike often made negotiations possible or successful. They discouraged violence and disorder, and appealed to the reason rather than to the passions of their members. Collective bargaining which recognised the right and existence of the two parties—capital and labour—was the very basis of their existence.

All this is now changed, and the fundamental principle of present-day Trade Unionism appears to be class war, a war that appeals to the worst passions of human nature. It is not surprising that a movement built upon such a foundation should produce a deteriorating effect on individual character. The enthusiasm of many of the present-day leaders for their creed borders on the fanatical. They do not sit down calmly, as was the habit of the old leaders, with the single purpose of thinking out how best to advance the interest of their members, but are more liable to be swayed by political passions and class jealousy.

The proverb says, 'The fool has his eyes on the end of the earth,' and it is no less true that many Trade Union officials are endeavouring to shape their policy of to-day in accordance with some ideal that can be possible, if ever, only in the dim and distant future. Apparently they subordinate the trade interests of the members to some outside political body, and consider it praiseworthy to use every opportunity for the one object of furthering the purpose of the class war.

One gathers from the new doctrines that the principle of collective bargaining is wrong

because a bargain by which an employer can obtain any profit is robbery. All interest in trade is destroyed because all work is represented as slavery : wage-earners are wage-slaves, and the best workman is the biggest fool since he is the most easily exploited by the parasitic class.

The creation of class bitterness tends to destroy all friendly relations between employer and employed, and induces employers to observe only legal agreements as regards hours and wages, and to recognise no moral obligations towards his work people. Strangely enough some advocates of this class war complain that employers have become cold and unsympathetic, and that the workers are becoming more and more like human machines, without interest in their labour. To me this appears the natural and only possible outcome of the new policy. In casual work, whether skilled or unskilled, the relations between capital and labour are slender, and neither side recognises obligations to the other beyond the next pay night. Men are employed only so long as they can do the full work for which they are engaged, and the men work only so long as it suits their convenience.

But this is not the general condition of permanently engaged labour. When a man has served for years in the employ of one man or firm he is not usually lightly cast aside. In agriculture, one of the poorest of our industries, men are often kept on to a great age when their capacity for work has become almost nil. Many farmers keep married men employed in wet weather, although their labour on such days is often of small value. A conveyance is provided to cart coal, which is frequently obtained for the men by the truck so as to save cost. In many other ways also a kindly feeling is shown.

The privileges in connection with our railways are so well known that they form a favourite subject for attack by Socialist Trade Unionists, who condemn them as being granted for the ulterior purpose of tying the workmen to their employers. It is even asserted that by thus destroying the mobility of labour it tends to keep wages down, although no evidence that wages would increase if the privileges were withdrawn is ever adduced. Thus employers are caught on one of the two horns of a dilemma; if they grant no privileges they are heartless and care only for the exploiting

of labour, whilst if they show an interest in their staff, it is merely with ulterior motive.

We expect that some consideration for old age and for infirmity brought about by long service should be shown, and that the man returning to work after an illness should not find his place permanently filled. Again, the workman who through failing eyesight, sickness, or other cause is unable to fulfil his former duties ought not to be lightly dismissed if any suitable employment can be found for him. Such concessions, however, depend upon the goodwill of the employer, and it is to the mutual advantage of both sides that such good feeling should continue.

If the time ever comes when all moral responsibility on the part of the employer ends, if the whole relations between master and man commence and cease with the earning and paying of wages, it will be calamitous not only for the parties directly concerned but also for the country. Such a result, unfortunately, is inevitable if a reckless campaign of class war is continued.

Some Socialist labour leaders are apparently more interested in condemning the present industrial system than in improving it,

and consequently do not discriminate between fair and unfair employers. Instead of using the former as examples to be copied, and bringing pressure to bear on the latter, they fasten on the worst cases for the purpose of condemning all employers alike. Thus the unfair employer escapes the moral stigma and indirect pressure that his conduct deserves, whilst the good employer is handicapped and discouraged. Put briefly, Trade Unionists of the old school desire to raise all employers to the higher plane, whilst the methods at present in favour will reduce all to one level, and that the lowest.

Strikes are being lightly entered into for quite inadequate reasons, often without any previous attempt to negotiate, and without even the formulation of grievances. In some cases the men have had no very clear idea of the reason for the strike, except that their Union had called them out. The strike of 1912 in connection with the London Docks is an instance of the reckless strike, whilst the leadership is typical of present-day methods.

The Lightermen struck because one man, although a Trade Unionist, had not joined the Union selected for him, but preferred

to remain in the Union of which he had been a member for some years. The Transport Workers' Union thereupon called out all kindred trades employed at the docks, and the men responded obediently. The leaders alleged they had ordered the strike for the purpose of compelling the man Thomas to join the Lightermen's Union, and declared they would not allow any non-union labour in the docks. The strike caused a serious dislocation of trade, and when public opinion condemned the attitude of the leaders they sought to save themselves by putting forward other reasons.

Where tens of thousands of men and numbers of employers are concerned in any industry grievances are almost bound to exist, and the London Docks proved no exception. Various complaints were tabulated and published, and some of them undoubtedly needed redress. At the same time it was admitted that the strike began before the machinery purposely set up to deal with such questions was exhausted.

It is not necessary to dwell upon the hopeless struggle, the bitter passions it aroused, the futile appeal for a National Strike, the violence and disorder, the fearful misery

in which dockland was involved; but it may be remarked that this particular strike, typical in many respects of the present Socialist labour policy, clearly shows how far we have travelled, or fallen, since 'New Trade Unionism' diverted the movement from its original path.

The old leaders certainly would not have counselled a strike until other means had been tried, and as the grievances were admittedly against a section of the employers only, an attempt would have been made to isolate those at fault and use the fair employers as a lever to force the hands of the others. The men would have been consulted, and, above all things, the complaints would have been clearly set out at the beginning. There would have been no attempt to widen the area of the strike until the leaders were fairly sure of some response.

The old leaders would have appealed strongly to the men to resist all temptation to violences, and would have met their opponents in a sportsmanlike manner. They would have scorned to beg Parliamentary interference in a trade dispute—in fact, they claimed that Government had no right to assist either side, and often complained

that indirect assistance was given to the employers. Above all, they would have seen that the case was hopeless at the end of the third week, and would have declared the strike off before absolute poverty had overwhelmed the strikers. It requires some amount of courage to tell men they have been defeated, but a leader should see further than the ordinary man, and having seen the danger should speak out plainly. The old leaders were as ready to acknowledge defeat and thus save unnecessary suffering as they were to fight for victory as long as any reasonable chance of success remained.

Nothing could better illustrate the difference between the old methods and the new than the conduct of this strike. The light-hearted manner in which the leaders rushed into a wholly unnecessary dispute, with depleted coffers, for a tyrannical purpose in which public opinion must be against them, the autocratic manner in which it was called, without consulting the members, the child-like faith in the power of Parliament to interfere in each and every trade dispute, the endeavour to widen the area of the dispute when it was obvious that the strike was defeated, the cowardice in allowing

unnecessary and useless suffering to be inflicted upon women and children rather than face the men and admit the blunder, all show how the Trade Unions had been changed.

The London Dock Strike of 1889 first showed the parting of the ways, and gave birth to the New Unionism which acted as a lever in diverting Trade Unionism from its former path. The London Dock Strike of 1912 showed how far the Unions have progressed under the compelling power of the Socialist guides, who have assiduously taken up the work which the New Unionism commenced.

CHAPTER VII

THE LABOUR PARTY—ITS ORIGIN AND CONSTITUTION

NOTWITHSTANDING that Socialism had been actively advocated in this country for about twenty years, at the end of the last century the combined membership of the three chief Socialist societies was little over twenty thousand, and as these largely consisted of aliens, females, and males without votes, they possessed little influence in political circles.

An effort was made to induce the Trade Unions to seek direct representation in the House of Commons, and at the Trade Union Congress held at Plymouth in 1899 the following resolution was adopted :—

‘That this Congress, having regard to its decisions in former years, and with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee to invite the co-operation of all Co-operative, Socialistic, Trade Unions, and other working-class organisations to jointly co-operate on lines mutually agreed upon, in convening a special congress of representatives from such of the above named organisations as may be willing to take part to devise ways and means for securing the return of an increased number of Labour members to the next Parliament.’

In accordance with this decision a conference was held at the Memorial Hall, London, on February 27 and 28, at which 129 delegates were present, representing 545,316 Trade Unionists and 22,861 Socialists. The following decisions were arrived at :—

‘That this conference is in favour of working-class opinion being represented in

the House of Commons by men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour movement, and whose candidatures are promoted by one or other of the organised movements represented by the constitution which this conference frames.

‘That this conference is in favour of establishing a distinct Labour group in Parliament who should have their own whips and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of Labour and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency. Members of the Labour group shall not oppose any candidate whose candidature is being promoted under the terms of the first resolution.’

This new organisation was to be known as the Labour Representation Committee, and its constitution provided—

(a) That the Executive Committee shall consist of twelve representatives: seven of whom shall be from the Trade Unions, one from the Fabian Society, two from the Independent Labour Party, and two from

the Social Democratic Federation. Such members shall be elected by their respective organisations.

(b) That the Committee shall keep in touch with Trade Unions and other organisations, local and national, which are running Labour candidates; and shall convene a Labour Representation Conference in the month of February each year.

(c) That each body shall be required to pay ten shillings per annum for every thousand members or fraction thereof.

(d) That Trades Councils shall be entitled to affiliate and send one representative to the Conference on paying £1 per year, and may send one additional delegate for each ten shillings paid.

This Labour Representation Committee was expected to become a committee of the Trade Union Congress, but the Socialist Party did not wish this, as, by an alteration in its constitution at the time of the struggle between Old and New Unionism, all delegates attending the Congress were required to be either paid officials of their Trade Union or men working at their trade. Connection with the Trade Union Congress would thus have confined the new movement

to a purely Trade Union one, and for that reason the Socialist party successfully supported the establishment of a separate body.

The constitution of this new organisation, which boasted of democratic principles, was rather remarkable. The Executive Committee, consisting of twelve members, was not to be elected by the votes of the Annual Conference as a whole, but by various groups, each of which selected its own representatives. By this arrangement 545,316 Trade Unionists had seven representatives, and 22,861 Socialists five.

Thus the Trade Unionists had roughly speaking one representative for each 78,000 members, the Socialists one for each 4500, or in other words, each Socialist vote was worth seventeen Trade Unionist votes. In addition to this advantage, the Socialists who were also Trade Unionists, after voting in their own sections were permitted to vote in the Trade Union section also. The Socialists being thus strongly represented at the Conference could ensure that at least two of the Trade Union representatives to the Labour Representation Committee were Socialists. The machinery of this new body thus arranged gave the Socialist minority,

and a very small minority, a permanent majority on the managing committee.

That this remarkable position was purposely engineered is made evident in a speech delivered by Mr Keir Hardie, the leader of the I.L.P., at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Sunday, March 8, 1903, when he said :—

‘If *the old gang* of Trade Unionists should get in a majority on the Labour Representation Committee Party, the Independent Labour Party, which existed for the making of Socialists, would revert to its original position.’

Here we have not only a revival of ‘New Unionism’ in speaking of the respected veterans who had built up the Trade Union movement as *the old gang*, but two definite statements—first, that the I.L.P. were in the Labour Representation Committee for the purpose of making Socialists; and, secondly, that they would remain with the committee only so long as the Socialists dominated it. If they were in a minority they would leave, and the only manner in which a minority can be permanently in control is by successfully manipulating the machinery.

Although the managing committee had been so completely captured, there still

remained the Annual Conference which marked out the policy to be pursued, and also reviewed the work done during the previous year. It was arranged that the Trade Unions should be allowed one representative at the Annual Conference for each thousand members. As this was very expensive, few large societies claimed their full representation.

It was further arranged that Trades Councils, which were well under Socialist control, might affiliate and send one representative on the payment of £1 per year, and could have one additional delegate for every 10s. paid. Thus, whilst the Trade Unionists were limited to one delegate for each thousand members, the Socialist Trades Councils could, whenever necessary, by a judicious distribution of £100 over the different Trades Councils, acquire 200 votes. As they were to receive twenty-five per cent. of the returning officer's fee for each Parliamentary candidate, and £200 per year for each member returned to Parliament, the money from a Socialist point of view would have been well spent in dominating the conference, and ensuring the placing of their own candidates on the official list.

Such tactics were practicable only through the machinery of the caucus. The members of a Trade Union have little control over their managing bodies once they are elected. Few of the Unions affiliated to the Labour Representative Committee ever took a vote of their members on the direct questions of such affiliation, and of those who did, few if any obtained the consent of the majority of their members.

The machinery set up by the new society became available only after the various Unions in their individual capacity had provided men and money, and this necessitated new machinery within each Union. The methods adopted varied. Some Unions sought to raise the money by special levies; others endeavoured to make use of the funds already established. Amongst those to adopt the latter plan was the Plumbers' Association, but their Canning Town Lodge, after an uphill fight, succeeded in obtaining an injunction to restrain the Association from using its funds for such purpose without the consent of the rules.

This decision compelled all affiliated Unions to make provisions in their rules for the support of the Labour Representation

Committee, and a special levy for political purposes became almost general. The method by which these levies were to be collected and dealt with differed in detail, but that adopted by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, which figured so prominently in this political struggle, may be taken as typical of the Unions generally.

In 1902 this society took a ballot of the whole of its members, amounting to 54,448, as regards their willingness to subscribe one shilling per year for the purpose of promoting Parliamentary Representation. Although the question of affiliation with an outside political association was not mentioned, only 14,289 voted in favour of such levy.

The Executive Committee met to consider the result, and adopted a scheme which amongst other proposals provided that—

‘A fund should be established to be called the A.S.R.S. Parliamentary Representation Fund, and that it should be formed and maintained by a *voluntary* subscription of one shilling per year, to be paid quarterly, and to be forwarded to the head office with the quarterly dues.’

Had the political levy rested upon the *voluntary* basis here suggested no real

injustice would have been done, although the wisdom of linking Trade Unions up with political associations might have been doubted. But when this scheme was being embodied in the rule book, the Annual Meeting of the Society struck out *voluntary* and made the scheme read as follows—

1. For the maintenance of Parliamentary representation a fund shall be established by the society. The subscription to be one shilling per year per member, to be paid quarterly, and forwarded to the head office with the quarter's dues.

2. The objects of the fund shall be :—

(a) To provide for the representation of railway men in the House of Commons as the Annual General Meeting may from time to time determine;

(b) To contribute to the Labour Representation Committee such sums as the Executive Committee or Annual General Meeting may from time to time direct, so long as the society remains affiliated to such Committee.

3. A separate account shall be kept of this fund, and the money invested in the names of the Trustees of the Society, each of whom shall hold office at the pleasure

of and act under the direction of the Annual General Meeting. Such fund shall be used for the objects herein stated.

4. Candidates adopted in accordance with object (a) must be and remain *bona fide* members of the society. Any branch shall have power to submit to the Executive Committee for their consideration the name of any member they deem suitable to become a candidate, also the name of any likely constituency to be contested, but no candidate shall contest a constituency whose candidature has not been endorsed by the Trades Council and Labour Representation Committee.

5. In the event of a candidate being selected for a constituency, his election expenses shall be defrayed. Should he be unsuccessful at the poll and be unable to resume his ordinary work, he shall be found employment by the head office at a salary not exceeding £150 per year, until such time as a constituency can be found to return him to the House of Commons.

6. Should a candidate be elected he shall be paid a salary of £250 per year and third class return fare to his constituency so long as he remains a member of Parliament. He shall reside at such place as the Executive

or Annual General Meeting may consider necessary for the proper discharge of his duties. During the time Parliament is not sitting his services shall be at the disposal of the society, as the Executive Committee or General Secretary may direct; and be subject to the conditions laid down for organising secretaries.

The scheme of Parliamentary representation here set forth, together with the constitution of the Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.), provided the whole machinery by which Labour Representation was to be carried into effect. The Unions were to collect compulsory levies from their members, and to pay over stated amounts to the L.R.C.; to send delegates to the annual meeting of that body; to select Parliamentary candidates and pay all expenses in connection with their constituency and election, with the exception of twenty-five per cent. of the returning officer's fee. They were further to act as a collecting link between the L.R.C. and their own members, so as to keep them all in touch and provide a nucleus of support in any constituency that might be contested.

The L.R.C. was to receive funds from the Unions and other affiliated bodies, consider

the adoption of nominated candidates, and when such had been adopted to organise support for them among all affiliated societies; to pay twenty-five per cent. of the returning officer's fees. If the candidate was returned to Parliament he became a member of the Labour Representation Committee Party in the House of Commons, and received from that party £200 per year and such further fee as his own society might decide to pay him. By clause 4 of the Union rules no candidate could contest a constituency whose candidature had not been endorsed by the Trades Council and the Labour Representation Committee. Both bodies were largely influenced by the Socialists, who could veto the candidature of any person not in sympathy with their party.

The Socialists had moved very discreetly, always covering their movements by plausible language, and progressing step by step towards a definite goal—the complete control of the Trade Union machinery for the advancement of Socialist candidatures. The Taff Vale judgment—which had alarmed Trade Unionists by making their funds liable for all actions for tort—was used as a cover, and the necessity of a strong Labour party

for the purpose of reversing that judgment was preached on every possible occasion.

Mr Keir Hardie, then one of the most prominent members of the Executive Committee of the L.R.C., when speaking at Swansea on January 31, 1903, said:—

‘Labour representation meant more than the returning of men to the House of Commons. It was a means to an end, and that end was not Trade Unionism, but Socialism.’

At the Annual Meeting of the L.R.C. at Newcastle-on-Tyne, three weeks after Mr Hardie’s speech, it was decided to revise the constitution so as to read as follows:—

1. The Labour Representation Committee is a Federation of Trade Unions, Trade Councils, the Independent Labour Party, and the Fabian Society. Co-operative Societies are also eligible for membership.

