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DURHAM MINERS AND UNIONISM, 1831-1926:

A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION.

FRANK WEBSTER.

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Abstract.

This thesis offers an explanation of why the Durham miners, while taking part frequently in bitter industrial clashes with their employers, never moved as a body to attack the system of British capitalism as a whole. It is argued that the experience of the pitmen constitutes a particular case of what has been called the 'dialectics of incorporation' of the working class under a system of bourgeois hegemony. The thesis opens with a consideration of three new beliefs about the Durham miners. It is suggested that these beliefs are in fact myths which in both revealing and concealing the real situation embodied certain important paradoxes. These paradoxes centred on a sort of ambivalence, an important degree of tension within the miners' organisation, which was a hall-mark of the pitmen's industrial and political activity between 1831-1926 and which resulted in the definitive oscillations between dissent and consensus which are to be observed both within the miners' fraternities and in the pattern of their involvement in the nexus of labour and capital. The study is necessarily limited in scope and I have chosen to cover fully one particular, rather under-used, primary source - the records of the Durham Miners' Association - over a long period of time rather than to range widely over numerous sources but in a narrowly restricted time span. Either procedure has its ^{dis}advantages and neither could claim to achieve a definitive analysis of the Durham miners' involvement in the wider social, economic and political system. For the purposes of advancing the interpretation presented here it seemed right to attempt coverage of a long period of historical development even at the cost of depth of research. It will be appreciated that the conditions covering the presentation of an M.A. dissertation would in any case have made a definitive history impossible.

Dedication:

In a remarkably short time the collieries where I was raised have been closed and the pitmen thrown on the scrapheap. The village in which they lived was tossed up around 1870 and obliterated a century later by J.C.B.s. This work I should like to dedicate to the memory of that home - Coundon Station. To the countless pitmen and their families who lived there and worked the now forgotten Jaw Blades, Black Boy, Binchester and Westerton. To a community that was brought into existence through the greed of coal capitalists and ruthlessly quashed by the economics of nationalization. To a people that nevertheless paid tribute to the endearing qualities of Durham pit folk. I was fortunate to have spent my formative years in such company.

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DURHAM MINERS: THREE MYTES:

"You see gentleman, reason is a good thing, that can't be disputed, but reason is only reason and satisfies only man's intellectual faculties, while volition is a manifestation of the whole of life, I mean of the whole of human life including both reason and speculation. And although in this manifestation life frequently turns out to be rubbishy, all the same it is life and not merely the extraction of a square root...."

Dostoyevsky: "Notes from Underground"

(1864, this edition 1972, Penguin, p.35)

PREFACE

Sociology is concerned with social meanings and social meanings are prejudices. As the sociologist is a social being, then all sociology is a reflection of the writer's prejudice. Writing about society demands an ideology; and ideology is prejudice. Like the authors of "Close the Coalhouse Door", this study is steeped in "a hundred-weight of inherited prejudice". To dismiss a work as prejudice, however, assumes an unprejudiced position, and in social systems there is no such thing. It would be the negation of the "social". This work is prejudice, but it dares to assume that it is the right prejudice. Being based in an analysis of the socio-economic structure of the society it can delineate an objective reality. Such structuralism is, of course, meaningless - and hence takes sociology very little forward. What it does allow, however, is a comprehension of the bases of these ideologically-grounded social meanings. This dialectic prevents sociology remaining opinion, while bringing meaning into structural analysis. The dialectic - not dichotomy - of the subjective and objective means that while the analysis may be of social meanings, it is not ideology, since the relation is between actors who have social meanings while simultaneously being objective entities.

PRELIMINARIES

"...In Germany (read Durham), the most violent and brutal collisions between workers and proprietor take place every year and every day without the struggle going beyond the limits of the single branch, the single city, or even the single factory. Punishment of organized workers...unemployment...struggles for union rights...are in the order of the day...However,...not a single one of these cases changes into a common class action..."

Rosa Luxemburg: "Selected Political Writings..."
D.Howard ed. p.242-3(New York, M.R.P., 1971).

June 8th. 1920"...it (Seaham) is virgin soil: these miners are not blasés; they are children in politics; they are not critical and they are solid trade unionists..."

"Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1912-1924" p.180
M.Cole ed. (Longmans, 1952).

"...But it remains a hopeless certificate of destitution for the English proletariat, all the same. The Baron has shown unexpected power and so has the cringing to respectability. Not a single working-class candidate had a ghost of a chance, but my Lord Tomnoddy or any parvenu snob could have the workers' votes with pleasure..."

18th. November, 1868: Engels to Marx. In "Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Correspondence, 1846-1895". Trans., D.Torr. (Lawrence and Wishart, 1934).

"...It is the totality of the bourgeois world view - the enormous complex of the prejudices, assumptions, half-thought-out notions and no small number of profound ideas - that infects the victims of bourgeois rule, and it is the totality of an alternative world view alone that can challenge it for supremacy..."

E.D.Genovese, "On Antonio Gramsci" p.96-7.
(Studies on the Left, 1967).

Introduction.

Anyone turning to this study hoping to find a history of the Durham miners will be disappointed. The events of the period have been documented elsewhere¹ and I make no pretence at a definitive account. The thrust of this thesis is a sociological interpretation of the politics of the Durham pitmen. It ranges wide in an attempt to blend a particular theoretical approach with the realities of pit life between Tyne and Tees. Quite purposely this work omits many narrative details in order to achieve a view of the meanings of the pitmen within a social totality. In particular, the author's desire was to examine the consciousness of the Durham miners in the context of capitalist society. As a result many of the documents which were tangentially relevant to the situation of the pitmen were ignored², but the idea was to bring out the thought of the miners rather than the discourses on them. Of course, this study will not be empirically saturated (one can safely trust to historians for the minutiae), but the intention was to grasp at a comprehensive understanding of Durham miners' unionism (and as I shall argue below completeness is not synonymous with an idealist belief in absolute empiricism). Little would be added by reading parliamentary opinions on Durham since it was the meanings of the union and particularly the contradictions in it that the writer wished to explore (crucially though, within the bounds of capitalism - though surely it does not require a re-examination of the national press et hoc genus omne to understand that in a capitalist order, and particularly that of Britain in the 19th century, the dominant mores represented the hegemony of the bourgeoisie).

Pedomorphy is perhaps inevitable, but this is because no attempt is made at dogmatic empiricism. On the contrary, it is a major postulate of the approach that over-specialization is itself

a one-sided (and hence abstract) view of history. A particular philosophy underlies this research. The historian whose concern is with scholarship may well disdain such a formulation, but I submit that his very rejection is indicative of envelopment within a particular philosophic tradition. Certainly the launching of any study must be historical events, but I believe that the attainment of exhaustive detail (even in modern sociology let alone history) is an idealist conception. There must be selection of historical data in any attempt to understand the research and this very process of decision presupposes a philosophic commitment. Empiricism is not only sterile but meaningless without an appeal to make coherent the analysis and this coherence can only be achieved by articulating one's philosophic exegesis. The aim is for both diagnosis and description. Trying to do so, as a Marxist, I take as axiomatic a fundamental of dialectical materialism. That is, empiricism is one-sided (abstract) and superficial so long as it is not made sensible by integration into a whole, and that the encapsulation of this integrative process is the way to advance beyond abstraction in order to present a meaningful (concrete) understanding. This relation is central to any dialectical hermeneutic: that of the opposition between concrete and abstract, the concept of totality, the relation of part to whole, and the interaction between subject and object.

From the mass of historical data one must select the directly relevant from the less important. Few historians will dispute this, but my tack is to urge a methodology which can go beyond the bounds of cul-de-sac debates over positions a, b, or c. Only a dialectical analysis can reach towards a grasp of the coherence of social meanings. In dealing with the consciousness of actors it is only possible to