2. To secure, by united action, the election to Parliament of candidates promoted, in the first instance, by an affiliated society or societies in the constituency, who undertake to form or join a distinct group in Parliament, with its own whips and its own policy on Labour questions, to abstain strictly from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any section of the

Liberal or Conservative Parties, and not to oppose any other candidate recognised by this Committee. All such candidates shall pledge themselves to accept this condition, to abide by the decisions of the group in carrying out the aims of this constitution, or to resign, and appear before their constituencies under the title of Labour candidates only.

3. The Executive Committee shall consist of thirteen members, nine representing the Trade Unions, one the Trades Councils, one the Fabian Society, and two the Independent Labour Party. The members shall be elected by their respective organisations at the Annual Conference.

4. The Executive Committee shall appoint a chairman, vice-chairman, and treasurer, shall transact the affairs of the committee, and make proper arrangements for the payment of permanent officers when necessary. It shall keep in touch with Trade Unions and other organisations, local and national, which are running Labour candidates, and on the approach of a General Election, it shall prepare a list of candidates run in accordance with the constitution, shall publish this list, and shall recommend these candidates

for the support of the working class electors. The members shall strictly abstain from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative Parties. It shall report to affiliated organisations if the chief officials of any affiliated body publicly oppose the approved candidates of the Committee, or if any member of this Executive, Member of Parliament, or candidate who has been endorsed by the Committee, act contrary to the spirit of this constitution.

5. The secretary shall be elected by the Annual Conference. He shall be under the direction of the Executive Committee, who shall have power to suspend or dismiss him for good cause shown, and to appoint a temporary successor to act until the next Conference.

6. Every Trades Council shall be entitled to affiliate and to send one delegate to the Conference on paying one pound per year, and may send one additional delegate for each ten shillings paid. Other organisations shall pay ten shillings per annum for every 1000 members or fraction thereof, and may send one delegate for each 1000 members paid for.

This constitution, although subjected to slight amendments, chiefly verbal, from time to time, remained substantially the same until 1908, when it was declared illegal by a judgment of the Court of Appeal.

CHAPTER VIII

POLITICAL DISSENSION

EXTREME surprise was expressed in both industrial and political circles when it became known to what extremes the Labour Representation Committee (since known as the Labour Party) had gone in amending its constitution at the Newcastle Conference. The old policy of excluding party politics, in order to avoid dissension among the members, had been abandoned, and the Unions were in future to be linked to a definite party, with its own whips and its own policy. The constitution of the Labour Party, which had previously provided that its members should co-operate with any party engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of Labour, was reversed, and it was now definitely laid down that in future Labour

men must abstain from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any party but their own. Nothing could be more likely to provoke opposition, than thus dictating to a body of affiliated societies consisting of men of all shades of political faith. Liberals and Conservatives alike were debarred from assisting their own parties, whilst Socialists remained at liberty to propagate their doctrines, and to receive support from every section. Such a policy was not only unjust, but impossible, and it has never been strictly carried out. Members have helped the candidates of other parties, and the Socialist Labour Party itself has been forced into close alliance with the Liberals.

Many subscribed to the new policy as far as constituencies with Labour candidates were concerned, but they felt that to isolate Labour where no Labour candidate was in the field was impolitic, and that the cause of Labour would be best served by co-operating with the candidate who approximated most nearly to their programme. It was pointed out that of necessity Labour men must appeal to other members of the House of Commons for assistance in support of Labour measures, and that it would be

ridiculous to place friends and opponents on the same footing.

The Social Democratic Federation had previously withdrawn from membership of the Labour Party, and this had necessitated some alteration in the constitution of the Executive Committee, but the preponderance of Socialist representation was made even greater than at first.

It was now demanded that all candidates under the auspices of the Labour Party should pledge themselves 'To abide by the decisions of the group in carrying out the aims of the constitution of the party or resign.' In practice this pledge meant that Labour members would decide upon a certain course of action as regard Bills brought before Parliament, and that the decision of the majority would be binding upon all. The pledge, moreover, was to be signed before an election, while the constitution of the group still remained unknown. The extreme section might secure election, or the more moderate one, but the unfortunate member who had signed the agreement was expected to shape his political ideas in accordance with the views of the majority. It might be said that the Labour Party claimed the

right to purchase the conscience and liberty of its members for £200 a year.

It is obvious that a man could not really represent a constituency when he received his instructions and his pay from a third party possessing the power to claim not only his service and obedience but his resignation from Parliament. Debate in the House of Commons was rendered valueless when members had no freedom of opinion.

The Socialist section succeeded in carrying their amendment and the adoption of the pledge, only after a long and heated debate, during which it was plainly announced that the new position would be strongly opposed in the country. This statement was fully justified by subsequent events. Mr Richard Bell, M.P., the chairman of the party during the previous year, denounced the pledge as humiliating, and refused to be bound by it. He openly expressed his intention of pursuing the course which he believed best in the interest of Labour, and to retain his independence of all political parties.

The miners' representatives, among whom were such widely respected men as Mr Thomas Burt, M.P., and Mr Charles Fenwick, M.P., also refused to sign, and later

were joined by Mr C. Steadman, M.P., Mr John Ward, M.P., Mr William Crooks, M.P., and others. Every possible pressure was brought to bear upon these stalwart supporters of liberty, but without success, except in the case of Mr Crooks, who was induced to reconsider his decision, and signed.

So bitter was the opposition, that only three Labour members in the House of Commons agreed to join the Labour Party group. Even after the remarkable success of Labour at the election in 1906, only thirty members signed the pledge, while twenty-one resolutely refused, and formed a Trade Union group. So grotesque was the position created, that, whilst any wealthy person could qualify for the Labour Party by signing the pledge, many of the most prominent Trade Union officials were excluded because of their refusal.

An even more serious interference with personal liberty was that portion of the new constitution which provided that—‘The Executive Committee shall report to affiliated organisations if the chief officials of any affiliated body publicly oppose the approved candidates of the party.’ Thus Conservative or Liberal Trade Union officials living in

a constituency contested by a Labour candidate must either refrain from supporting the candidate of their choice or render themselves liable to dismissal from their employment in the Unions.

The words 'chief officials,' though not defined, were generally understood to refer to all paid officials, including the branch or lodge secretaries. The rule was regarded as an attack upon the liberty of the subject, and much controversy ensued.

In January, 1904, a by-election took place in Norwich, and the local branch of the Railwaymen's Union adopted a resolution appealing to their general secretary, Mr Richard Bell, M.P., to support the Labour Party's candidate. Mr Bell declined on the ground that great principles affecting the interests of the working class were at issue, and he could not assist in splitting the progressive vote. This refusal to help the Socialist Labour candidate was represented as a support of the Liberal candidate, and consequently an open defiance of the Labour Party constitution.

The Socialists, disappointed, angry, and perhaps a little alarmed, asked for an interview with the Executive Committee of

Mr Bell's Union, which was granted. A deputation consisting of Mr Ramsay Macdonald and Mr D. J. Shackleton attended before that body in the following March, for the purpose of inducing them to use pressure on Mr Bell to compel him to sign and abide by the pledge and constitution of the Labour Party.

This action was distinctly impolitic, since the opposition which previously had consisted of individuals without any common ground, now centred round the person of Mr Bell, and involuntarily he became the leader of the revolt against Socialist tyranny within the Unions. It soon became recognised by all parties that his name stood for a principle—'The liberty of the subject.' He held that the rights, privileges, and duties of citizenship should be subordinated to no movement, and on this point adopted an uncompromising attitude from which he never swerved.

It had always been the aim of the Unions to retain the management of their business in their own hands. For this principle they fought in 1871, and the Trade Union Act of that year proves how successful was their effort. That Act expressly exempts

Trade Union agreements from legal enforcement, so as to restrict the interference of the Courts in the internal affairs of the Unions. This local autonomy so successfully defended before a Royal Commission and Parliament itself was now being destroyed, and the resentment was not lessened by the fact that Mr Ramsay Macdonald—who was not even a Trade Unionist—had been included in the deputation which had interfered in the domestic affairs of a Union so far as to dictate the policy it should adopt towards its paid officials.

The Labour Party had, with the object of stamping out the revolt, purposely carried the war into the ranks of the railway servants, and numerous members readily took up the defence not only of their own liberty, but also that of their general secretary. Never in its history had the society been so torn with strife and dissension. The subject was debated in its branch meetings, which often broke up in disorder. Members were placed at enmity with each other; the more aggressive attended the meetings to fight for their own side, the more peaceful members abstained from attending and merely sent their contributions, whilst others allowed

their membership to lapse. This fight against Socialism within the society induced many extreme Socialists who had hitherto held aloof from the Union to join.

When the Railwaymen's Executive met in the following June they were faced by a remarkable position, not the less so because the whole dispute, in its present form, had arisen out of the Norwich resolution, which was alleged to be invalid. According to report the agenda was ended, the meeting over, and the minute book closed; but five members remained in the room talking, when one suggested that it would be good policy to get Mr Bell down to support the Socialist candidate. The suggestion was agreed to by the other four and the resolution entered up in the minute book.

The Labour Party, emboldened by their success in securing admittance to the last Executive meeting, and placing the railwaymen's secretary on his trial, now sought to follow up their victory. Accordingly they sent in a protest against the Executive having permitted the dispute between their secretary and the Labour Party to be discussed after the deputation had been withdrawn, and complained that reports of the

meeting had been circulated without proofs first being submitted to the secretary of the Labour Party. Other actions of the committee also met with disapproval, and permission was requested to attend before the Annual General Meeting of the Society in order to present the Labour Party case to the delegates.

In placing this matter upon the agenda the General Secretary entered a protest against 'those outside and not interested in the society, and especially those who are not even Trade Unionists or have any connection with Trade Unions, coming inside our affairs and dictating to us how and what we shall do in conducting the affairs of our society. This is entirely a new departure, the kind of which I have never remembered during the history of our society, nor do I believe it has obtained in any other Trade Union. Our own members are not granted such privileges, and I strongly urge our members to jealously guard our rights and privileges from drifting into the hands of bodies outside this society.'

The Executive Committee having considered the Labour Party's communication replied that they did not make a practice of

submitting proof copies of verbatim reports to persons attending with deputations, and that they could not interfere in the matter of a deputation to the Annual Meeting. This interference with the management of the Union was too much even for an Executive Committee with a strong Socialist leaning.

The agenda for this meeting clearly reflected the political strife that had been introduced into the society by the aggressive action of the Labour Party, and the following items appeared :—

Derby branches and eighty-three other branches appeal for a Special General Meeting to consider this subject. Birmingham (Aston) and fifty-two other branches appeal for a ballot of the members as to whether the society should continue its affiliation with the Labour Party. Aberdare, Barnes, and six other branches appealed to the president to take a ballot of the members. The Bristol and District Council (representing a number of branches), Gloucester branch, and four other branches ask for the matter to be placed on the agenda for the next General Meeting, so as to allow an alteration of rules to be made.

The Wellington branch considered the constitution of the Labour Party to be too stringent and appealed for a modification. Wednes branch asked for a vote of the members upon a suggestion put forward by that branch.

These appeals coming from every part of the country proved that the discontent was of a general nature. Neither did these resolutions disclose the extent of the quarrel, for numbers of branches although expressing dissatisfaction and in many cases even passing resolutions, refrained from an appeal to the Executive Committee. In a great many others the objectors formed the minority and so were unable to take action.

The Executive Committee carefully considered the difficult position, and it was moved that the following reply be sent:— ‘That in reply to Birmingham (Aston) and fifty-two other branches, this committee have no desire that the policy of this society with regard to politics should be any other than that which is in harmony with the views of the majority of our members, and considering the feeling caused of late between our general secretary and the Labour Party, to which we are affiliated, we decide to take

a vote of our members at once to ascertain their opinions as to whether we shall continue to be affiliated to that body or not.' This was defeated by nine votes to three and the matter was referred to the Annual General Meeting.

During all this time the society was diverted from its proper purpose, and its machinery, funds, and energy instead of being used to protect its members from capitalistic aggression were being dissipated in internal strife. At the Annual Meeting in the following October after a lengthy and heated discussion the following decision was arrived at :—'That this Congress heartily appreciates the excellent work performed by Mr Bell, M.P., in the House of Commons on behalf of railwaymen, and whilst admitting that some of his actions may have been somewhat indiscreet, still we do not consider that they are of such importance as to warrant a withdrawal of our confidence in him; and, further, that whilst we do not wish to sever our connection with the Labour Party, we consider its constitution too stringent. That Mr Bell still act as at present without signing the constitution, and that in the event of an election taking place he shall be allowed

to stand as our representative on the same conditions as heretofore.'

This decision was adopted only by thirty votes to twenty-nine, which shows how evenly balanced the two sections were. Resistance to the political levy continued, and at one time it was reported to the Executive Committee that 12,000 members were refusing to pay, and thereby endangering their benefits.

In December, 1904, the Executive Committee were given a list of branches in which not a penny was being paid towards the political fund, and the General Secretary was instructed to inform the branches that the levy would be enforced.

The Walthamstow branch had throughout the dispute taken a very active part in the fight for political liberty. Matters came to a head when a leading Socialist was brought forward as a candidate under the auspices of the Labour Party, and the support of the local Trade Union branches, including that of the Railwaymen's Union, was claimed. This branch, though having a sprinkling of Conservative members, was overwhelmingly Liberal, and the members desired, not as a branch, but in their individual capacity, to support the candidate of their

respective parties. Great energy was thrown into the contest, and much bitterness followed. The secretary of the Railwaymen's Walthamstow branch was reported to his Executive Committee for opposing a Labour candidate, and an explanation was demanded. The secretary, however, refused to allow any one to sit in judgment on his political conscience, and repudiated their right to interfere in a matter outside the Union's proper sphere.

Chiefly owing to the action of this branch, the Socialist candidate was compelled to retire, but the incident had brought home to the members of the branch the necessity of defending the political liberty of the Trade Unionists against the aggression of the Socialist Labour Party. What had been feared in other districts had actually happened in Walthamstow, for whilst the branch had been unanimous in opposing the candidate, they were compelled to pay levies for his financial support, and the name of their branch was printed as being, by the affiliation with the Labour Party, supporters of the candidature. This branch determined to pay no further political levies, and were informed that although they paid all other dues and remained loyal to the society in

all its original objects, their refusal to pay a levy for a purpose to which they conscientiously objected would necessitate their expulsion from the society and the forfeiture of all contributions and benefits.

It now became evident that some strong action was needed, or thousands of good Trade Unionists would become victims of political tyranny and be deprived of their contribution and benefits. A specially summoned meeting of the Walthamstow branch having considered the whole matter, a lengthy statement was drawn up and sent to the Executive Committee. In this it was definitely stated that unless the direct question of affiliation with an outside political party was submitted to a vote of the members immediate legal action would be taken. The Executive Committee took the opinion of eminent counsel, which was so carefully worded that both sides claimed it supported their case. A vote was also taken, but the vexed question of the affiliation with the Labour Party was purposely avoided, so that the result of the vote was of little value. Notwithstanding this method of taking the vote, only 21,713 supported the levy out of a membership of 54,928. At the next

Annual General Meeting, however, it was decided that the political levy should continue to be included in the rules.

At the following Annual Meeting, October, 1906, the Socialist section were able to alter the rules of the society so as to make it compulsory for all candidates to accept the conditions of the Labour Party, and be subject to their whip. This action, taken in defiance of the rules, by a meeting that had no power to make such alteration, was regarded by many as illegal, yet the governing bodies declared their intention of enforcing a rule adopted in such an irregular manner. Many delegates attending this Conference although instructed to oppose any such change of rule had supported the alteration.

At no time during this long struggle had feeling run so high as now. Branches repudiated the action of their delegates at the General Meeting, and the Executive Committee were again inundated with appeals. Six branches asked to sever the affiliation with the Labour Party, fifty-two branches asked for a ballot on the question of the affiliation, ninety-one branches asked for a ballot as to whether the candidates of the society should be compelled to sign the

constitution of the Labour Party and be subject to their whip, and 109 branches desired their general secretary to be independent of the Labour Party. Only one branch sent in a resolution supporting the action of the General Meeting. The Executive Committee faced by so serious an upheaval of the members were afraid to oppose their declared wish any longer, and in the hope that the agitation would die down they adjourned the subject for six months.

Meanwhile a movement, inaugurated for the purpose of obtaining better conditions in the railway service, diverted the attention of the members from the political struggle to the industrial. This movement, conducted with great vigour during the year 1907, very largely served the purpose of the Socialists, as the political strife was almost suspended owing to the call to close the ranks and to meet the employers as a solid body. The struggle was eagerly taken up by men who justly thought themselves entitled to better conditions of employment, and was supported with such energy that, before the end of the year, the country was faced with the danger of a great railway strike.

This political dispute was general throughout the Unions, but the case of the railway servants has been taken as typical of all. They were responsible for the birth of the Labour Party; in their society the struggle for individual liberty waged most fiercely, and the great legal battle was finally fought out.

The whole history of this internal struggle demonstrated in a most striking manner the wisdom of the early Unionists in keeping party politics out of the Unions and combining only for an economic purpose common to all workers.

CHAPTER IX

THE OSBORNE JUDGMENT

THE recent action on the part of the Socialists clearly showed that compromise was impossible, as they were determined to divert the Unions from a purely industrial to a political purpose. Many of their adherents, indeed, made no secret of the fact that they would rather see the Unions destroyed than continuing to exist apart from the Socialist movement.

No member, not a Socialist, was allowed

to act for himself in political matters, but was compelled to accept the instructions issued from headquarters and to support any party or policy enjoined. In addition, the Socialists sought to dominate not only the political, but the religious conscience of the members, since by making secular education one of the chief planks in their programme, they compelled men who were voluntarily paying for the upkeep of denominational schools, to pay also for their attempted destruction.

They refused to accept the adverse decisions of any conference or committee, but continued to raise the matter in season and out to the exclusion of more important matters. Their persistency in forcing this political squabble into the branch meetings prevented the Unions from fulfilling their proper function, and turned what had previously been an industrial brotherhood into an army of warring factions.

It was evident that, if the Unions were to remain of service to those who had joined them for their original objects, and if the funds were to be used for the purposes for which they had been subscribed, some legal redress must be sought.

After very careful consideration the Walthamstow branch of the Railwaymen's Union decided to take the necessary action. In arriving at this decision they fully recognised the difficulty in the way, since no machinery for making an organised effort on behalf of the whole body of objectors existed. This revolt was the spontaneous outburst of an outraged conscience on the part of the majority against a well organised and disciplined minority working through an organisation within the Union, and controlled by a stronger organisation without. Since the Socialists had captured most of the official Union positions, they controlled all means of communication not only as between Union and Union, but also as between branch and branch.

The Walthamstow branch recognised that they must start without funds or assistance and fight single-handed not only against the whole resources of their own wealthy Union, but behind that, the whole force of the Socialist army. They also expected to be met with a storm of abuse and misrepresentation, and in this were not mistaken. The branch was a small one but the cause was great, and the members never doubted but that assistance would be forthcoming

from those in the various Unions who resented the political tyranny.

The Socialists were ever on the alert to turn any passing incident to account, and by a strange coincidence the Trades Disputes Bill came before Parliament just after the Walthamstow branch had announced its intention to carry a test case into the courts. The Socialists, who saw in this Bill a chance of frustrating any attempt to obtain legal redress on the part of their opponents, endeavoured to make the wording in section 4 (1) sufficiently wide to prevent an action being entertained by any court. One of their members mentioned the plan to a friend, and on it coming to the knowledge of the Walthamstow branch, the Attorney-General was approached indirectly on the subject.

He promised that in any event he would guard the right of members to prevent the illegal use of their funds. When the Bill was finally passed through the House of Commons the Socialists had succeeded in inserting such words as they desired in section 4 Sub-section 1, but the Attorney-General had safeguarded the position in Sub-section 2. Apparently the Socialists were totally unaware of this safeguard, as one

of their number, Mr Wardle, wrote a letter to the *Daily News* explaining how by the Trade Disputes Act they had successfully scotched such action as that contemplated by the Walthamstow branch.

The methods by which the action was defended were illustrative of the general ideas of latter day Trade Unionism. Instead of relying upon the merits of their case, the defendants sought to escape the main issue by raising technical points and legal quibbles. Few opportunities for making applications to court were missed. By adding to the expenses it was thought to exhaust the resources of their opponents, and when this failed the defendants sought to prejudice the plaintiff and gain sympathy for themselves by pointing to the large amount of money spent. All offers to test the question in a friendly way were refused, and the suggestion to exchange copies of the documents to be used was scornfully rejected. This made it necessary to put cumbrous legal machinery into force to compel them to submit their documents for inspection, but even then two of the most important were missing without satisfactory explanation, and further effort had to be taken to obtain these.

To raise the necessary funds subscription lists and books were circulated amongst those in sympathy with the plaintiff in the various Unions, but much secrecy had to be observed owing to the vindictive spirit of the Socialist section. The action of the Shepherd's Bush branch of the A.S.R.S. in demanding the expulsion of one of their members who carried a collecting list was but a sample of the pressure brought to bear to prevent assistance being given to the Walthamstow branch for this legal fight.

Curiously enough this very branch a little later made a great outcry against the tyranny of their employers in dismissing one of their members for, as it was alleged, having taken an active part in connection with the Union, although on investigation by their own Executive Committee this charge could not be substantiated. It is strange how the greatest tyrants cry out at any fancied act of tyranny practised against themselves.

The action against the political levies would, in the ordinary course, have come before the Chancery Court in March, 1908, but that date being very inconvenient for the defendant society, their officials asked that the action might be permitted to stand

out of the list until the following July. Although this delay was undesirable, the plaintiff offered no objection. In July the action was delayed by a long patent case, and as the plaintiff's leading counsel was compelled to go to Leeds the next week in an official capacity the defendants were asked to agree to a further postponement. This they most emphatically refused, and in consequence the plaintiff was under the disadvantage of changing his leading counsel on the eve of going into court. The necessity for this litigation was a reflection on the new methods of Trade Unionism. Members of the Unions were being compelled to seek the protection of the courts—not against tyrannical employers—but against the tyranny of Trade Union officialism.

It was well understood that there were Unions of masters as well as of workmen, and that any powers granted to the latter could not be denied to the former, yet the Unions instructed their Counsel (Mr Peterson) to argue as follows :—

Lord Justice Farwell : I suppose that it follows that a Trade Union of employers can equally impose upon the employee the duty of subscribing to their organisation.

Mr Peterson : Of course what is good for the one is good for the other.

Lord Justice Farwell : Let me point out the result. The wretched workman has to subscribe of his own choice, we will say, to party A, by compulsion of the Trade Union to party B, and by compulsion of the master to party C. It is rather hard on him.

Mr Peterson : Yes, my lord.

Lord Justice Farwell : I thought there was some element of freedom left in the country, but that may be the result enforced by starvation, that is to say, by turning him out of his Trade Union or out of his employment.

Mr Peterson : I am not in the least defending or suggesting a defence of such an act.

Lord Justice Farwell : We must put a reasonable construction upon an Act of Parliament, and not an extravagant one.

Mr Peterson : The question is what is a reasonable construction.

Lord Justice Farwell : The case which I have just put is quite possible. The two Trade Unions, the masters, and the officials of the Trade Union can compel the man to subscribe to two different organisations, he himself preferring a third to which he also

subscribes. I personally attach very great importance to the franchise, and it is the franchise that you are interfering with by this.

Mr Peterson : It is a question of degree, is it not? The question on the section is a question of powers, and not a question of whether those powers may be abused in a smaller or larger manner.

Lord Justice Farwell : You alter the whole of our representative constitution if you are going to allow people to be driven in this way. Money after all makes the wheels go round, and it is money that is of more importance than the individual vote in these days.

Mr Peterson : No doubt there is a deal of truth in that, my lord.

Lord Justice Farwell : This seems to me to be a most important constitutional question.

Mr Peterson : No doubt it is; but the question, again, if I may say so, is not the constitutional question; the question here, really is, what powers are given by Section 16; that is the only thing. If, as a matter of fact, abuses, or such abuses as your lordship suggests, arise and are not prohibited by any existing law——

Lord Justice Farwell : I beg your pardon.

Mr Peterson : The necessary result would be the passing of fresh legislation.

Lord Justice Farwell : They must arise. According to your view, about one-fourth of the whole of the members originally voted for this Parliamentary representation. At the last division there were about 50,000 on one side and 45,000 on the other side, or something like that. You say that 50,000 can compel the 45,000 to contribute their shillings towards a representative chosen by the 50,000.

Mr Peterson : Yes, if they remain in the society.

Lord Justice Farwell : The society is thirty years old and has accumulated funds.

Mr Peterson : I agree. That is one of the dangers of these societies which have power to alter their rules. It is always so.

Lord Justice Farwell : To my mind it is most unreasonable.

Mr Peterson : Your lordship suggests that it goes to the root of a representative government that a man should be a member of a Trade Union, with the result that if he did not subscribe his funds for a particular policy he would be expelled from the society.

Lord Justice Farwell : Yes.

Counsel, whilst using the argument that a Union had the right to enforce support from its members for any political policy it might adopt, could not defend the position. He merely claimed its legality, and admitted that although the action might lead to such abuses as would render further legislation necessary, they intended to claim their full pound of flesh and exert their powers to the utmost. Counsel was not alone in adopting this line of argument, for the Socialist section in the different Unions associated themselves with his words, showing they were prepared to allow the employers the right of political coercion over their workpeople, provided they could obtain the same right for themselves. In the face of such conduct it is hard to believe that these are the same Unions that, in former years, fought so strenuously for the political and religious liberty of the workers.

The judgment that followed had the unanimous support of the three judges in the Appeal Court. It laid down that, as Trade Unions comprise members of every shade of political opinion, it could not have been the intention of the Legislature that it should

be competent for a majority of the members to compel a minority to support by their votes, still less by their subscriptions, political opinions which they may abhor, under penalty, not only of being expelled from the Union, and thus losing all chance of benefit, but also the risk, and in some cases the very serious risk, of not being able to obtain employment in consequence of the refusal of Trade Unionists to work with non-Union members.

When later the case was carried to the House of Lords, the five Law Lords were unanimous in support of the judgment of the Appeal Court. It might have been thought that the justice of this decision would have appealed to all parties affected, but the defendant Union sought to evade the judgment by creating for their Parliamentary representatives positions with big salaries but no duties. Meeting with some opposition, they took counsel's opinion, and were advised that their action would be deemed as contempt of court. Further opinion was now sought, but as no counsel could be found to give a more favourable opinion they dropped their scheme and announced the intention of relying in future upon voluntary

contributions for the support of their Parliamentary representatives. Those, however, who had exposed the illegality of the political levy were yet to reap the reward of their temerity. The Walthamstow branch was ordered to be closed, its secretary and another member were expelled, and their eighteen years' contributions and all benefits were ordered to be confiscated. The action of the members had been upheld by the highest courts in the land, yet the Socialist executive, supposed to exist for the advancement of the brotherhood of man, stooped to a mean reprisal hardly to be paralleled by even the worst class of employer.

The judgment in respect of the political levies, although applicable to all Trade Unions, could be enforced in each Union only by its own members. As an effort was made in various Unions to enforce the judgment, the expulsion of every recalcitrant member and the confiscation of his contribution and benefits were openly advocated. To protect these men and to render the judgment effective it became imperative that this new tyranny should be challenged, and an action for restitution of membership was

entered against the Executive Committee of the Railway Servants' Union by the secretary of the Walthamstow branch. Every effort was made to prevent the facts of this vindictive policy coming before the court, and notwithstanding that for many months the branch continued to retain the books and funds of the society, no legal action was taken to obtain them.

When the expulsion case came on the Union claimed that a Trade Union existed for a purpose in restraint of trade and was therefore illegal at common law. They were outlaws whose existence was contrary to the public good, and those who joined the Union must surrender all freedom, and be obedient to the governing body in all things; they must leave their employment when called upon, notwithstanding that they might be satisfied with the conditions under which they worked. The Union claimed the right to expel any member, and to confiscate all contributions and benefits, and further, though a member might remain in the Union, it claimed the right to refuse any or all benefits without assigning reasons.

One would suppose such a definition of a Trade Union came from the most biased

capitalist: that it came from The Unions themselves is a matter for surprise and regret. Surely it grieved the old leaders, who retained vivid recollections of the great fight in past years for the legal recognition of Trade Unions, and whose supreme energies had been directed toward protecting and not destroying the liberties of the workers. When the courts decided against the Union on this point an attempt was made to raise a still more astounding plea—that the plaintiff was not entitled to maintain the action because the Union was an unlawful combination and confederacy within the meaning of the Unlawful Societies Act passed in the year 1799 (39 George III. c. 79) and the Seditious Meeting Act, 1817 (57 George III. c. 19). The Union, it was pleaded, was divided into district lodges which constituted different divisions or branches or parts of which the Union was composed. Such different divisions, branches, or parts, acted separately from each other and had a separate president and other officials, and appointed delegates to meet and confer with delegates of other associations.

Had the Courts entertained this novel argument, it would have thrown the Unions back upon the old Combination Laws and

rendered the branch officials of Trade Unions liable to arrest for attending their branch meetings. Had some unfriendly capitalist dug up these century-dead statutes, which were framed for the purpose of suppressing organised labour, he would have been rightly met with a howl of execration. The recognised leaders of the Unions, however, seemed willing to sacrifice the whole fabric of Trade Unionism in order to gain the right of using the Union funds and machinery for the purpose of Socialist propaganda.

These arguments were not advanced by counsel without the opportunity of considering their significance: they were deliberately thought out and reduced to writing; they received the approval of the Union officials, and have since been utilised in another case for a similar purpose. The extravagant and unworthy pleas failed: the Appeal Court brushed aside these legal quibbles, and ordered the case to go for trial on its merits. Recognising the weakness of their position and not desiring the exposure of the witness-box, the defendant society admitted the wrong and settled the action out of court. This decision altered the situation completely. Members who took active steps to prevent

the use of Trade Union funds for the purpose of party politics were no longer in fear of expulsion from any of the various Unions.

CHAPTER X

THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL POWER

THE judgment of the Courts declaring the political levies illegal was supported by such sound reasoning that the majority of people found it entirely convincing. The members of the Unions generally recognised its justice, and not only expressed no surprise at the decision, but eagerly took advantage of its protection, so that when the levy ceased to be compulsory they refused to pay voluntarily. When the disposition to withhold the payment became apparent the official section grew alarmed, and, after months of comparative calm, broke into a frenzy of passion at the Trade Union Congress held in September, 1910. The judgment and the judges were denounced in wild and extravagant language.

The speeches delivered and the voting that followed clearly demonstrated how little

the Congress represented the ordinary Trade Union member in political matters. It claimed that the members of the affiliated Unions, including those who had obtained the judgment, were burning with enthusiasm to reverse the judgment and thus enable the political levies to be again enforced. The Congress decided to initiate a campaign against the judgment, and demonstrations were immediately arranged throughout the country ; but the movement failed miserably for want of support.

Many Unions instituted voluntary political funds, but in almost all cases the overwhelming majority of their members refused to support them, notwithstanding that the whole machinery of the Unions was brought into action.

The Socialists were placed in a peculiar and embarrassing position by these voluntary funds. If the Unions succeeded in raising sufficient money for their political policy, the need for compulsory levies would disappear; on the other hand, if the members refused to give their support voluntarily, the refusal would serve as the strongest argument against compulsion: the extension of voluntary funds was therefore

discouraged rather than supported by the official party. The Stone Masons' Society took a vote of their 15,000 members on the question of the judgment, but received only 800 votes in favour of its reversal. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers took a vote of their 107,499 members as regards their willingness to subscribe a shilling each for the purpose of replenishing the Parliamentary Fund, and obtained only 5110 favourable replies. Other Unions took votes of their members in reference to Parliamentary representation with equally disappointing results. As every appeal served only to expose the weakness of the demand for political powers they were not continued.

Some Union leaders, and others who were not even Trade Unionists, stumped the country demanding that the Government should pass an amending Bill to legalise all that they were doing previous to the judgment. These speakers claimed that the organised workers were unanimous and enthusiastic in support of this demand. At the same time other leaders were travelling through the country lecturing their members because of the apathy and indifference they displayed.

For the purpose of relieving the situation, and making it easier for all classes to be represented in the House of Commons, the Government adopted the principle of payment of members, and proposed that each member of Parliament not already in receipt of a salary from the State should receive £400 per year. Instead of staying the demand for political power this served to increase it, as the greater the Parliamentary prize, the greater the number who aspired to obtain it; and the easiest and quickest path, and to many the only one, lay through compulsory levies.

It was the 'pledge' as adopted at the Newcastle Conference in 1903, that first roused the Trade Unionists to active opposition to the levies, and that had been the main cause of contention. When, however, the payment of members was mooted, it became clear that the pledge, as an integral part of the Labour Party's constitution, was wholly opposed to constitutional government, and it was abandoned with some feeling of relief on the part of those who had so long defended it. The removal of this obstacle enabled the Government to introduce a Bill into the House of Commons

for the purpose of meeting the Socialists' demand. Though the Bill passed its second reading, it failed to make further progress that year, and even when re-introduced in 1911 it did not succeed in arousing any **large** amount of enthusiasm. The Government itself was strongly suspected of possessing very little affection for the measure, which they felt to be a dangerous experiment in legislation. An understanding between the Irish and the Labour Party, by which the former were to support the Trade Union Bill and the latter the Home Rule Bill, produced sufficient pressure upon the Government to compel a second reading for the Trade Union Bill previous to the summer vacation.

This curious alliance brought into prominence a very strong difficulty. Secular education still remained one of the foremost planks of the Labour Party's programme, and this was greatly objected to by the Catholics who gave much money and made strenuous effort to support their schools. Now, the effect of this alliance was that any help the Irish Party gave to the Trade Union Bill would be used later toward making Catholic Trade Unionists pay for a party pledged

to destroy their schools. The difficulty was surmounted by the Socialist Labour Party agreeing to make secular education a less prominent feature of their programme, with a view, if possible, to dropping it gradually.

It appears absolutely impossible to find any justification for conferring political powers upon the Unions. Even at the present time they can promote Parliamentary candidatures, and support the Socialist Labour Party by forming a separate fund, under separate control, kept apart from the ordinary work of the Union, and supported only by those who agree with their avowed political policy.

The Socialists would by this plan obtain the advantage of working through the Unions for the purpose of approaching the workers, making their fund known and collecting the contributions in a ready manner. All members who so desired could support the Socialists by their money and service, whilst leaving all others free to support the party of their choice. This question of Parliamentary representation by compulsory support is more than a Trade Union question: it cuts at the very foundation of our constitution.

The present system of government is by a majority in the House of Commons so long as that majority does not exceed its legitimate power; we must therefore see that no section of the community interferes with the proper formation of that national majority, as would be the case if any body of employers or workmen were permitted to coerce others into supporting a particular political party. If a candidate can be brought into a constituency and all organised workmen be forbidden to oppose him under pains and penalties, whilst their support is given unwillingly and under pressure, then representative government is at an end; for representation can exist only so long as it is possible freely to select a person whose views correspond with those of the person represented. If, as suggested, some safeguard could be found whereby an objector could claim exemption from the compulsory levy, by giving notice of his objection, the difficulty would be only partly surmounted, as most Unions have a rule which provides for the expulsion of those members who oppose the society's policy. If the Union made it a part of its policy to promote a certain candidature, any member who took

an active part in opposition would be opposing the 'policy of the society' and therefore liable to expulsion, although legally exempt from any obligation to support the Union's political policy.