separate the essential from the tangential by utilizing a model of an integrative totality. (Incidentally, in keeping with Marxian epistemology I do not uphold an absolute Totality à la Hegel since Marxism stresses that no totality is not part of a greater totality as a principle of negative dialectics³). Where we can advance beyond merely schematic abstractions is to grasp at an understanding in a capitalist society of the dialectical intricacies within and around the class divisions of that order. The particularities of Durham miners' history can only be managed by moving within the totality of the boundaries of cultural hegemony. This whole exists only within and through the parts, but is not simply the sum of them. The co-joining of a mass of parts cannot lead simply to the whole. Rather, meaningful sociology proceeds from the abstract to the concrete through a continual oscillation between the whole and its parts. In fine, the necessary selection of sociological datum from the history is made coherent by integration within the realities of the makeup of capitalist society. This is not a jig-saw. The dialectic is made up not by delineating parts towards a whole, but by a series of parts and wholes revolving within a dialectical spectrum. Hence capitalist society is both a part and a whole in that it surrounds the social actors as a totality while in itself being a one-sided phenomenon in its very class structure, while within this system the D.M.A. is itself a part and a whole of which the members are a constitutive element.

Within this study the intention has been to offer a coherent (and from the above it will be clear that within capitalism the coherence is itself a negation) interpretative account of the meanings of the pitmen from an outline of hegemonic bourgeois domination. It was not felt an essential task to discern every aspect of the miners' activity since the methodology urged comprehension of the tendencies

of dissent and consensus of a particular group of workers enveloped in a culture which had developed as a result of a particular social and economic situation, who simultaneously acted in apparently ambivalent ways because of the very contradictions inherent in that milieu. The work illustrates the oxymoronic attitudes and actions of the pitmen, but the hope is that it will show that those who fight against the contradictions of capitalism rarely transcend the manifestations of those negations.

A lengthy period (1831-1926) was covered for reasons which converge with the above. The approach necessitated selection of the main historical threads in order to trace the changes of relationships within the union at the same time as understanding the incorporation of the pitmen as a whole. It ~~was~~^{was} essential to range across many years to grasp the machinations of the dialectics of incorporation. Certainly a much shorter period detailed to excess would have meant a disastrous blurring of the theoretical postulate. This is the essence of the methodology I embrace: to offer an explanation of such phenomena it is imperative to take the period - as well as the social order - as a whole. Much flesh and blood may be lacking, but I contend that the skeleton is framed with enough lean to avert atrophy. I believe that to understand the formation of the D.M.A. in 1870 one must be aware of the catastrophic defeat of 1844, and who would deny that any study of the Durham miners cannot omit the death-knell of 1926? Again, the treatment of Primitive Methodism may appear cavalier, but what is argued need not be the subject of any considerable disagreement. It is primarily a response to academic history's (both Marxist and bourgeois) stress on sides. My contention is that the question what is radicalism and conservatism is more fundamental to the debate (which

is necessarily one-sided) and that the only resolution is to grasp at the system which defines these categories. Only then can one square the apparant paradox of radicalism in a working class religion with conservatism as regards the basis of the social order. Moreover, only a temporal overview of the changes within the sect can discern the oscillations within the cultural apparatus so crucial to an understanding of the type of miners who rose to defend the pit families against the onslaughts of the coal-owners and yet moved on to act as disciplinarians of the militants at the pit-head.

It was with these considerations in mind that the author examined the Durham miners from 1831-1926 and offers a sociological interpretation of their political and economic struggles over the period. It goes without saying that my contribution will be modified and transcended by future scholarship. Particular stress was laid on the records of the D.M.A. not only because they offered a rich and relatively untapped source, but also because it was the union which was the major vehicle of Durhams' aspirations for much of this period. Moreover, within this context, the thesis's main effort was to describe why the D.M.A. took on such a particular form as it did and why tensions within the organization were proverbial. It would no doubt have been a great asset to the work to have studied the rise of grassroots' articulated opposition in considerable detail. That must be left for future research on two counts. First, the time and space available for an M.A. study disallowed such a move. More important, the thrust of this thesis is to explain the paradoxes which infected the union. How it was that a union could be founded as an answer to capitalist offensives and yet refuse steadfastly to fight back; why a particular sort of leadership arose and remained;

why localized militancy was not translated to a county-wide militant trade unionism. The D.M.A. records were particularly important in this respect since they display clearly not only the impressive votes of confidence in the executive and the world view of the leading agents, but alongside this they highlight the consistent undermining of the union by unofficial action, strikes against the wishes of the leadership, as well as the contortions of the rank and file delegates at Council gatherings. If I have not gone to the depths of the more traditional historian in answer I submit that few historians have been able to discern the ties - both structural and ideational - of Durham to the prevailing cultural climate in Britain which the author believes had the most fundamental repercussions for the area.