To compel a person who objects to the official policy to submit a signed form of objection is contrary to the spirit of the present law. If it were allowed, employers could call upon their employees to support a particular policy or to submit a form of objection. This would be equivalent to a compulsory declaration of political faith, which is illegal. The whole trend of recent legislation has been to extend the franchise, and as it is extended to those less able to protect themselves from coercion, laws have been passed for their protection, so that Parliament may rest upon the will of a free electorate. Such laws are wise and just, and should obtain the willing support of all who are interested in building up a real democracy.

Yet the Socialist Labour Party apparently desires to reverse this policy and to establish a system of government by the party that can most successfully compel political support by tyranny and coercion. Their claim

that they should be the only party empowered to coerce is illogical and cannot stand; we must have either a constitution that aims at government by the free and uncorrupted will of the electorate, or one in which all have an equal opportunity of corrupting and coercing; it is imperative that we should have a common political level for all parties. The *Railway Review*, the organ of the Railwaymen's Union, when dealing with this subject in its columns on January 7, 1910, said: 'A more important difficulty is how to legalise Trade Union activity in politics without providing a corresponding activity in commercial associations on the other side, which might aggravate what is undoubtedly one of the evil tendencies in modern politics.'

It then proceeded to argue that such distinctions between a Trade Union and other associations could not be drawn, and therefore all should be permitted to engage in political activities. Thus, with the object of obtaining power to use Trade Union funds for political purposes, the Socialist Labour Party in 1910 was prepared to support the granting of similar powers to all other associations and companies; but in

1907 Mr Ramsay Macdonald led the Labour Party into the division lobby of the House of Commons against a Bill of the London and North-Western Railway Company as a protest against that company having spent a portion of its funds for political purposes regardless of the opinions of some of its shareholders. This action in support of political purity and freedom would have earned for them the thanks of the country as a whole, only many of the men who made the protest owed their position in Parliament to the fact that they had illegally used the compulsory levies of Trade Union members, who in various cases were their political opponents.

An attempt has been made to justify the compulsory levies on the ground that the benefits of Labour representation should go only to those who support that party. If this argument carried any force, then the benefits derived from Parliament would be limited to the supporters of the party responsible for the passing of particular Acts. Thus Conservatives alone would have the right of free education for their children, and only Liberals would be entitled to old-age pensions. This would be a perfectly splendid example of the doctrine 'spoils

to the victors,' but the whole argument is so preposterously absurd that one cannot even attempt to criticise it. The practice has always been, and must continue so long as we have constitutional government, that though a Bill may be the Bill of a party, so soon as it becomes an Act, it is the property of the nation as a whole.

On the question of how far the Labour Party really benefits the Trade Unions in particular, and Labour in general, difference of opinion will naturally arise. But here the tyranny of the Socialist Labour Party steps in, by denying the right of any man to exercise his own opinion. The Socialists arrogate to themselves the right to force their opinion on every one. They are right, all others wrong, and consequently for their own benefit must be compelled to support the policy set before them. The non-Unionists must be forced into the Union for their own good, and being in the Union they must be dragooned into supporting any revolutionary doctrine that may be dictated to them—again for their own good. Any dissent is an economic heresy that can lead only to their industrial undoing. Private views and conscientious opinions

must be sacrificed under the threat of pains and penalties. It is argued that present pressure, a euphemistic name for tyranny, is but a means to an end—the entire emancipation of Labour, and that such a glorious object justifies any means. This line of argument is peculiarly familiar. Back in the dark and middle ages the priest laid down the creed, and all doubters or dissenters were heretics whose destruction was necessary lest others should be led astray. Even personal suffering was justified on the ground that it was for the victim's own good, to save him from himself.

It is a strange commentary on the progress of the human race, when it has to be admitted that we have only thrown off the religious yoke to take on a political bondage, and that the priest of religion has been replaced by the political dictator.

The Labour Party of Australia is held up as a pattern for Labour representation. There, Labour coercion has developed to such lengths that true citizenship ceases to exist, and the workman has been converted into a mere electoral machine to register votes as directed by his political taskmasters. The political Labour Council of Victoria

issues subscription cards to its members for the payment of sixpence per quarter, and on each card is a printed pledge for the member's signature. The contents are instructive and some people might even think degrading. 'I hereby pledge myself to the political Labour Council of Victoria to faithfully uphold to the best of my ability its constitutions and platforms and to vote and work for its selected candidates.'

Thus a member residing in a constituency where an election is to take place is pledged to support any candidate brought to the district, regardless of his character or views. By such means election by constituency is destroyed, and the candidate practically secures election on his adoption by the caucus.

The Australian system was being fast copied here, and but for the unexpected check administered by the Law Courts, the Victoria Labour Council would not now be far in advance of the Socialist Labour Party in this country.

The demand of the Labour Party is that all constitutional and individual liberty shall be sacrificed, and representative government as known and followed for generations past shall be abolished. The door

is to be opened to corruption and coercion, the funds of the collective bodies are to be used for the purposes of political parties without the consent of the contributors, and workmen are to be compelled to support any policy placed before them.

By such means representative government will be removed from a voluntary to a compulsory basis, citizenship which has been so hardly fought for and so greatly prized will become a meaningless term. Political life, which has hitherto attracted the noblest and ablest in the land, will become the hunting ground of political adventurers. Yet this demand for the reversal of the judgment is being pursued under the plea of liberty. The freedom of the Trade Unions to use their funds as the governing section may decide, without regard to the purpose for which they were subscribed, or the wish of those by whom they were constituted, and the right to compel support for the official policy, however far removed from the original and proper objects, spell not liberty but licence—licence to destroy the liberty of others.

CHAPTER XI

THE LABOUR PARTY: ITS POLICY AND
PROGRAMME

At the general election in 1906 the Labour party succeeded in securing the return to Parliament of twenty-nine of their candidates. This success impressed the country profoundly and caused the workers to exaggerate the importance of their victory. Viewed in a clearer light there was really nothing remarkable in the result which had been brought about by a series of incidents over which the Socialists possessed little control. A reaction had set in after the South African War; declining trade had produced much unemployment, while the introduction of Asiatic labour into the Transvaal had been greatly resented. Above all, Mr Joseph Chamberlain had opened a campaign in support of Tariff Reform, with which the Conservative Party had identified itself. A general revolt against the Government occurred, and the task of the Opposition candidates was rendered comparatively easy. The Liberals, quick to see the danger

of splitting the progressive vote, and at the same time recognising the advantage of harnessing the new Labour Party to their coach, allowed a large number of Labour Party candidates to go to the poll with Liberal support.

In twenty-six of these constituencies out of twenty-eight, Labour was successful, but in almost every case where the contest lay between Labour and Liberalism the Labour man was defeated. It was thus made quite obvious that the Labour Party owed its existence as a Parliamentary section to the favour of the Liberals, and its members were expected to give general support to the measures of their allies. This peculiar result placed the Labour members in a most embarrassing position, with one foot resting upon Liberal and the other on Socialist support, and fearing the whole time to be dropped by one section or the other. Their embarrassment was not lessened by the failure of the workers to observe the various factors which had operated toward their success. Believing that the numbers returned to Parliament reflected their normal strength in the country, they were led to demand impossible things.

The Labour group attempted to maintain their reputation by claiming the credit for all beneficial legislation, and repudiating all that was not considered satisfactory from the standpoint of Labour. As the Liberal Government had a majority of about 325 independent of the Socialist Labour group, it is doubtful if their thirty members greatly affected legislation, more especially as the Trade Union party of twenty-five members in the House of Commons were watching all measures in the Labour interest, and, owing to their co-operation with the Government, were being consulted on all Labour matters. For some time, however, the Labour Party managed by smart window-dressing methods to satisfy both sections of their supporters. On the one hand they refrained from openly offending the Liberals, and on the other by moving abstract resolutions and indulging in theoretical discussions they made some appearance of supporting the extreme platform. The elections in 1910 were even more disastrous to them than that of 1906, as not a single candidate could secure election except by the aid of Liberal votes. Their weakness became so obvious that their prestige suffered severely, the more so because of

the exaggerated importance that had hitherto attached to them.

In 1909 the Miners' Federation, which had previously maintained an independent attitude, affiliated with the Labour Party, thus adding to the strength of the Parliamentary group, and also to the voting strength in the constituencies; but the increased power was more apparent than real, the miners' members being practical Trade Unionists, who thought more of co-operating with others for the advancement of Labour conditions than in maintaining a position of political isolation. Instead of joining in the headstrong pursuit of impossible ideals, they acted rather as a drag, steadying the less thoughtful and more erratic members of the group.

Surrounded by these difficulties, and fearful of offending their various supporters, the Socialists have been wholly unable to attain to that independent position so generally anticipated after their success in 1906. Recognising the impossibility of improving their position in this Parliament or at the next election, when they expect to suffer some measure of defeat, they look forward to a change of Government to provide an opportunity of regaining some of their lost

confidence. Against a Conservative Government they will be able to take far more aggressive action, and thus enjoy the support of both Liberal and Socialist voter. By such methods they expect to obtain some measure of success, but it will be in opposing Government measures, not in a constructive programme, which, after all, is the only possible justification for the existence of a Labour Party.

The Workmen's Compensation Act is sometimes claimed as due to the efforts of the Socialist Labour Party, whose members have even attempted to estimate the amount of money derived by injured persons under one section of the Act of which they regard themselves as the authors. The whole history of Workmen's Compensation refutes this claim. It is a principle introduced into this country from Germany in 1897. It was purely experimental legislation confined to certain trades, and even to those in a restricted form. It was generally agreed that if the experiment proved successful it would be extended to all trades, and would gradually supersede the old principle of employers' liability.

The war in South Africa hampered and

delayed domestic legislation, but in 1906 almost every member returned to the House of Commons was pledged to the amendment and extension of the Act. A large and comprehensive scheme was introduced by the Government, and numerous amendments were moved from both sides of the House. The Trade Union party carefully watched the measure and took an active share in shaping it. If the Socialist Labour Party moved a certain amendment it was merely owing to their luck in obtaining the first opportunity: the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress followed the Bill very closely, and could have had any amendments moved which they considered necessary.

The attitude of the Socialist Labour Party toward the question of compensation for accidents is in direct contrast to that of the Trade Union Congress so late as 1895. The Socialists, regarding the matter from a monetary point of view, test the value of the Act by the amount of money to be obtained through it. The Trade Unions advocated employers' liability. Compensating the victims of accidents was a secondary object, the primary purpose being to penalise faulty

plant and machinery, and thus prevent carelessness on the part of employers and their agents. Their object was to save the lives of fathers and husbands rather than to compensate widows and orphans. They spoke of the amounts recovered under the Employers' Liability Act with regret, because it indicated a terrible sacrifice in human life and limb. Because the Act of 1880 was not sufficiently effective in preventing this frightful toll of human life, an amending Act was demanded.

Employers' liability not only compelled care on the part of the employers, but, by making the workman responsible for his own carelessness, it induced care on his part also. Workmen's compensation is but a form of industrial insurance; it provides money rather than protection. Employers shift their burden by insuring with a third party, and so escape the direct inducement to carefulness. Workmen, however careless, receive compensation, and they often meet with avoidable accidents, through accepting unnecessary risks which often prove more serious than they anticipate. Workmen's compensation has contributed to malingering and at times even to self-inflicted

injury. The value of any Act dealing with industrial accidents must be judged by its effectiveness as a preventative, and in this respect the principle of workmen's compensation has sadly failed.

The Trade Unions had succeeded in obtaining a second reading for their Trade Disputes Bill in 1905, and at the general election in the next year the Liberal Party were returned to power with a huge majority pledged to this reform. The Socialist Labour Party is therefore most unfortunate in its pretension to be responsible for this Act, although it initiated a mischievous amendment. Neither are its members happier in claiming the Miners' Minimum Wage Act as a result of their Parliamentary effort. The principle of this measure was adopted by the Government in direct negotiation with the Miners' Union.

The efforts of the Labour Party to insert in the Bill the definite amount which should constitute the minimum wage for the mining industry was resolutely and successfully withstood by the Government. As the Labour Party denounced the measure in Parliament and voted against its third reading, it is difficult to see how they can claim any credit for its passing.

This Act lays down no minimum, neither does it set up machinery that can fix a minimum wage for the trade. It merely constitutes different boards at which, failing an agreement between employers and employed, an outside chairman can be appointed to fix the minimum for a district, and his award becomes enforceable in the courts. The resolute action of the Government in refusing to insert any particular figures in the Act saved the Labour Party from itself. Had their advice been accepted, and a general legal minimum fixed throughout the mining industry without the option of contracting out, then, as subsequent investigations have proved, many mines must have closed and thousands of men have lost employment. As the connection between the Act and the closed mines would have been so direct and apparent, the Labour Party could not have escaped the resentment of the workers.

The Socialist Labour Party has now definitely pledged itself to support the principle of a general minimum wage. Whatever may be the attitude of political theorists toward this question, only the most extreme and unthinking section of the workers

can believe that one fixed minimum wage for all trades is feasible. It must be recognised that profits and conditions vary in different industries. Some chiefly cater for foreign, and others for home consumption. We are powerless to regulate the prices for foreign markets, we can only destroy our own trade. Were it possible to make the payment or the receiving of a wage less than the fixed standard a punishable offence, it would still remain impossible to compel the employment of labour, when such employment could only mean a loss to the employer.

When it was made an offence to pay more than a certain wage per day, employers evaded the law by paying for seven days per week, although no actual work was done on the seventh day. No law can be devised that will prevent employer and workman arriving at a mutual understanding as regards the payment of wages. It would be wholly impossible to run a line through all employment, dividing skilled from unskilled labour, and fixing a wage for each, regardless of the amount of skill required in different trades, the cost of living in different districts, and the unpleasant conditions attached to certain callings.

It is impossible to fix one wage for all industries and equally so to fix a separate minimum to each trade. Those in which the highest fixed wage was paid would soon become glutted, thus producing a dearth of labour in one trade and unemployment in another. During the closing years of the last century the building industry, especially in the London districts, was in a flourishing condition, and numerous parents brought their boys up as masons, carpenters, and bricklayers. These industries subsequently became glutted with labour, and since the men possessed no training for any other kind of work, it was not easy to transfer to different callings, and much unemployment and suffering ensued.

It would be disastrous if the law endeavoured to make any particular trade attractive by a legally fixed wage higher than that of other trades. In order to avoid this the lowest rate must be sufficiently low to meet the requirements of the less skilled or less prosperous trades, and then it would be so much lower than the existing rates in some trades that it would not only be useless to them but would also constitute a real danger by tending to drag wages down

to that level. It must be carefully remembered that in the whole experience of Trade Unionism the minimum wage tends to constitute the maximum also. If Parliament attempts to regulate wages, it will be necessary to frame a separate Act for each trade, and, as the conditions change, with schedules for each district ; the rates must be altered and some inquiry must precede each alteration. Parliament will not find its new duties light ones by any means. When electing a member to Parliament the workers will be electing their own paymasters, and their votes naturally will be given to the highest bidder.

Even if the numerous obstacles barring the way of a legal minimum wage for each trade could be surmounted, the increased cost of production would be passed on to the consumer; in fact, this has been the policy recommended by members of the present Government to employers complaining of the burden placed upon industry by recent legislation. Thus the higher wage would purchase less than now, and the worker would lose rather than gain by an Act which, though it would irritate, disorganise, or destroy trade, could not produce new wealth.

The advocacy of a legal minimum wage rests upon two fallacies: first, that profits in all industries are sufficiently large to meet the extra cost involved without any further effect than reducing the enormous sums which employers draw from the industry; whereas in numerous cases it is only by the greatest care and economy that any profit can be realised. Secondly, it is assumed that a wage is the worker's only object in giving his labour, whereas it is not the wage but the purchasing power that is of value. Every increase of price in goods to the workman's wife is equal to a decrease of wage to the workman; thus if the cost of living rises more rapidly than the wage an increased wage may mean a loss in the wage value.

The Socialist light-heartedly bids us nationalise the industry, whilst the Syndicalist urges that it should be put under the ownership and control of the workers. Whichever plan is decided upon the finished article must bear the cost of its own production, and as public control is usually less economical than private management such remedies will inevitably aggravate the disease. Even the boldest advocate of the

legal minimum wage admits that its application must tend to injure the aged, the weak, and all whose earning capacity has been impaired. It will be the survival of the fittest by legal enactment. By such means the old cry of 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number' is inverted, and the few, those best able to look after themselves, will benefit at the expense of the weaker ones.

No proposal put forward by the Labour Party is more calculated to deceive and injure the workers than the Right to Work Bill, which provides that an unemployed workman may register himself as such, and it shall be then the duty of the local unemployment authority to provide work for him, at wages not lower than those recognised as the standard in such work in the locality ; or, failing the provision of work, to provide maintenance for the workman and those dependent upon him.

If there were not already overwhelming evidence of the failure of all such projects in this country and abroad, it should require but little knowledge of human nature to realise the impossibility of such a scheme. All those in any district in receipt of less

than the standard rate of wage could easily qualify for registration with the local authority, and thus demand work at the full rate, or, what many would prefer, maintenance for themselves and dependants without work. Such conditions would create an artificial dearth of labour in private employment, and those who remained would be able to demand a higher standard wage, which new standard would also apply to the registered unemployed. The workers would naturally flock to those districts where the standard wage was highest. All industrial discipline would collapse when the workers through their ability to demand from the local authority wages as high or higher than those previously earned became wholly independent of private work.

In private employment a reasonable amount of work must be given in exchange for wages, but the registered unemployed would be sure of the maximum wage even for the minimum amount of work. The local officials would find such difficulty in procuring suitable employment for applicants that they would almost certainly encourage malingering. If the men are employed on profitable work they will be merely

displacing other labour. If they are employed on unnecessary work the money is wasted and society becomes the poorer; whilst the money will be diverted from other channels that probably would be employing labour on remunerative work to the benefit of all.