Following on from this, to those who object to my cursory review of the General Strike and other events (and there is much truth in such criticism) in Durham I reply that the crucial factor for my approach is to grasp that while in 1926 the union was temporarily abandoned and the membership extremely militant they were unable to work against the Baldwin machine because they were politically unorganized. To understand and explain this impotence lies at the heart of this account. Only the fleeting phenomenon of A.J. Cook had the effect of introducing a widespread political articulation to their industrial militancy yet even Cook could not move the mass of the pitmen to collective aggression against the owners. My aim was to explain this apparant paradox which underlies the whole history of Durham miners. Of course, a fascinating aspect of labour history is the activities of local political militants, but such opposition is rather tangential to my sphere since the fact remains that the union as a whole did not change course. Similarly, George Harvey the industrial activist is an important figure in North-East history, but

my hope in this thesis is not to describe the prophets but rather to understand and explain why the most striking phenomenon of Durham miners was their profoundly unrevolutionary consciousness combined with an impressive pit-head militancy. Harvey was a significant figure on the Tyne, but the fact is that he did not commit the membership to an offensive political strategy - viz. the failure of 1926? It is this latter contradiction (between the reality of coal capitalism and the pitmens' consciousness) with which I sought to come to terms. It is not denied that leading individuals exercised influence upon events in the region, but there is little evidence that points to even a significant minority of the pitmen breaking the bounds of bourgeois hegemony to support them (indeed, it is argued that the I.L.P., the major radical grouping of the 20th century, was itself embedded in bourgeois hegemony) and this ambivalence lies at the very heart of my admittedly superficial study. Only when there was evidence of widespread political awareness from at least a large minority of pitmen did the militants merit note, such as the 1915 Washington Glebe affair, and even then the crucial point is that the opposition was contained within the union - and it was this containment and tension which the thesis set out to explore. Similarly, there was felt no great need to excessively detail the agitational propaganda and growth of the I.L.P. in the area since the thrust of the study was to show that the dichotomy of leadership and led in the industrial field, with joint accommodation on the political level, still remained whatever the epithets of the union.

In short, it is the belief of this thesis that the majority of the pitmen need analysis perhaps more than the revolutionary minority. Such a postulate stands despite the conclusion that the only way forward for the Durham miners was the formation of rank and file revolutionary groups to attack the basic cause of their misfortunes. The political militants were important chiefly in that they

united with the pitmen in industrial struggles; the reality remained that the mass of the miners refused to throw out the traditional leaders which speaks legions for their political myopia. (Naturally, this dichotomy is conceptual: the substantive situation was of course hazy). It is to this problem of consciousness that the weight of this work is turned. In response to labour historians who no doubt will query why I do not delineate the growth of socialism in detail I reply by asserting a more fundamental issue: why did Marxist ideas not spread like wildfire given the abject conditions and militant response of the pitmen under free enterprise? This is the crucial point: not where did pockets of Marxism arise, but why did the vast majority of pitmen remain rebels without a cause? The pockets of political militancy are interesting phenomena, but the most glaring point about Durham is that the mass of pitmen did not add a political revolutionism to their industrial stridency. My aim is not to describe the development of Marxist ideas in Durham. On the contrary, the thrust of the work is to ask why they never got beyond an embryo. Activists in history invariably get extensive review (whether favourable or not), but there were nigh on 150,000 miners on the Durham coalfield at the turn of the century and it is their consciousness to which this study is addressed. To see this in any genuine perspective it is crucial to juxtapose their actions in a conservative union in face of fierce industrial struggles. The D.M.A. records, especially Council records and voting returns, alongside accounts of actual disputes are the only way to discern these oscillations. Moreover, the realization that all their activism was encompassed within a capitalist matrix is the only way to grope at an understanding of the miners' views.

This thesis springs from the question of three 'myths' of the pitmen. It points out that the miners were invariably on the defensive in disputes with the owners, though throughout the period localized stoppages were ubiquitous. The author asks, how can one square this industrial militancy with trade union conservatism and a particular sort of leadership consistently elected to high office? From a critique of the 'community' image of Durham miners it is suggested that the explanation for this apparant contradiction between thought and action lies in the cultural domination of British hegemony. An attempt is made to illustrate this process of the dialectics of incorporation by a chronological purview of the elements of consensus and dissent within the pitmens' organizations and the wider societal realms.

The development of Primitive Methodism, it is contended, introduced a critical extrapolation of the cultural apparatus into almost every pit village in Durham. In the early days it was a particular form of religion gestated by a dialectic of working class need for a consolatory metaphysic and the dilution within their desperate social conditions of the Protestant Ethic. The early Ranters quickly became spokesmen for unionism amongst the pitmen due to their oratorical abilities, intellect and moral steadfastness. However, even in these early days of immense class conflict and ruling class confusion this leadership in its emphasis on moral salvation blurred the realities of the socio-economic struggle. They were a considerable influence in allaying the violence of the miners and allowed the owners to inflict a major lock-out on their employees in 1832. Until 1844 the Primitives had much in common with

'moral' force Chartism (Chartism itself had significant contradictions within it, a number of which were tied closely with bourgeois hegemony), though the rank and file pitmen were more favourable to direct action. However, 1844 was a watershed since a disastrous defeat of the Durham miners had a number of important repercussions. First, Chartism as an ideology of the working class was crushed. Second, the pitmen as a whole lapsed into despondency for nearly a generation. Third, the Primitives, having been badly mauled as strike leaders, spent these years in re-assessing their religion. Their anomy was channeled into their Methodism and considerably shaped by the 'lessons' of the 1844 defeat. Traits which had been dormant came to the fore, particularly those of conciliation, compromise, and negotiation. Moreover, the ideational and structural connexions of Primitive Methodism introduced these leaders to the wider aspects of capitalist hegemony. The dialectics of incorporation were well under way. Four, the Primitives, following their stoic acceptance of victimization, were reinforced as leaders of the miners.

When the D.M.A. was founded in 1869 it reflected the embroilment of the pitmen in the cultural apparatus, though it was launched on the side of an attack on the bond, since Primitives dominated the upper echelons (and the sect had undergone considerable changes, which were to continue, since the 1830s). Moreover, astute owners had discerned the change-over from the militancy of earlier days and in fortuitous trade conditions saw in the union a way to actually increase productivity. 1870-1874 confirmed the D.M.A. leaders in their stress on peaceful advance, while in the short term it coincided with the owners' desires and placated the miners with concessions of substantial wage advances. Incorporation continued apace.

The decades which William Crawford (1870-1889) held office indicated the immense popularity of the secretary amongst the grass-roots. However, trade recessions and local squabbles invariably thrust the pitmen not only into dispute with the masters but also with their own union. Periodic and bitter arguments raged and the agents frequently came in for vilification. Despite this, Crawford held to the end the confidence of the membership. Pitmen voted with their feet in a number of clashes, but they constantly esteemed the political views of the leadership. Moreover, this was not a crude process of integration. Crawford certainly acceded to the dominant mores of the Manchester Liberals, but he was too much a pitman to swallow it whole. Significantly, he was a Primitive precisely because the sect was dissenting. His reign is illustrative of sharp oscillations in his opinions. Indeed, he displayed more vision than his own membership. Towards the end of his life new unionism injected a militant mood that began to undermine the traditional union, but Crawford's views continued to coincide with those of the rank and file. Liberalism - if a radical variant - shrouded the area.

John Wilson took over effective control of the union when militancy was ascendant. From 1889-1893 Durham was a hive of activism yet the end saw Wilson able to resurrect many of the adornments of Liberalism. Certainly, his office saw an increased rift between the agents and rank and file when coal owners' attacks forced an abandonment of the Gladstonian-Liberals and agitators (there is obviously a dialectic, not dichotomy, between economic and political consciousness), gaining ground in the North, caused the leader a number of headaches. However, the fact remained that not only was Wilson in office until his death in 1915, but even at this time union policy did not radically change. What had occurred was actually