The Bill rests upon the assumption that no one will take unfair advantage of the measure, that every workman is scrupulously honest, and that no one will endeavour to exchange hard and low paid private employment for well paid light council work arranged on the go-as-you-please system.

The workman out of employment with dependants reduced to poverty is not in a position to consider calmly such a Bill or to discover its impossible nature; he only knows that he is in need of employment and thinks this Bill will assist him. The Bill is doubly mischievous, because it affords no solution to the terrible difficulty of unemployment, but distracts the attention of those who might attempt to deal with the problem in other ways, and tends to make workmen expect assistance from this fanciful scheme rather than to take the slow but practical means that lie to hand. The Labour

Party, like all political parties, is more interested in exploiting social ills for political capital than in finding practical remedies.

When their programme extends to Home Rule, Woman Suffrage, Licensing Questions, Religious Instruction in Schools, National Defence, and Foreign Relations, they are abandoning the Labour preserve in order to compete in the arena of party politics in which Trade Unionists so widely differ. When they endeavour to deal with purely Labour questions they approach them in such a superficial manner that the time spent is only taken from a better cause. The weakness of the Labour Party is that its leaders are political theorists rather than practical workmen; they build castles in the air and forget that some solid foundation is necessary. Holding dual offices, they are unable to give the necessary attention to the work of the party, whilst their various salaries, fees, and other emoluments raise them from the ranks of labour into middle-class men, with tastes, ideas, and ambitions harmonising with their new status.

CHAPTER XII

THE TAFF VALE CASE

EMPLOYERS and workmen alike had shown a general disposition to accept the law as it was understood to have been defined by the Trade Union Acts 1871 to 1876. These Acts were believed to exempt Trade Unions from suing or being sued, a state of affairs which would undoubtedly have long continued to the advantage of both sides but for the campaign inaugurated by the advocates of 'New Unionism.'

The New Union officials did not possess the same qualifications as their predecessors—patience, calmness and disinterestedness. They were chosen rather for their oratorical power and the impetuous enthusiasm that appeals to the mob. However helpful such men may be on a platform, they cannot be other than dangerous in a responsible position in connection with the management of the Unions. The Executive Committees were being largely drawn from the same class, and thus instead of providing a healthy

check to their over-hasty officials they often encouraged their policy.

Sometimes, indeed, it happened that a fiery young organiser, let loose amongst the members to whom he could appeal personally, became stronger than the Executive Committee itself, with the result that the Labour movement was being rushed along like a train with full steam and faulty brakes. The more sober and experienced leaders looked on with alarm, conscious that this wild and whirling campaign, with its accompanying violence and class hatred, could not proceed long unchallenged. The general secretary of the Railway Servants' Union on several occasions warned his Executive Committee against permitting such conduct, and pointed out that the employers were not likely to tolerate it for ever. This extravagant policy had already compelled employers to strengthen their organisations, and the legal position of Trade Unions was being considered with the view of testing the extent of their powers, privileges, and immunities.

The Railwaymen's Society had placed one of the new leaders in charge of their South Wales and West of England District,

a man of great energy and impetuosity, whose ambition led him to conduct movements almost unknown to the governing bodies, or to the chief officials of his Union. How difficult it was to control his enormous energy is made evident by a report issued by his society in January, 1903, in which the general secretary stated, 'I have been blamed by judge and jury for not controlling our local agent in connection with the Taff Vale agitation and for not having called him away from the district. This is very unfair, for upon every occasion I brought his conduct to the notice of the Executive Committee—and I had to do this at practically every meeting from the date of his appointment to the strike—resolutions were passed, but in spite of them he deliberately went on his own way.'

For some time previous to 1900 a good deal of unrest had existed in connection with the small railways in the South Wales district, and the general secretary reported that he found great difficulty in controlling the branches and movements in the district in charge of the South Wales organiser, and also in controlling him.

After dealing with movements in connection

with different railways in an irregular manner, this agent identified himself with a similar movement on the Taff Vale Railway without the knowledge of the chief officials of his society, who only became aware of his action through a press cutting agency after ballot papers had been issued to the men concerned. On July 13, 1900, his usual weekly report to *The Railway Review*, a paper which circulates among the public as well as among railwaymen, contained the following remarks, which were deleted by the editor so as not to prejudice the men, but afterwards appeared in the Society's report: 'There is nothing I would like better than to measure swords with this Taff Vale Railway dictator (the general manager), and who knows how soon the chance may come. I not only don't fear him but court a try, and if the men will only prove men I have no fear of the results. There is a black mark to rub out, and I swear I won't rest till it has been done.'

The agitation increased at such a rate that on August 6, 1900, a number of strike notices were handed in to the railway company, whereas the local agent evidently intended the signing of the strike notices merely as a piece of bluff. This serious

turn of affairs apparently frightened him, and he immediately wrote to the general secretary of his society as follows : 'I enclose a cutting from a local paper which gives a fair report of the position up to now. You will see by my letter to the papers that I advise postponing putting notices in until August 13, but I regret to say they have not taken my advice, and this morning, August 6, 363 notices were handed in to the company—signalmen, 201 out of 220 employed; guards, 83 out of 98; brakesmen, 78 out of 90. By a serious blunder the Cardiff guards and brakesmen don't go in until the 13th inst. I have done my best to prevent this stupid blunder, but these men were determined and so the matter stands. I do not know how you may view this serious matter, but my own opinion is that it is serious enough for the Executive Committee. I shall be glad, after perusing the papers and this letter, that you will give me any advice.'

The general secretary replied that the movement was irregular, not having received the sanction of the Executive Committee, neither had it been conducted in accordance with the rules of the Union. The President of the Board of Trade intervened, and also

asked the secretary of the men's Union to attempt to settle the matter without a strike, but all intervention failed, and the strike commenced on August 20, 1900. The total number of notices sent in on different dates was 797, but by some remarkable mischance no list of names had been kept, so that no one knew who was or who was not going to strike.

On August 19, a meeting of the men was held at Pontypridd, in which the local organiser took a prominent part, and it was decided that all men should strike at midnight whether their notices had expired or not. On the same day the Executive Committee met in London to consider the dispute, and whilst condemning the irregular manner in which it had been entered into, it was agreed by seven votes to five that the general secretary should go down with a view to bringing the strike to a speedy termination. Further, it was agreed that financial support should be given. By this unfortunate decision the Union became officially responsible for the strike, which led up to the most important action in the whole history of the Labour movement.

On the next day, August 20, the general

secretary travelled from London to Cardiff and at once opened up communication with the railway company, proceeding to do all in his power to bring the strike to a satisfactory conclusion. The company refused to meet him, and the men did not return to their employment until September 1. The general secretary conducted the strike on the usual lines, doing nothing but what was common in all strikes, and what is necessary if Trade Unions are to be of any real use to the workers; but he was unable to control the bitter spirit aroused, and much violence was done. The local agent had appealed to every striker to be up in good time to picket the stations, and added, 'Let them not come within the limits of the law, but, of course, there were many ways of persuading men.'

The Taff Vale Railway Company then summoned 208 of their men who had left their employment without notice or with insufficient notice, and also applied on August 23, 1900, for an injunction to restrain the society, its officers, and members from doing certain things. The case was heard in the High Courts on August 30, by Mr Justice Farwell, who held that as

the Legislature had authorised the creation of numerous bodies of men capable of owning great wealth, and of acting by agents, which can inflict injury, it must be taken to have impliedly given power to make it suable in a case of law for injuries purposely done by its authority and pronouncement; he therefore gave judgment against the society. On the case being carried to the Court of Appeal the judgment was reversed, but subsequently the House of Lords restored the judgment of Mr Justice Farwell.

The Taff Vale Railway Company thereupon commenced a further action claiming £24,626 damages against the Railwaymen's Union. The bill was made up as follows: Police protection, £306 5s. 3d.; police subsistence expenses, £125 19s. 8d.; extra wages, £582 18s. 6d.; extra works and watching, £1467 18s. 8d.; cost of newhands, £959 14s. 10d.; advertising and printing, £289 11s. 4d.; cost of maintaining, housing, and feeding imported men, £2141 10s. 7d.; legal expenses and sundries, £703 5s. 1d.; loss of profits during and in consequence of the strike, £14,500; loss on working during the strike, £3549.

This account, especially the item referring

to the maintenance of imported labour, was the most humiliating that any Trade Union could be asked to pay. The statement of claim set out that the plaintiffs have suffered damage by reason of the defendants other than the trustees unlawfully and maliciously conspiring together to molest and injure the plaintiffs in their business, or alternatively, by reason of an unlawful combination on the part of the said defendants to carry on a strike of the plaintiffs' servants by unlawful means, or in the further alternative, by reason of the said defendants individually having knowingly committed violations of the legal rights of the plaintiffs.

It then proceeded to state facts in support of that claim, many of the cases mentioned being harmless and cited only for the purpose of proving a connection between the society and the movement prior to the strike. Complaint was also made of about 70 serious cases of violence and intimidation by organised pickets, of which the following is a sample. On August 20, 1900, at Pontypridd, a large body of pickets came upon the plaintiffs' railway, and, with a view to compel C— H— the driver, from fulfilling his lawful employment, forcibly

removed him from the train which he was, with the assistance of a fireman, lawfully driving from Theherbert to Pontypridd, and violently assaulted him and removed him from the railway, and conveyed him to the headquarters of the defendants at Pontypridd, and afterwards to the defendants' headquarters at Colbourne Hotel, Cardiff.

It was also complained that the unrest among, and subsequent strike of, their servants were fomented and procured by the said defendants, not for any lawful or legitimate object, but under the colourable pretext of demanding improved conditions of service for such servants for the real purpose and object of injuring the plaintiffs, and of dictating the terms under which the plaintiffs should be allowed to employ labour, and in order to interfere with the liberty, both of the plaintiffs and their servants, as to the terms of employment, and with the intention of exalting and asserting the defendants own position at the expense of the plaintiffs.

It was further urged that at the instigation of the Trade Union's local agent, it had been decided that all men, whether their notice had expired or not, should cease work

at midnight on August 19, and that the men employed for duty on the mail train in the early morning of August 20 should refuse to work.

The case came before Mr Justice Wills on December 3, 1902, and lasted for thirteen days. The judge summed up strongly against the society, and submitted the following questions to the jury :—

Did the defendants conspire together to molest and injure plaintiffs in their business by unlawful means?

Did the defendants, or any of them, unlawfully persuade men whose notices had not expired to break their contracts?

Did defendants, or any of them, authorise and assist in carrying out the strike by unlawful means?

So overwhelming was the evidence given on behalf of the plaintiffs' claim that the jury, after only ten minutes' deliberation, answered the questions put by the judge in the affirmative, thereby finding a verdict against the society, and the general secretary of the defendant society reported that, after hearing the evidence, the verdict did not come as a great surprise to him. It was felt that no good purpose could be served by carrying the

case to a higher court, and a cheque for £22,000 was paid to the Taff Vale Company in settlement of damages and cost. Altogether the case cost the Railwaymen's Union a total of £42,000.

This decision had a sobering effect upon the Socialist section who were responsible for bringing this disaster upon the Unions. Whilst organised labour resented the judgment as a direct attack upon the whole principle of collective bargaining by those who desired to see the Unions crippled, it was generally admitted that this strike had been brought about by wild and extravagant means, and that by playing upon the passions of the men previous to the strike those responsible for the movement had induced intimidation and violence. Above all, this action had demonstrated the necessity of appointing to responsible positions in the Unions strong, calm, and moderate men who would think before they spoke, and count the costs before they acted; men who would seek to control rather than excite bitter passions.

The general secretary of the Railwaymen's Union when reporting the results of the Taff Vale case to his members said,—‘The

experience I have gained during the last five or six years tends to show that the members are not sufficiently careful in their selection of Executive Committee members. Instead of electing those with grit enough to rigidly administer the society's rules, the tendency, in many cases, seems to be to elect the members who have become popular through the exercise of their oratorical powers. As the result of this we have to put up with the Taff Vale Strike, the cost of which, including the House of Lords case, the present action, and the probable damages, will amount to close upon £50,000. This is a heavy price to pay for the gratification of irresponsible members, and those not the most thoughtful. In view of this enormous cost, and the damage done to the prestige of the society which has done so much for railwaymen in the past, and which is capable of doing still more in the future, I feel that the members should know how the difficulty has been brought about and where the responsibility lies. During my term of office as general secretary I have done my utmost to cause things to be conducted in the right way, but by the Executive Committee I have not been

supported as I ought to have been. As a result, a few irresponsible persons have run away with the governing body, and landed us in the present difficulty.'

In the face of such testimony, no matter how much one may regret the decision, it must be admitted that the employers had real cause for complaint, neither can it be wondered that they appealed to the law for protection from such gross and unjustifiable conduct on the part of the responsible agents of the Unions.

Truly had the new methods and the new men been tried and found wanting.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRADE DISPUTES ACT

THE entire Labour army, irrespective of party, received the Taff Vale judgment with consternation and alarm. The members had been suddenly denuded of a safeguard which they had always considered their strongest protection. Not only their trade, but also their provident funds were exposed to the attack of their opponents. Serious as the judgment was, the uncertainty it

created was even more grave: no Union entering into a trade dispute could feel sure of avoiding the meshes of the law however carefully its officers and members might act. It had been held that where a Union through its recognised agents acted wrongly, the Union could be made to pay out of its funds for the damage caused.

In theory the judgment was sound, but in practice it proved full of difficulties. The law might hold that every branch official was an agent, and the same contention might apply to every local committee. In such circumstances no Union could possibly feel safe; any indiscreet action on the part of some over-anxious official, perhaps without the knowledge or consent of and even contrary to the wish of the central committee, might involve the Union in expensive litigation.

Substantial damages might sweep away the whole of the funds, leaving men stranded after a life of thrift, whilst widows and orphans, together with aged and superannuated members, would also suffer. In reality an attempt had been made to find an analogy between an ordinary Corporation and a Trade Union when no such analogy existed. In the former

case, the shareholders or members appoint their directors or managers, and through them the whole of the officers or agents, who are paid and controlled by the central authority.

In a Trade Union the local branches appoint their own officers or agents and local committees. Local movements are often initiated without the knowledge or consent of the central authority. It needs no argument to show the hardship that would be entailed if the members in general were held responsible for the acts of men they neither appointed nor controlled. The judges were most unfairly attacked on account of their decision, but they do not appear to have had any alternative. In common law a body owning wealth and acting by agents is responsible for the actions purposely committed by those agents, and if Parliament had intended, as doubtless it had, that Trade Unions should be placed in a privileged position, then words conferring that immunity should have been inserted in the Trade Union Acts. In the absence of such words the judges had no discretion, and the best friends of Labour placed in their position could have arrived at no other decision.

It was useless to argue that Parliament had intended to confer such immunity or to produce speeches in support of that contention; the judges were compelled to interpret Acts of Parliament, and not the speeches of individuals however influential. The case as presented rendered only two decisions possible, the one that was arrived at, or one recognising that the Unions could deliberately inflict injury upon others with complete immunity.

The Trade Union leaders were at first divided in opinions as to the best means of protecting the Union funds, but gradually they arrived at the conclusion that legislation was necessary to (1) define the law, and (2) to give the Unions that immunity which the Taff Vale judgment showed they did not possess. After two or three futile attempts to obtain the assistance of Parliament, the Union leaders concentrated their efforts on a Bill which, introduced into Parliament in 1905, was carried through its second reading by a majority of 122, but failed to pass the committee stage.

The Liberal party made the subject one of the first items on their programme in the general election of the following year, and

having obtained a very large majority in the new House of Commons they introduced a Trades Dispute Bill which provided that 'where a committee of a Trade Union constituted as hereinafter mentioned has been appointed to conduct on behalf of the Union a trade dispute, an action whereby it is sought to charge the funds of the Union with damages in respect of any tortious act committed in contemplation or furtherance of the trade dispute shall not lie, unless the act was committed by the committee or some person acting under their authority. Provided that a person shall not be deemed to have acted under the authority of the committee if the act was an act or one of a class of acts expressly prohibited by a resolution of the committee or if the committee by resolution expressly repudiate the act as soon as it is brought to their knowledge.'

This Bill, most happily worded, gave the Unions immunity from liability for the acts of others over whom they had no control, and restricted the liability of the funds to the deliberate acts of the managing body. The Socialist Labour party, greatly strengthened by the recent election and eager to find some means of justifying their separate

existence, put forward the demand that there should be no limit to the immunity conferred upon the Unions, and that in every case their funds should be free from all liability. The election had introduced a great number of new men to the House of Commons, with little experience in either legal or industrial matters, but with a keen desire to please their more active supporters; these were consequently prepared to give their support to any extension of the Government's Bill.

Though more sober Trade Union officials recognised the danger of these proposals opposition was impossible without laying themselves open to serious misunderstanding, and in order to avoid adding to the bitterness already existing between the two wings of the Labour party, they supported the extravagant demands. The Law Officers of the Crown and other eminent lawyers on both sides of the House pointed out the danger of concession, but Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, then Prime Minister, threw over his advisers and incorporated the Socialist demands in the Government Bill which was passed. The Bill as amended provided that 'an act done by a person in contemplation

or furtherance of a trade dispute shall not be actionable on the grounds only that it induces some other person to break a contract of employment or that it is an interference with the trade, business, or employment of some other person, or with the right of some other person to disposal of his capital or his labour as he wills.'

A further provision was that 'an action against a Trade Union whether of workmen or masters, or against any members or officials thereof on behalf of themselves and all other members of the Trade Union in respect of any tortious act alleged to have been committed by or on behalf of the Trade Union shall not be entertained by any Court.'

The passage of this Act made it possible for the Unions to commit civil wrong with impunity. The assembling of large gangs, without limit of numbers, for the alleged purpose of 'peaceful' picketings, had conducted to much violence and intimidation, not only in the immediate neighbourhood of the dispute but over wide areas. The violence and brutality of the 'peaceful' pickets have become so notorious that it is totally unnecessary to labour the point.