a subtle change within the union. The agents to a man took over the Labour Party banner (and thereby considerably bridged the yawning political chasm that had increasingly developed under Wilson), and after years of propaganda the I.L.P. had displaced the former Liberalism. The pitmen had discarded their earlier politics having witnessed their bankruptcy. However, the political change remained within the dominant hegemony. Certainly it was a different variant yet the Labour Party was fundamentally an elaboration of plebian Liberalism in its call for social justice by securing increased working class representation in the Commons. The leaders of the D.M.A. remained Primitive Methodists (by now confirmation rather than causal of their world-view) and as social democrats advocated parliamentarianism as the panacea. It was the old formula, more votes, more representatives, more justice. It was a commitment to solving the problems of capitalism rather than attacking the capitalist problem itself. While the owners advanced on the miners the agents continued with their insistence on conciliation and compromise. Where they embraced socialism it was restricted to verbal conjectures: never to the industrial strength of the rank and file. Union conservatism was the logical extension of social democracy. Not surprisingly, the tensions within the union continued. While the lodges acted out the class war the politics of the Labour Party eased over the whole North-East Coalfield. There had of course been significant changes within the union and the mens' consciousness, but these changes remained within the boundaries of constitutional procedure. Labour Party politics, like Primitive Methodism, were in crucial respects emanations from within the British cultural apparatus. They remained fixed in bourgeois hegemony into and

throughout the gravest clashes of 1921 and 1926. By far and away the mass of pitmen threw off any scruples to fight back against the employers' offensive. What they lacked, however, was any political answer to the demands of coal capitalism. They were carping at symptoms and never taking up the cudgels to attack the cause. Demand ~~and~~ after demand was forwarded in these years for resistance to economic affronts and the representatives, that much more imbued in capitalist culture, even criticized for appearing over-conciliatory yet the mass of pitmen were myopic to the limitations of Labour. On the contrary, once the most grave economic clashes were postponed the Labour Party was re-affirmed in the leadership. The pitmen could not break the bounds of bourgeois rationality. They only managed to achieve a particular and subtle variant - vigorous social democracy. Economic constraints at times made this irrelevant and the miners had been straining at the leash in face of crises, but constantly the initiative was left to the owners and the mediations remained with agents from the Labour Party who rather than add political weight to their members' militancy persistently deflated the industrial unrest.

Notes.

1. See G.H.Metcalf, 1947.

E.Welbourne, 1923.

W.R.Garside, 1971.

J.Wilson, 1907.

R.Fynes, 1873.

A.Mason, 1967/1970.

and bibliography.

2. This was why, for all the records of the M.F.G.B. were consulted, they were infrequently quoted. All they did was reinforce views already clear from the D.M.A. records and earlier histories. See, for example, Ben Pickard's comments on Durham's position - M.F.G.B. 1894, p.22-24.

3. It will be clear that I follow a particular methodological school. It may be loosely termed Hegelian Marxism and the approach is highlighted in Lukacs, 1923, Goldmann, 1964/1969, Adorno, 1970. And of course, Marx himself -

e.g. '....The concrete is concrete because it is a combination of many determinations, i.e. a unity of diverse elements. In our thought it therefore appears as a process of synthesis, as a result, and not as a starting point, although it is the real starting point, and, therefore, also the starting point of observation and conception from 'Marx's Grundrisse' David McLellan, ed. p.44-45, Paladin,

London, 1973.

DURHAM MINERS: THREE MYTHS:

A myth is an attempt to explain the past within the terms of the present. It tries to come to terms with the existing situation by making more coherent the past. As a rule, the myth reinforces the status quo, and thereby the authority of those in power. Rarely a downright lie, it is more often a reinterpretation of history; a half-truth which takes the sting out of unpleasant knowledge.¹

Within these terms, the three myths of the Durham miners fall into two categories:-

(a) two 'bourgeois' myths, i.e. two interpretations to explain away what the existing order has seen or sees as a threat.

(b) one myth from the left to account for the disappointment of there being no revolution from the miners, who for so long have been regarded as the vanguard of the proletariat.

1. Myth of isolation of Durham pitmen in secluded "communities"

It is a commonplace to think of Durham miners as being isolated from the rest of the country in tight-knit, self-contained communities. To a very considerable extent this image has continued right up to the present times. The stereotype pitman is regarded as a character who knows little of the outside world, entombed as he is in the catacomb of the pit-village. It is not too hard to understand how this picture arises in view of the fear and awe felt towards the

rough and ready miners (it is easy to dismiss hostility as due to ignorance), the structure of pit villages, the capitalist press, and above all the illustrators of pit-life (usually ex-pitmen or pit exiles who romanticize their recollections) have over-emphasized beyond recognition the inward-looking aspects of the colliery situation. Lawrentian fantasy sets the trend for such myth-makers,² but quite as recently as 1971 we may read one of the leading culprits, Sid Chaplin, stating "... one lived (about 1918) in one's own village and it was sufficient. One was hardly aware of the village next door."³ Such an image is at best a half-truth. Of course, pitmen, because of the peculiar nature of their work, developed a particular mode of living on the Great Northern Coalfield. The community of miners was and still is a reality, bringing with it a close family network, an institutionalized social structure, and a striking web of neighbour relations. But when the descriptions get to the stage, as they invariably do, of positing a lack of awareness from the miners of the outside world, then indeed it is they and their popular image that is sadly isolated. Every stage of the history of the Durham miners points to the fact that the pitmen were conspicuously outward-looking, with an acute sensitivity towards the social and political events of British society. Further it is central to this ~~paper~~^{study} to show that far from being isolated, the Durham miners were inextricably bound to the growth and development of

British capitalism. They were enveloped in the system whether they liked it or not. More importantly, they were aware of these very strong bonds.

To get to the roots of the isolation myth one can examine a number of aspects of North-East history.

(a) The capitalist connexion

Fundamental to capitalism is the relation of capital and wage-labour. The two are inseparable and inter-dependent. In Durham it is possible to delineate the rise of capitalism as being in the forefront of British society, resting predominantly on the relation with the markets of London and the South-East, although after the 18th century exports to the continent became an increasingly important factor.

What is essential at this stage ~~of the system~~ is to trace the links between the Durham pitmen and the capitalist development, in order to show that in this crucial respect the North-East Coalfield had very close ties with the industrial centres of Britain. In this way it is possible to see that rather than being isolated the Durham miners were central to the British economy, and central under a system which encroached into every aspect of their daily lives while in return demanding reciprocity.

Capitalism of a crude sort has a long history in Durham. There are records of coal having been mined over 2,000 years ago, though the first comment of note was in the "Bolden Buke" of 1180.⁴ As early as the 14th century there is evidence of the exporting of coal on a commercial basis from the Tyne,⁵

and evidence from the 13th that coal was being shipped at regular intervals to the South-East.⁶ As in agriculture, so in coal, it was initially the feudal lords who started to work on capitalist lines.⁷ The attractions were multiple. Easy seams, ready access, and an open market after the early 16th century decline in timber. The North-East became the only coalfield in England with these assets added to the proximity of river and sea to facilitate transport.

By the early 16th century an embryonic capitalism was established.⁸ The local lords soon faced outside competition. Capital was invested from other English lords. Men at Court such as Robert Dudley cajoled and persuaded so they could have a stake. For a time the remnants of feudalism joined in the race,⁹ but the influence of the nobility soon lost its hold to the trading classes. As early as 1517 there are records of the Company of Hostmen containing a significant share of non-aristocracy.¹⁰ This was the group which was to dominate the coal trade of the twin counties up until the Civil War. It was formed and functioned solely to retain the monopoly of the trade, and hence control price, production and profit, in the hands of a Newcastle oligarchy. There were elements of feudalism in their structure, but the Hostmen were capitalist in action, manipulating a market situation with a profit goal, working in increasingly intensive competition, with a heavy investment of capital, and a sharp division of labour based on the employer/employee relation. Production soared under the group.¹¹

The Civil War smashed the hold of the Hostmen on Durham's coal industry, but it in no way slackened the influence of capitalism. On the contrary, it opened new markets by breaking down feudal barriers throughout the country.¹² It was not long before a 'Grand Alliance' of coal owners, similar to the Hostmen, was formed. Its function was simple: to control the coal trade to suit their interests (i.e. to gain maximum profits).¹³ The history of the Durham coal trade is etched with accounts of these coal combines. The rationale behind them was to influence the market to their sectional interest. In short, to produce as cheaply as possible, but to sell on their own terms by having absolute control of the market supply.