Sacredness of contract is the very basis of civilised life. It was therefore the more amazing that in 1906, for the first time in modern history, a government should lay it down that the inducing to breach of contract should constitute no civil wrong. How far this immunity extends was amply demonstrated by the great strike on the English railways during the summer of 1911. Only when the leaders of the railwaymen's four Unions had been assured that calling the men out without notice, in breach of their contract of service, would bring no liability to the Union funds, was the strike ordered, and every effort was made to induce the men to leave their employment in an unlawful manner. Not only was that strike called contrary to the law of contracts, but also to the rules of their own association, inasmuch as these provided that a strike could take place only when other efforts, including an offer to arbitrate, had failed, and then only by consent of two-thirds of the members concerned.

Though called out from regular employment contrary to their wish, and without any reason being assigned, the men were unable to compel their committee to observe

the society's rules, because the Trade Disputes Act had deprived them of all legal control over their society or its funds in time of trade disputes. Thus a committee of twelve could defy the rules of the Union and use the Union funds as they thought fit, whilst the members were left without redress. Such monstrous powers were never claimed by the Unions previous to 1906.

When their Bill for reversing the Taff Vale decision was before Parliament in 1905, Mr T. P. (now Sir Thomas) Whittaker and Mr John Wilson of the Miners' Union were the official spokesmen for the Unions. In a justification of picketing Mr Whittaker said, 'We are told that this Bill would permit men to molest, and terrorise, and intimidate, and we should have a great crowd attending. Nothing of the kind. This is not the aim of the Trade Unionists of the country, and if it was it would not be legal for a great crowd to attend watching and besetting a house. Who could say that when so attending a crowd of men were attempting peacefully to persuade? A large number of men could not contend that they were there peaceably to persuade.'

Mr John Wilson supported this view, and in claiming for the Union funds some

measure of immunity said, 'Give us fair play and a fair field and we have no desire whatever to make any man irresponsible for his action. I will go further and say that if the Executive Committee of an organisation or an organisation itself deposes a man to do a thing which may be wrong, I have no objection to its being made liable, because then it is the Union itself that is doing the wrong. But take my own position as secretary. If I madly and recklessly go down to where there is a strike, without the sanction of the committee or of any one else, and urge the men to do what is wrong, I am liable and should be punished, but the funds of the Union should not be mulcted at all.'

Mr Whittaker condemned such action as that which occurred in the case of *Quinn v. Leatham*, where an attempt was made to punish an employer for not dismissing his non-Union workmen, and also repudiated the suggestion that they desired to legalise such conduct.

The Trade Union Congress was so pleased with the case as presented by Mr Whittaker and Mr Wilson that they published a verbatim report of their speeches and circulated them throughout the affiliated Unions.

It is therefore clear that the Trade Unions in 1905 did not wish or even anticipate such wide powers and immunities as were granted by the Government's measure in the next year. Doubtless the Government in passing the Trade Disputes Act intended to assist the Unions, but no more grievous injury could have been done to the cause of real Trade Unionism by its worst enemy. The extraordinary powers and immunities have induced the wilder spirits to go to such excesses that public sympathy—so necessary to success in all Labour movements—has been largely turned against the Unions, and numbers of its former friends have been alienated. A spirit of anarchy has been imported into many Unions, making itself apparent in unauthorised strikes and stoppages and in an inclination to defy both rules and leaders. The Unions have fallen very largely into the hands of the extreme section, which uses them for purposes wholly opposed to their original objects, with the result that the community has suffered by unnecessary and violent strikes, trade has been rendered difficult by uncertainty arising from the breach of contracts and agreements, the Unions have suffered in loss of prestige

and funds, and the members in loss of liberty, uncertainty in employment, and the depletion of their provident funds for strike purposes.

It is therefore desirable in the general interests that the Trade Disputes Act should be so amended that whilst granting immunities similar to those demanded by the Unions in 1905, the new Act should place such responsibility upon them and their members as would restrain them from deliberately committing wrongful acts. Such an amendment should provide for the restriction of the numbers constituting a picket and also prevent picketing at private residences. The Union should be responsible for the wrongful acts of its governing bodies. The present absolute immunity from civil liability for those inducing others to break their contracts of service should be limited to such contracts as are entered into in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute. There can be no comparison between the contracts of service entered into in the ordinary course of business, which if so desired can be legally terminated before a strike takes place, and the temporary contracts entered into for the purpose of the strike and which have never been in actual operation.

The man, a free labourer, probably brought from a distance, enters into the contract ignorant of the conditions attending the dispute, but immediately he appears on the scene he is asked not to weaken the cause of the strikers by working.

The situation is extremely difficult. It is the strikers' first opportunity to attempt to persuade the newly imported man, and yet if they succeed in inducing him to return he will in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred be breaking his legal contract. If picketing is to be permitted, and few will raise objections, then, as its real purpose is to persuade, it would be ridiculous to allow peaceful persuasion only where it is not effective, and to make it an actionable offence so soon as an imported worker is persuaded to return to his home.

The wearing of a distinctive badge by the pickets would be of distinct advantage. It would invest the pickets with some authority and avoid interference from the police; on the other hand, the police could prevent unauthorised persons from loitering in the vicinity of a dispute under the pretext of being pickets, and further, the badge would assist in the identification of pickets in the event of their committing unlawful acts.

CHAPTER XIV

SYNDICALISM

JUST as the Taff Vale judgment threw the Unions into the arms of the Socialists, so the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, by producing an atmosphere of lawlessness and unrest, tended to draw them within the influence of the Syndicalists. For some years previous to the passing of that unfortunate Act a small body of men calling themselves Industrial Syndicalists had been actively advocating their creed and attempting to induce the Trade Unions to adopt it. Little success, however, had attended their efforts, partly because their teachings were foreign to British ideas and sympathies, and partly because recent decisions of the Courts had declared the Unions responsible for damage done by their own wrongful acts, which naturally made them chary of allying themselves with a body that could not fail to come into conflict with the law.

The origin of Syndicalism is generally ascribed to Continental countries, and is assumed to possess a separate and distinct

existence. Syndicalism has no such separate existence, and for the want of a better definition it may be called the development of Trade Unionism into Labour Unionism. Trade Unions were previously what their name implied, Unions of workers in particular trades, whose leaders were chiefly interested in the betterment of their own members: no class war was involved, and no objects other than those set forth in their rules were pursued. Toward the close of the last century many Unions, by extending their area over various callings, ceased to be Trade Unions in a true sense and became Labour Unions; their objects came to be of a more general character, whilst their leaders were not necessarily experienced in any particular trade.

The range of trade disputes became wider owing to the different trades being organised within one Union, and this intermixing of trades strengthened the idea of a general strike, which has found advocates in this country for the past quarter of a century. Combined strikes of kindred trades under leaders not drawn from among their own members, and Unions confining their membership to no particular trade, unconsciously

but inevitably prepared the ground for Syndicalism. The introduction of politics and revolutionary teachings under the name of New Trade Unionism led the Unions from the pursuit of purely industrial matters and prepared the members for the more extreme policy of the Syndicalist.

The maintenance of two or more Unions in one trade not only meant expensive administration but it induced weakness rather than strength. Efforts were therefore made, and often with success, to get these reduced to one for each trade. As the interests of several trades are often interdependent, it was advocated that they should be affiliated to and governed by a central committee on which no single trade would have a majority. Thus the members of those Trade Unions lost control of their own trade and their own labour, to become the obedient tools of men regardless of the interests of any trade, but thirsting for power and actuated by political motives.

To complete the link in the chain of organised labour, a national federation to which all Unions were invited to affiliate was formed. With the accomplishment of this scheme, the kindred trades federation

will become subordinated to the national committee, the workmen will be removed even farther from the centre of control, and will become a mere atom in the organised army, where individual will and personal liberty can have no existence. Since this absolute autocracy could not long exist if workmen were free to revolt by leaving the Unions, a war on non-Union men has been instituted, and employers, in order to prevent a stoppage of work, have assisted in this campaign by dismissing their non-Union workmen.

Here, then, we have Syndicalism in all but name—compulsory membership in the Unions, which are amalgamated in their own trades, linked up with kindred trades, and affiliated with a national federation, officered by men having no interest in many of the industries affected, and using as their weapon the sympathetic strike. This process of subordination has involved the loss of individual liberty and control, although the ultimate aim is the consolidating and strengthening of the forces of Labour. The argument that if men become powerful by organising themselves into Unions they must become more so by organising the Unions

under one control was a plausible one, and appealed to the unthinking member.

The power of a general strike appeared so irresistible that it caught the imagination of the worker, and anything that tended towards setting up the machinery necessary for this policy readily gained the support of the ordinary workman. It was but a natural development of organisation carried on step by step with the object of being more fully equipped for the conflict between capital and labour. The members who permitted this system to be built up, the employers who consented to dismiss non-Union men, the Government who by the Trade Disputes Act smoothed the path for contract breakers, and even the leaders of the men themselves were unconscious of working on behalf of Syndicalism. They had chiefly in mind the perfecting of Trade Unionism and the re-adjustment of the conditions as between employer and employed. But it was impossible that such concentrated force could long remain on constitutional ground.

The Socialist doctrine had taught Unionists that all profit was robbery—robbery from the workers. Why not stop this by

crushing the capitalist and permitting Labour to control everything? Trade was to be made unprofitable by reducing the productive effort, whilst wages were to be forced up by the weapon of the general strike. By such means profit would be turned into loss, the capitalist would be squeezed out, and the workers would assume the ownership and control of their own particular industries. The railways would be owned and managed by the Railwaymen's Union, the docks by the Transport Workers' Union, the mines by the Miners' Union, and so on.

Such a revolutionary doctrine, if it is worthy of the name, needed no importing; it was no independent creed, it had no existence apart from the Unions. It is true that Trade Unions in Continental countries lent themselves to this extreme teaching much earlier than ours did, but the Continental Unions had long been the happy hunting ground of revolutionary politicians, and the political strike for the purpose of forcing concessions from governments had long been employed.

Here the Unions had pursued a purely industrial policy for the purpose of collective bargaining to the exclusion of all controversial

subjects, so that Syndicalists and other revolutionary advocates had failed to obtain foothold. When the Unions, breaking from their old traditions, allied themselves with the Socialists, their doors were thrown open to the extremists of every revolutionary creed, who saw in the already existing Unions a weapon which could be used for their particular purpose.

By a remarkable coincidence, just as the Unions by abandoning their independent position rendered it possible for the Syndicalists to advance their attractive policy of crushing the capitalist by a general strike, the Taff Vale judgment checked the Unions from embarking upon a revolutionary policy. The caution prudently displayed by the more wealthy Unions caused the Syndicalists to declare that 'poor unions are the best.' It was therefore only after the Trade Disputes Act had cleared the way by removing the responsibility of the Unions that the influence of Syndicalism began to operate successfully.

Socialism is a political science, the evolving of a new state of society, a constructive policy that needs intellect and ability, and though it may possess no real substance,

there is much in it that is attractive. Syndicalism, on the other hand, which required no thought to produce, contains nothing that is attractive or constructive; it is merely the expression of blind brute force, toward which the Unions have unconsciously moved without any recognised or definite policy.

On the base of National Syndicalism, International Syndicalism is to be reared. Some effort has already been made towards international federation. The idea is to form committees on which the various countries affiliated shall be represented, but with no country possessing a majority of votes. If this movement is successful national federations will become subordinate to a cosmopolitan committee, and British trade and British workmen will fall under Continental control.

The general strike is being advocated for other reasons than the abolition of the capitalists. Some see in it a means of making war impossible, others fondly expect that it will render every government subservient to their wishes. Should a government be sufficiently weak to allow itself to be coerced, it will be but a swift descent from constitutional government to mob rule.

However successful a general strike policy may appear to be, it cannot prove other than a failure in the long run. Workmen, similarly to other sections of the community, live by trade, and anything that paralyses or destroys trade injures the worker. A general strike is in reality aimed at the community, of which the workers constitute the largest part, therefore the worker is called upon to strike against himself. Permanent advance is caused by the creation of new wealth, whereas strikes destroy wealth. In the August of 1911, 2,828,300 days' work was lost by strikes, the value of wages represented was left unearned, and the amount of new wealth which that number of days work would have produced was lost.

Formerly it was the duty of Trade Union leaders to watch the conditions of their particular trade and to demand for their members a wage as high as the industry would allow. Some of the present leaders apparently do not recognise it as their duty to consider anything but the possibility of force. It is possible by a strike, or threat to strike, to better the position of labour up to a certain point, where the workman is not receiving a fair share of the fruits

of his labour, or where the employers have been more anxious to enter into ruinous competition than to pay good wages.

In the latter case it is certain that to force a higher wage would be to increase the selling price, but if a low price is practicable only through a sweated wage the increase can have nothing but a good result. The production of articles to sell at a price which necessitates the payment of a wage below that of similar labour in other industries, compels the workers to accept a low wage, whilst it increases the purchasing power of the wages earned in other industries.

But it is a fallacy to suppose that wages—and by wages the purchasing power of the worker is meant—can be increased in proportion to the strength of the Union. In competitive trades neither employer nor workman can affect the world's markets by either decreasing the purchasing price of raw material or increasing the selling price of the finished article; the wages of both capital and labour must lie between those two points. If, however, as often happens, capital is obtaining more than its share, a re-adjustment may be fairly easy under threat of a strike or by a strike. Capital

may be willing to accept a smaller reward rather than chance losing all; but if the margin of profit is to be wiped out altogether, the employer has every inducement to fight to the bitter end. If labour should succeed in forcing its demand, and so convert a profit into a loss, it will end inevitably in destroying trade and producing unemployment. If the trade concerned is not a competitive one, or if the competition is sufficiently limited to allow of prices being raised by concerted action, then the increased wage is added to the cost of production and passed on to the consumer.

Now, increased prices will necessitate the use of more capital in the production and distribution, therefore the increased cost to the consumer must be higher in proportion than the increased wage; thus the price of living must be increased in greater ratio than the wages, if the latter are forced up without regard to the possibilities of trade. In this way it is possible to benefit one section of labour only at the expense of another, *e.g.* by one trade being able to pass its increased wage on to the consumer, whilst purchasing the goods of other trades at their old prices.

The railways may be cited as one instance. Not being productive in the ordinary sense of the word, and their rates and charges being mostly fixed by Government, the directors cannot pass much of the extra cost of wages on to the public. The railwaymen, therefore, have failed to obtain an increase in comparison with the extra cost of living, and are thus worse off to-day than a few years ago—in a word, they are bearing the burden cast upon them by other trades. What applies to the railwaymen applies to all other cases where it is not possible to pass on the extra cost and where the present profit will not permit of an additional wage being paid.

The worst way to attempt to better the labour position is by causing a general upheaval, which although it may arouse the enthusiasm of the worker creates a corresponding panic among the capitalists. A sense of insecurity tends to lock up capital, which will either depress trade and produce unemployment or increase the price of capital, and as the increased price of capital can only come out of profit there is less for labour.

The various trades are so interdependent

and their conditions so complex that the position of the worker cannot be permanently advanced by mere brute force or by ignoring economic laws.

The Syndicalist will answer that the capitalist should be abolished and that labour should control everything. The Socialist whilst agreeing with the first part will declare that the ownership should rest in the State and not in any section of the community. Nothing demonstrates more clearly why Trade Unionism should steer clear of political parties which aim at a new social system. The duty of the Trade Unionist is to take the position as he finds it and to use every endeavour to improve the present condition of the worker—now by careful and patient watching, now by energetic effort, at one time by persuasion and argument, at other times, when necessary, by industrial warfare. Trade Unions exist for collective bargaining which implies the recognition of two parties.

Trade Unions as practical bodies must use practical methods for the purpose of dealing with present-day difficulties, and leave future centuries to the political theorist. Even if it were possible to ignore economic

laws and force up wages regardless of profits or prices, the general strike could not succeed. If all went on strike together all would wish to gain equally; the cost of living would go up, and labour would be merely running round a circle and stopping a little short of the starting point.

The general strike would be war on society, and to suggest such an act would be to hold a very poor opinion of the community. No government could sit still and see anarchy prevail and civilisation blotted out. Such a strike, even if for a few days, would place millions of the very poorest face to face with starvation, whilst the suspension of all sanitation would produce disease on every hand. Such a strike could not be organised under existing conditions, and, if it could, it must break of its own tyranny.

It is difficult to-day to conduct a strike successfully in opposition to public opinion; it would be still more difficult to organise one not against an employer or an industry but against the community. There are few trades in which a strike would seriously affect the country as a whole. Of these the chief are the coal mines, the docks, and the railways, and even these powerful

combinations can injure themselves, their wives and families, and the workmen in dependent trades, much more easily than they can hurt society.

The general strike for the purpose of preventing international war is impractical until at least human nature has utterly changed, and patriotism and loyalty have become obliterated. The general strike must progress with equal force in each of the contending countries; if not, the more successful strikers will be delivering heavy blows against themselves. The policy of the general strike may be acclaimed in times of peace, but it will not stand the stress of war.

Should the Syndicalists succeed by means of the general strike in raising wages and reducing output to such an extent that the capitalists could not carry on their business, they would not be much nearer their goal. Capitalists even now are frequently failing; their works are shut up and their employees turned adrift. Here, without any revolutionary act, the Syndicalist has a splendid opportunity to demonstrate his business abilities. It is true he would have to enter into competition with the remaining capitalists, and he would greatly prefer a complete

monopoly, so that by placing prices sufficiently high he could cover any cost of production. It is of course expected that the expelled capitalist will leave his plant and machinery as an absolute present to those who have ruined him.

The mines have been regarded as peculiarly suited to the Syndicalist purpose, as they must be worked in the interest of the community and the capitalist cannot take them away. But since the miners represent only one set of Unions, their control could hardly be in the interest of the community. Similarly the railways would be taken over by the railwaymen and worked for their own benefit. Since competition would not exist and Parliament could have no control, the rates and charges would be as high as the railwaymen for their own benefit cared to make them. Every trade would be controlled by its Union in the sole interest of its members, and run on the principle of all for self, and beggar my neighbour.

Trade would be pitted against trade and Union against Union, whilst labour would be more divided into hostile camps than ever before in its history. Foreign trade would become impossible. All competitor

and incentive to energy and new methods would drop out; corruption of every description would enter, and the whole venture would end in anarchy, disorder, and ruin. No one knows better than the professed Syndicalist that the whole affair is impossible, and that apart from the wild and extravagant talk of irresponsible persons, Syndicalism, for the purpose of owning and controlling trade is a myth, and can never have any actual existence. The real danger is that such people are always ready with new ideas to divert Trade Unions from their proper path, and to use them for purposes of class war regardless of injury to the community and to the workers themselves.

CHAPTER XV

LIBERTY

THE most serious feature in connection with the more recent development of Trade Unionism is its total disregard for personal liberty both for those inside and outside its ranks. The Unions were formerly ever ready to protect the liberty of their own

members, although undue pressure was often used upon others in the attempt to compel them either to join the Union or to support its movements. When the protection of the law was withheld from the Unions on the one hand, and restrictive laws were being passed on the other; when the judges recognised them as outlaws and revolutionary bodies whose aim was to destroy all constituted authority, it was small matter for surprise that they were driven to excess, and at times interfered unduly with the rights and liberties of others. No such justification can be found now.

No sooner were the Unions brought within the law than the judges recognised them as entitled to its full protection, and decisions have been given only after the most careful consideration and an evident desire to interpret the statutes justly. Restrictive laws have been removed, and Parliament has placed the Unions in a specially privileged position which is held by no other organisations in this country. In recommending that workmen, who so desired, should have the right to organise, the Royal Commission expressly stated that those who preferred to remain outside the Union and sell their

labour in their own way should have an equal right.

When the Unions existed for a purely economic purpose and all controversial subjects were excluded, when the members held the controlling power and their officials only carried out their wishes, little reason existed for men to remain outside the Unions. Even then the leaders rarely encouraged wrongful acts for the purpose of enforcing membership, their advice being to 'use persuasion not force.' On this point Mr George Howell, that memorable pioneer of the movement, said, 'This is a free country, and a man must not be compelled to join a Union. The State must preserve equal liberty to all, as it has at length done in matters of conscience.' Such a speech is in strange contrast to those of our present leaders who rely upon compulsion and force in all things—against the State, the employers, and the non-Unionist.

It was always considered mean and vindictive for any man to go to the employer with the object of getting a fellow-workman dismissed from his employment. In the beginning Union men were in a very small minority in almost every trade, but although

they were often regarded with suspicion by non-Unionists, the latter never approached the masters to demand their dismissal, and even now when a campaign has been launched against the non-Unionists they never retaliate, even where they possess an overwhelming majority. The reason is that the non-Unionist acts in his individual capacity, whereas the Unionist acts in his corporate position. It is a strange fact that men will do dishonourable and wholly unpardonable acts in their collective capacity which they would scorn to do as individuals, and perhaps the meanest of such acts is to attempt to procure the dismissal of other men with wives and children dependent upon them, simply because they hold views different from the Union men.

When the Unions were demanding the amendment or repeal of laws which were considered a restriction on their liberties, they always pleaded their desire not to intimidate nor coerce, but merely to persuade and induce. It is generally admitted that the Trade Unions by their conduct justified the Legislature in repealing the Criminal Law Amendment Act in 1875 in order to give them free scope for moral suasion.

But with the advent of New Unionism violence and intimidation were renewed. If a section of employees at any works desired to strike, they assumed the right to revert to terrorism and brute force in order to force the others into joining them.

The present trend of the Unions renders it more than ever necessary to protect the liberty of the non-Unionist. Men of all shades of political and religious faith no longer meet on common ground within the Unions, which are now allied to the Socialist party; and in many Unions the support of Socialism is made the test of membership, whilst secular education remains one of the main planks of their platform. It is contrary to all human justice that men should be compelled to join an association to promote political and religious views which they believe erroneous, and to oppose those principles which in their individual capacity they are supporting with time, money, and effort.

The weak, unprincipled man may suffer such compulsion, but the men of strength, principle, and independence, the very flower of our industrial classes, who love liberty and hate tyranny, are outside the Unions

to-day, not by choice but by necessity. Such a position can be viewed only with regret by all who wish to see the Unions representative, as they were formerly, of all that is best among the workers.

It is not against non-Unionists alone that the tyranny of Trade Union officialism is aimed. Men, occupying in everyday life most subordinate positions, get elected upon the Executive Committee of their respective Unions, and dressed in a little brief authority quickly develop into the greatest tyrants; but, as that tyranny affects individuals and not large numbers of the members, it excites no general revolt. Some Unions have claimed even in courts of law that their members must sacrifice all liberty, be obedient to their governing bodies in all things, and cease work at the bidding of the Union even when they have no complaint against their employer. The rules have previously acted as a protection to the member, who on joining the society voluntarily accepted the conditions as laid down in the rules, and nothing further could be demanded of him.

Now the officials, under the powers granted by the Trade Disputes Act, can enter into trade disputes in defiance of the rules, spend

the members' money without authority, and call men out from regular employment without their consent and in breach of their contracts. If a member answers the call of his Union the employer can proceed against him for breach of contract; if he disobeys the Union he is liable to more serious punishment.

Although the rules of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants were ignored in the railway strike of 1911, and the men called out without their wishes being consulted, those who refused to take part in the illegal strike were subjected to abuse and intimidation. Many of their members had taken up loans with the society for the purpose of purchasing their own homes, and it was freely asserted that in the case of recalcitrant members threats were made to foreclose all such loans.

A Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the cause of the strike, and in its report—signed amongst others by Mr Arthur Henderson, a leading Trade Unionist and a past Chairman of the Labour Party—it referred to the breach of contracts and intimidation that had occurred, and said: 'Men have the right to determine their

engagements by giving a lawful notice, but in the exercise of their freedom in this respect they should not, in our opinion, be permitted to incite or coerce by threats, or by any form of intimidation, men who desire to give their labour.'

One might have imagined that this clear exposition of the rights of the workers—the right to strike and the equal right to work—would have met with general approval within the Unions. On the contrary, however, extreme dissatisfaction was expressed at Mr Henderson's action in signing the report. The right to strike was endorsed, but an equal right for any man, whether Unionist or non-Unionist, to work without the permission of the Union officials was denied.

No movement in recent years has been so destructive of personal liberty as the policy of the 'closed shop,' the refusal to work with any but Union men. It has been the steady aim of Trade Unionism to see one Union for every trade, and every one in his Union, an ideal which all supporters of organised labour can look forward to with pleasure and approval. The voluntary membership here indicated exerts a healthy

influence on the managing bodies. It is absolutely necessary to make an attractive policy if they are to obtain members, and to consider their wishes and opinions in order to retain them after they have joined.

Compulsory membership is a wholly different affair, to which all true friends of liberty must be opposed. With compulsory membership freedom vanishes; there is no need to consider the conscience or opinion of the member, who must accept whatever policy is forced upon him. This autocratic power tends to render the Union more and more despotic, as the fear of expulsion compels obedience. A man expelled from his Union loses all the benefits, such as out of work, sick, superannuation benefits, for which he has paid, and thus sacrifices a life's thrift.

Excluded from his workshop, he finds that wherever he goes he is asked to produce his Trade Union ticket, and in default, through no fault except that of daring to stand up for a principle, the door is closed against him. Thus a capable workman and clever mechanic, with wife and children dependent upon him, may see his home broken up, or he may attempt to earn a

living as an unskilled workman, thus sacrificing the trade he gave so much to learn. As trades are coming into closer affiliation and being brought under one controlling body, it will in the future, if compulsory membership continues, be difficult for a mechanic driven from one trade even to find employment as a labourer in another. The hope of using their combined power to force higher wages induces the ordinary workman to accept the plausible arguments of the Union officials in favour of compulsory membership, without realising the absolute slavery to which it leads.

Those not acquainted with the inner workings of these associations may wonder how any large body of workmen can submit to such tyranny. The system grows up steadily, and pressure is applied in exact proportion to the strength of the officials, so it is only when that body is in a commanding position that the tyranny is felt, and is then usually applied to individuals, although the Cigar Workers' Union recently expelled about twenty per cent. of its members. As the official party generally holds the sole means of communication between branch and branch, the individual member is placed at a serious

disadvantage. The unfortunate workman who has given offence can be represented as attempting to injure the Union to the advantage of the capitalist.

It is an easy matter to raise the prejudice of the unthinking workmen who believe they are best serving their own interests by supporting the tyranny of their bosses. The employers are, in numerous instances, not less short-sighted than the workmen, since it is only their willingness to dismiss non-Union workmen that makes the policy of the 'closed shop' possible. Nothing more cowardly and unmanly can be imagined than for an employer to dismiss a capable workman whose sole fault is that he refuses to submit to what he considers an organised tyranny.

Such workmen are dismissed and victimised to save trouble and possible loss, the employer being too short-sighted to see that he himself must later become a victim to the power he is assisting to establish. It is not only the duty, but also the best policy, for an employer to act impartially as between Union and non-Union men, and to protect the liberty of all workmen, even though it be at some temporary inconvenience and loss.

If Trade Unionists desire that all men should be in their Union let them refrain from compulsion, which cannot long succeed; let them by dropping all controversial matters remove the barrier which prevents conscientious men from joining, and by a wise and tolerant policy show the advantages of organisation, thus inducing rather than forcing every man to become a member. If it is desired that Union labour shall have preference of employment, that labour must be made the most efficient and trustworthy, let the Union card again become a proof of good workmanship, and the employer will not be slow to recognise the advantage of bargaining with an organised and disciplined force.

The system of government within the Unions should rest upon the will of the majority, but as that is generally interpreted by the caucus to suit its own purpose, it frequently means the bolstering up of officialdom by an apparently popular consent. Even where the view of the members is correctly reflected through a majority vote, it does not justify a majority of the members imposing their will upon the minority, except in so far as that minority consent. A person

in joining an association agrees to its objects and to its rules, and to such alteration of rules as may become necessary or desirable for the carrying out of those objects, and in all these matters, by the fact of his membership, he consents to the rule of the majority. It will be generally accepted that majority rule is the basic principle of any self-governing body, but it can operate only for the purpose for which it was created—administering the rules and accomplishing the objects of the association. If it goes further and claims to dictate what the objects shall be, it transcends its legitimate powers and develops into tyranny.

If majority rule is to be interpreted to mean, as many now contend, that a majority has the right to dictate to the minority in all things, then we have but removed the rule of ancient kings and feudal lords to set up a more drastic tyranny in a sham democracy. Fear and expediency might exercise some restraining influence over kings and lords, but not over a majority fired with enthusiasm and flushed with success.

Should the time ever come when it is held that a majority is all powerful and minorities have no rights, then liberty will

have ceased to exist. Yet men holding the highest positions in the Labour movement proclaim this new gospel of the omnipotence of majority rule. They assert that a majority can enforce its will upon the minority in all things—social, political, religious, and industrial. Even were Trade Union membership absolutely voluntary, it would be monstrous for a majority to interfere with the private affairs of its members (and a man's political and religious opinions are his private affairs), but where membership is compulsory, so that the man is forced into a Union and then compelled to support any political or religious views placed before him, the whole proceeding is an outrage on human justice.

Men who support the right of majority rule when it suits their purpose are often the first to whine when they become its victims. At the Trade Union Congress in 1911 members who claimed that minorities possessed no rights in political matters created a scene when Congress passed a resolution in favour of secular education which interfered with their own religious views.

Not content with forcing majority rule upon the Unions, some of the leaders desire

also to make it the controlling factor in the State. They apparently contend that a minority of the electors should be at the mercy of any government securing a majority of votes cast at an election, however narrow the margin might be. Such a policy would lead inevitably to civil war.

Monopoly is always destructive of liberty, but the Socialist would set up a greater monopoly than the world has ever yet seen. By his system all production, distribution, and exchange will be under the ownership and control of the State. If a member of a Trade Union offends his Executive Committee he is probably expelled; if he happens to be in their employment he is dismissed.

If these men formed the Executive of a Socialist government, the position of the workman who offended them by the expression of opposite views would be desperate in the extreme. He would be dismissed from his job, and as there would be no employer other than the government he would be unable to obtain fresh work: he would be evicted from his house, and as the State would own all the others he would be unable to obtain a shelter for himself or family; and, since his opponents would hold all

means of exchange, all the shops would be closed against him. A citizen who gave offence by the expression of anti-Socialist views would court a decision equivalent to an order of expulsion from the country.

The workman is being taught to regard with anything but friendliness the property-owning class, yet there can be no liberty apart from private property. Property and the means of existence in many hands guarantee independence and freedom, but when all means of existence is centred in one set of men, then the nation will touch the lowest depths of slavery.

Much has lately been heard of the solidarity of labour. If this means that a feeling of tolerance has arisen whereby each party has agreed to sink all points of difference, and to put forward only such points as can command a general support so that labour can stand upon a common platform for a common cause, then all friends of organised labour must rejoice. But if, as experience testifies, it merely means that the majority has ridden rough shod over the wishes and opinions of the minority, and compelled support by violence, then such solidarity offends against the

common principles of justice, and can have no lasting advantage.

Such methods exercise a deteriorating effect upon the members who, ceasing to think and act for themselves, only follow where others lead. In giving evidence before the Royal Commission which inquired into the Railway Strike of 1911, the general secretary of the Railway Workers' Union said he did not know that his members had any special grievance, but he called them out and they came: he told them to resume and they did so. Such a sheep-like attitude on the part of large bodies of men is extremely disappointing to those who seek improved conditions through an improved race, to make each generation morally, physically, and intellectually better than the preceding generation, and to reach the ideal state through the ideal man.

The whole trend of Trade Unionism in latter years has been towards the abolition of private rights and personal liberty. The widening of their objects in order to bring political and religious matters within their scope without regard to the conscience or opinion of large sections of their members; the compulsory membership; the linking up

with other Unions, thus subordinating the aims of their members to others whose interests differ; the placing of unlimited power in the hands of committees and officials; the extension of majority rule into the sphere of conscience—all strongly militate against personal freedom.

If by the abrogation of liberty the worker was assured of an increase in wage, the price would be too high, but there can be no such assurance; he is selling his birthright, liberty, for an uncertain mess of pottage.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BETTER WAY

THE whole experience of Trade Unionism has demonstrated that membership increases in time of disputes and decreases during normal periods, which causes some leaders to oppose any arrangement that will better industrial conditions without the intervention of the Unions. When new machinery is suggested for regulating the relations as between workmen and masters, the first consideration of some Trade Union officials is

how the Union will be affected. It is too often forgotten that the Union exists for the benefit of the men and not the reverse. The only object should be the improvement of the conditions of labour, and the Union is merely an instrument to be used for that purpose. If the end can be attained peacefully and without the active intervention of the Union so much the better. Those who argue otherwise ought logically to condemn the employer who voluntarily raises his men's wages.

Trade Unions properly conducted will never find themselves unnecessary. If changed methods make their services less required in any direction, the very alteration of conditions will open up new fields for their activities. If the more barbarous method of the strike is replaced by schemes of conciliation, the Unions can still render themselves indispensable by training their officials to become competent representatives on the Boards. By collecting and tabulating information they may render higher service in the office than on the battle-field of industrial strife. The labour disputes of the future will tend to resolve themselves more and more into a battle of brains between the

leaders of the two sides. Science rather than brute force will count in the days to come, and then the existence and vitality of the Unions will be found essential. The only way in which they can endanger their existence is by obstructing necessary and inevitable reform.

If they refuse to advance with the times and adapt themselves to changing conditions they must sink to decay. In this respect many Unions are scarcely more intelligent than those workers of fifty years ago who opposed machinery lest it should displace their labour. Machinery came, and although it has displaced much of the most unpleasant and laborious toil, it has succeeded not only in reducing the cost of production and thus raising the standard of life, but it has made it possible to provide employment for an evergrowing army of workmen. The Unions can enter upon no more unfortunate course than to oppose all advancement through fear of its effect upon their own position. There is nothing inconsistent with sane Trade Unionism in settling disputes by peaceful methods, so long as the power of the strike remains in case all other means fail. Even should

the happy time ever arrive when we can settle all international disputes by arbitration, every sword will not be beaten into ploughshares nor every battleship scrapped. Neither will it be necessary nor advisable for labour to abandon the right to strike because more reasonable means for settling disputes have been found. After all, peaceful arguments are rendered more effective by the knowledge that failure must inevitably result in a strike.

It is not only in relation to hours and wages that some leaders for purely selfish reasons have cried down reforms, but in legislation similar opposition has been encountered. When employers have established pension and other funds of a voluntary nature they have been criticised by the Unions, although by general consent such funds have been to the advantage of the men. As the contributions were withdrawable with interest if the member left his employment, the practice did not affect the mobility of labour nor tend to compel the acceptance of a lower wage. It should be the highest desire of the Unions to see men permanently employed, with good wages, fair conditions, and suitable provision made for old age or infirmity. Any scheme

that makes towards this ideal should be supported. If the plans put forward contain provisions inimical to Trade Union principles the Unions can state their objection in clear and well-defined language, and demand the amendment of the scheme rather than its destruction.

The Great Eastern Railway Company, employing thousands of men, has adopted a pension scheme whereby each employee can qualify for a pension of ten or fifteen shillings per week according to contributions, at the age of sixty-five, or a reduced pension if certified unfit for service after fifty-five. Should a member leave the service before reaching pension age he can withdraw the whole of his contribution, with three per cent. interest, and if he should die before pension age, his relatives are entitled to double the amount of the contribution paid. The fund is entirely voluntary, yet the Union has been bitterly opposed to it. The same company has established an accident fund whereby all cases arising under the Workmen's Compensation Act are settled by a Committee consisting of an equal number of representatives of the company and the workmen. The fund is admittedly beneficial to its members,

but it does not meet with the Union's approval.

A branch secretary who assisted in the establishment of the fund was bitterly attacked, one of the chief Union officials explaining that although they fully recognised its benefits to the employees, and acknowledged that practically all the Union men in the employ of the company had joined it voluntarily, it should be opposed because it entered into competition with the Union, which provided legal assistance in all cases of accidents. By coming to an understanding over the table they prevented the activity of the society in fighting cases in the courts, and it was by such methods that they could best attract attention and gain new members. If there were no serious accidents there would be no cases to fight, therefore the argument, pressed to its logical conclusion, means that the more numerous the accidents the better for the Union, so that it may be able to pursue its propaganda through the blood of the victims and the suffering of the widow and the orphan. Few Union officials would like calmly to reflect upon such a position, or to believe that it rightly interprets their policy.

It is perfectly consistent for the Socialist

leaders to discountenance all forms of conciliation or any other policy which would bring employers and employed together. The doctrine of class war is more suited to the platform than the committee room; the principle of conciliation is contrary to the spirit of Syndicalism, and it is impossible for both to live in the same atmosphere. In 1901 Mr Richard Bell, M.P., on behalf of his Union,—the Railway Servants—introduced into the House of Commons a Bill to provide for conciliation and arbitration in connection with railway disputes. After the unrest in connection with the railways in 1907 a scheme of conciliation and arbitration was accepted by both sides, although opposed by the extreme Socialist section. The Boards were established, but in 1911 the men struck for the purpose of destroying them, and when a Royal Commission at the end of that year recommended the adoption of an amended scheme, a further strike was threatened. Thus the Union repudiated in 1911 the very principle for which it had contended a few years earlier.

In 1911, Mr Crooks and others whose loyalty to the Labour cause few would doubt, introduced into Parliament a Bill for the purpose of regulating trade disputes, and providing

for investigation and conciliation without depriving the workers of the right to strike. The Bill and its promoters were promptly repudiated, without any real effort to consider how far its provisions could be adopted with advantage to organised labour.

In former years Trade Union objection to Conciliation and Arbitration Boards was reasonable and prudent. Only just emerging from a state of outlawry and finding their whole movement covered by a cloud of suspicion, the Unions feared to trust any machinery that might be used to their disadvantage. No ground now exists for fearing that Labour will not receive fair treatment before any tribunal, and the objection offered to such schemes at present is political not industrial.

Notwithstanding opposition the principle of conciliation and arbitration is making rapid progress; there are now about 300 schemes in operation in the United Kingdom, and the recent labour unrest served to fix public attention upon these remedies.

The conciliation scheme in connection with the railways in Great Britain, adopted after careful investigation by a Royal Commission, appears almost perfect. It provides that in

case of any grievance the men concerned may lay the matter before their employers, who must receive a deputation within fourteen days from the time the request is received. Failing a settlement, the Conciliation Boards must be called together. These Boards are constituted by an equal number of employees and representatives of the company, each side being permitted to employ a secretary chosen from any source. If the two sides fail to arrive at a settlement, it is provided that an independent chairman shall be called in, and his decision shall be binding. Thus the machinery of the Boards is not put in motion until an opportunity has been given to arrive at a mutual arrangement. The scheme has already accomplished a vast amount of good by increasing wages, decreasing hours, and above all things by producing a better feeling between capital and labour. Its usefulness will increase as the men more clearly understand how to work it.

The main difficulty in connection with Conciliation Boards is that the Unions in most industries fail to recognise that they are semi-judicial bodies, especially where the chairman's decision is binding, and therefore any claim put forward must be such as can

be supported by argument and sound reasoning. The old method of asking for a great deal in the hope of getting something must be modified to meet the new system. Where extravagant demands are submitted, concessions often reasonable in themselves appear out of proportion to the expectations of the men, and thus create discontent rather than satisfaction. Quite naturally the Union loses credit for a satisfactory settlement and is blamed for accepting a solution so much below its demands.

A serious error also lies in putting forward as candidates to the Boards the most extreme men, whose aggressive conduct cannot fail to cause resentment, whilst some employers allow themselves to be represented by officials known to be unpopular with the men. The chief duty of representatives on a Conciliation Board is to produce an atmosphere which is conducive to real conciliation and good feeling, so that each side may have confidence in the other, and this can be accomplished only when extreme care is exercised in constituting the Boards.

Those who are looking for a solution of industrial problems in the control of all instruments of production by the workers

can go a long way towards accomplishing their object without entering upon any revolutionary policy. By a system of co-operative production the workers have an opportunity of using their accumulated funds for productive purposes, and can establish businesses from which the capitalist is entirely eliminated. The leaders, however, are far too astute to adopt an extensive application of the principles they profess. So long as they are merely advocating an abstract reform they are on safe ground, and can confine themselves to criticising and condemning the present system; if they attempt practical experiments they will become liable to criticism themselves, and in failing will stultify their own teaching. It is to be regretted that the fear of putting their remedies to the test will serve as an effective check to any great advance in productive co-operation.

Many well-intentioned people are endeavouring to find in co-partnership and profit-sharing a satisfactory settlement of industrial troubles. Although the ideas are good and eminently worthy of warm support wherever possible, little prospect can be held out of these principles exercising a determining influence in the solution of labour troubles in

the near future. Profit-sharing rests upon the erroneous assumption that there are huge profits to divide in all industries. In some trades the employees are able to increase the profit by adding to the output or by lessening all waste, but few trades would be able to pay the workmen a bonus sufficiently large to make any appreciable addition to the weekly wage.

Unless labour is granted some effective control over the management it would be unfair to make wages, whether weekly wage or periodical bonus, conditional upon profit. The present system of giving labour a guaranteed wage irrespective of profit leaves the workmen without any direct interest in the management, while the investor being wholly dependent on profit maintains sole control. If labour is to share in the profits and risks of the business it must also share in the control. Co-partnership has been tried with satisfactory results in some few concerns, but these are specially selected cases, and should not be regarded as warranting a general extension of the principle. The annual return on any stock so acquired in an average business is unlikely to add considerably to the income of the workman, while the gradual accumulation

of invested wealth which cannot be converted into ready money will not appeal to a man earning a wage insufficient to meet the requirements of his family.

Many persons have desired to see Co-partnership applied to the railway service, but numerous difficulties stand in the way. In most instances there is not sufficient profit, after paying a reasonable dividend, to set aside a fund for the purchase of scrip for a large staff. The higher and better paid grades might appreciate the opportunity of possessing some stake in their company, but it would be tantalising to the more poorly paid men to hold shares and be unable to realise them when in difficulties.

Even were the scrip obtained, the rate of interest paid by most railway companies is too small to make it particularly attractive to small investors. If the scrip could be realised whilst the holder remained in the company's service, there would always be the inducement to do so when in temporary distress. If it could be disposed of only on leaving the service some men might sever their connection with the company as soon as a fair amount had accrued. If the scheme did not allow for scrip being saleable when

leaving the service it would tend to destroy the mobility of labour, and the Unions would be compelled to oppose the scheme. Notwithstanding the numerous difficulties, the principles of profit-sharing and co-partnership should be applied wherever possible, though undue risks must be avoided, since every failure would retard the progress of the cause.

No infallible remedy can be found for the settlement of trade disputes. That which may be satisfactory to one industry may be harmful to another. Only by careful investigation into each case as it arises and mutual agreement as regards the remedy can real progress be made. Nothing can be more injurious than for Parliament to be interfering continually in trade disputes and adding to the present uncertainty; such action is at best haphazard, and if continued can only lead to compulsory arbitration and other forms of state control.

The present position of our outstanding industries is too delicate to be treated in this manner. If Parliament is to interfere, and there is room for definite action, let it be first by careful investigation and afterwards by setting up such machinery as may be

deemed necessary for the better settlement of disputes. Let the whole law relating to trade disputes be defined, simplified, and modified, so as to be fair and just to all concerned. Every inducement should be offered to employers and employed to arrive at mutual agreements which should be made binding on both parties.

Section 4 of the Trade Union Act of 1871 should be so amended as to make all Trade Union agreements voluntarily entered into enforceable, unless such agreement be in direct restraint of trade.

Employers have a serious responsibility when dealing with labour. They cannot evade that responsibility by the payment of a wage, and that the lowest possible. Every employer has a moral obligation to see that his men are living and working under reasonable conditions that will allow them to fulfil not only their duties to their wives and families, but also to undertake the rights and duties of citizenship. Many who complain of Trade Union action never think of voluntarily improving the condition of their men. If employers were more ready to improve the conditions of their staff when circumstances permitted, their action would be appreciated

and Trade Union interference would become less necessary.

State and municipal employment should always be paid at the highest standard rate, otherwise the public economise at the expense of the individual workman. On the other hand, to pay more for such labour than would be given by private employers is unfair to other workmen who help to pay the rates, and as such higher wages usually can be traced to political pressure the system is corrupt. As state and municipal employment is increased this difficulty will grow, and in the interest of political purity no public body resting upon an elective basis should be permitted to fix the wages of the men directly or indirectly employed by such body ; all such wages should be controlled by a properly constituted authority not open to political pressure.

It is not by an effort to use unfair methods to raise wages in the public service that labour can be benefited permanently; for by making direct employment by municipal bodies more costly than outside labour the principle of direct employment is retarded. The real object of the Unions should be to enforce the standard wage in public and private employ-

ment alike, and to encourage every system which may be introduced for the purpose of settling trade disputes and bettering the position of the workers, provided always that such schemes are consistent with the principle of collective bargaining.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSIONS

A CENTURY of active Trade Unionism with its faults and virtues, its failures and successes, now lies behind us. The most successful leaders of the future will be those who carefully realise the lessons taught by the past. The greatest danger of the present day is the tendency to ignore all past experience.

The history of Trade Unionism is similar to that of other causes which have had to fight their way from prejudice to popularity. The movement was never so really strong and pure as when its difficulties were greatest and the opposing forces strongest. Then the Unions were compelled to exercise continual vigilance, so that the purity of their actions would disarm their critics and justify their

own existence. Later they embarked upon a policy which would have wrecked the movement in earlier years, and which even now is gradually undermining it.

Members who to-day are too indifferent to attend lodge meetings when within a mile of their homes, offer a strange contrast to the old warriors who often plodded weary miles to and from their meetings, and were ever ready to make sacrifices for the cause. They scorned to make a profit out of work done for the Union. Any service rendered was a labour of love; to-day there is a scramble for official positions for the purpose of personal aggrandisement. The management expenses now compare badly with those of a few years back.

It will not be without interest to compare certain items in the balance sheet of the A.S.R.S., which in this respect is typical of most Unions, for the years 1899 and 1909. In the former year the membership was 59,819, in the latter 73,571. The Executive Committee's fees and fares, including visits to branches, were in 1899 £357 2s. 6d., against £651 17s. 0d. in 1909. Auditors' fees and fares in 1899 were £83 1s. 11d., and in 1909 they had grown to £107 19s. 3d. Counting

of voting papers in 1899 cost £44 18s. 7d., in 1909 the figure had risen to £254 14s. 1d. In the ten years the general management expenses of the society had risen from £7139 7s. 11d. to £11,367 9s. 2d., although few items of expenditure are affected by any rise or fall in membership.

In view of the present fierce world-competition, Trade Union leaders bear an almost appalling responsibility. By the advocacy of impossible policies, they can only divert energy and thought from real and practical reforms, and any policy, however alluring, if taken in defiance of natural and economic laws, must inevitably end in disaster. The only road to real advancement lies through higher wages and greater purchasing power. The application of science and machinery has both increased and cheapened the output, and articles which were the luxuries of the rich a century back are now the everyday necessities of the poor. Good work adds to the wealth not merely of one class, but of the nation, and the duty of the Unions is to see that workmen get their full share of the fruits of their labour.

Just as national peace is necessary for national advancement, so is industrial peace

essential for industrial progress. Every day lost by a strike is a loss to the nation. The workman who destroys property in time of strike reduces national wealth. Riots, by causing panic, destroy credit, raise the price of capital, increase cost of production, and lessen the purchasing power of all classes. It is a short-sighted policy which would either destroy or reduce the production of wealth, since of all sections of society none would suffer more severely than that of the workers.

Our future as a nation depends upon our ability to advance; but that must be by adding to the edifice built up by centuries of care and effort on the part of the wisest of our race, and not by destroying it in order to start all over again. The results of our previous endeavours afford every encouragement to persevere. Never in the history of the world has such progress been made as in the last century, and no class has advanced more rapidly than that of the workers.

During the latter half of the last century wages rose nearly fifty per cent., hours of labour were reduced, and the cost of living was lessened. The most exacting toil was done by machinery, which cheapened the cost of production and added so enormously

to the output that instead of displacing labour it increased the demand, and employment tended to become more permanent. The workers were better housed and clothed, and the general standard of living was raised.

Human life and limb were protected by the Employers' Liability Act, Factory, Mines, Shipping, and other Acts. Education became general, while repeated extensions of the franchise raised men from serfs to citizens. The Truck Acts gave workmen the right to spend their wages in their own way, infant slavery was abolished, child labour was reduced, and female labour regulated. Science and invention catered for new tastes and wants, while political and religious liberty were secured.

This remarkable progress took place when a restricted franchise limited labour power in Parliament; now that a wider franchise is in operation the rate of progress should be accelerated. As a fact, and one admitted by Socialists themselves, owing to the increased cost of living the position of the worker has become worse during the last few years. It is worthy of notice that this adverse position has been created since the Socialist Labour Party has become more active.

When Labour sought through the direct action of the Unions to obtain industrial legislation, its position was more powerful than now. Then the demand for reform came from a solid body of workmen irrespective of political opinion, and the leaders enjoyed the loyal support of every member. Now a party actuated by political motives puts forward demands that are opposed or supported according to the political convictions of the members.

The best friends of Trade Unions wish to return to a common platform from which everything of a party nature shall be excluded. The Trade Union Congress is fast losing ground, by abandoning practical measures for the purpose of coquetting with political theorists. As long as it remained the recognised mouthpiece of organised labour, and spoke for every member, it was respected by friend and foe alike. Now that it deals with political questions on which the members have not been consulted, on which indeed they are known to differ widely, it has lost its claims to be regarded as the mouthpiece of Trade Unionism, and is degenerating into a mere debating association. So closely has it approached the Conference of the Labour

Party that complete amalgamation has already been mooted on the ground that it is unnecessary to maintain two bodies so similar in their purpose.

The duties of the two should be as far as the poles asunder—the one purely political, the other solely economic. A Labour party should stand wholly apart from Trade Unions. All citizens could subscribe to its platform, and organised labour co-operate with it, as it can with any party, without becoming identified with it.

Such a party should rest upon the voluntary efforts of its friends. A party that cannot live upon voluntary support should die. No healthy political life can be maintained upon compulsion. It will either end in internal strife or will develop into an organised tyranny; under no circumstances can it be representative. Political effort is no substitute for Trade Unionism, which would be as necessary if industry were under State control as it is under the present system.

Higher wages and shorter hours are not an end in themselves. They are but the means by which the greater end may be reached—the universal happiness of mankind. Only so far as Trade Unions can attain to that goal

do they really succeed in their mission. Poverty is diametrically opposed to happiness, but increased wages will not necessarily produce happiness. Very much depends upon how wages are spent, and this resolves itself largely into a question of character. An equal and sufficient wage distributed amongst the whole of the workers would not bring an equal amount of happiness to all. Distressing cases of poverty are often found among those earning or capable of earning good wages, or amongst those who have fallen through their own fault. An overwhelming amount of suffering and sorrow exists in the country to-day, but it must be admitted that a great deal could be removed by individual effort. Money previously lost or wasted would flow into productive channels, and would render less difficult the task of solving the social problems that remained.

It is useless to condemn the present social system because of individual wrongs. Human nature would not change even if the system changed, and the disease in the body politic would still remain. The ideal state can be reached only through the ideal man, and eventual success needs steady and patient progress as each succeeding generation

becomes better than the previous one. Some people, just as anxious for personal reform as others are for social and political reform, often feel keen disappointment at their slow progress towards the desired goal. The real inspiration must be drawn from the distance already traversed. The greatest encouragement any reformer can receive is in looking backward.

As social and industrial problems grow more complex, and each section of society becomes more dependent upon the other, the necessity for Parliamentary action will increase; but it should be confined to registering and giving force to decisions already arrived at by the nation, and not to fostering the fads of active minorities upon an unwilling people. The proper function of Parliament is to give what the nation demands; the present tendency is for the nation to submit to what Parliament inflicts upon it. Nothing can be more likely to injure Trade Unionism than that it should be associated with such a policy, and figure as the catspaw of political parties.

Trade Unionism is destined to encounter numerous difficulties in the near future without travelling outside its own province. Not

the least will be the severe competition produced by Asiatic labour. The Japanese are already copying Western ideas and methods, whilst they have displayed marvellous ingenuity in building and managing machinery. There is no reason why the Chinese should not awake and demonstrate similar powers. When that happens their inferior standard of living will constitute a serious menace to the progress of European nations.

Such difficulties will not diminish the necessity for Trade Unions, although they will test the qualities of the leaders. It is the duty of Trade Unionism to be ready for all emergencies by reforming itself, so that it may be free from the tyranny and corruption slowly creeping into it. Its leaders must be chosen for general ability rather than for their aptitude in appealing to the passions of the crowd. The members must take an intelligent part in the management, instead of leaving matters in the hands of the delegates and the caucus. The best class of workmen, who have been driven out by the recent policy, must be attracted back by sound management. The officials must devote themselves whole-heartedly to the duties of their office, and their efforts must be directed

towards the primary purpose of Trade Unionism—collective bargaining. This can be best accomplished by bringing capital and labour together and thus promoting that better understanding that is so essential to industrial peace.

In this direction lies the mission of Sane Trade Unionism.

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