But this was the zenith of the monopolies. It was the eve of the Industrial Revolution. Coal was in such demand that the North-East could not supply it quickly enough. The demand was an incentive to other areas, and they rapidly answered the call. Yorkshire, South Wales, Shropshire and other regions began to sink collieries and England entered the age of competition. Capitalism was maturing. The railways revolutionized the Durham mining concern by introducing cheap, efficient and bulk transport.¹⁴ Pits in the early 19th century ate into the rich reserves of West Durham. The 'Grand Alliance' shook under the force of the innovations. Affairs got out of hand and capitalist anarchy (free trade) took over. Production soared¹⁵ as entrepreneurs rushed in with investment and counter-investment.

But such a state of affairs was anathema to the coal-owners. Peace was secured and the combination returned. It was the apotheosis of the Hostman, "... an institution specifically designed to accomplish the two-sided function of limiting output and raising prices."¹⁶ This "Limitation of the Vend" effectively dominated the North-East coal trade from 1827-34.¹⁷

However, the early 19th. century was not the time for thriving monopoly. Britain underwent in two generations more fundamental changes than it had experienced in the previous two thousand years,¹⁸ and the coal combines felt the full force of the shock waves. The industrial centres in the Midlands and the London area had an apparently insatiable appetite for coal. It seemed the more coal they ate the more energy was roused to appeal for more. Up in the North-East the Vend fought a losing battle to try to control supply. Demand was way ahead and supplies were coming not only from other regions, but also from abroad. Durham's magnates responded to the competition in the only way they knew. They were more competitive. The Vend broke down as the industry became increasingly cut-throat. The Vend was exceeded by any owner who was cunning enough to avoid censure, and even if caught there was a limit to the sanctions it could bring to bear. In 1845, when Lord Londonderry had exceeded the limit by a staggering 40,000 tons, and refused to pay the fine because he would not be "faithful among the faithless" it marked the start of unbridled competition.¹⁹ The market now created demand and governed supply. The coal

combines lost all hold they ever had. It was a new game for the Durham owners. The rules were now refereed by the market forces. The new doctrine was to win as large a slice of the market as possible. To be successful one had to produce coal cheaply, it was irrelevant how, just so long as one's production was cheaper than the other competitors. It had to be this, because the stakes of the game were one's collieries. The profit motive had always had an excessive influence on the North-East coast trade, but now it seemed to take on an existence all of its own.

Even from such a cursory view it is possible to see the early critical role of capitalism in the North-East coal trade, with links stretching right back to the 13th. century with the southern ports. Durham was not an isolated area, but central to the development of a capitalist economy.²⁰ From this small county came the bulk of the energy to set going the wheels of industrialism. From Durham County came the railway engine, arguably the most important product of the last two hundred years. This county boasted the largest iron and steel works, and some of the busiest ports and shipbuilding wharves in the world. Within the North-East Coalfield thrived some of the most influential aristocrats of 19th. century Britain - the Lords Londonderry, Ravensworth, Durham, and Northumberland, not forgetting the largest coal-owner of them all, the Bishop of Durham. The fact that Durham was so closely linked to the centre of the British economy was reflected in the day-to-day lives of the pitmen.

Whatever they may have desired, the miners who produced the coals were caught in the morass of capitalist connexions. The existence of the Tommy shops, the Bond, the 'free' housing, and many of the unnecessary dangers of mining were in crucial respects due to the twin ties of wage labour and capital.²¹ These were all factors which impinged on the everyday lives of the pitmen and having their origin in the markets of the South East coast, would serve to wrench the miners out of any isolation that geographical conditions may have favoured. Moreover, in the face of the long history of the coal combines, the miners had only one recourse and that was to learn the lessons of the owners and combine to urge improvements. The unions of the North-East pitmen were little more than a response to the despotism of the owners. They were of course a threat to the latter's profitability, so the early unionization was crushed by the much more powerful owners. Further, as the coal trade expanded into the 19th. century the capitalist influence developed an even greater momentum. By 1860 the market whims were paramount. Not only did the owners feel the greater competition, but every pitman felt the effects of the market trends in his inconsistent wages and uncertain employment which varied with the price of coal.

(b) Migration into, in, and out of the county

It could be suggested of course that although a capitalist connexion may well link the pitmen to the centres of Britain,

such an impingement on their daily lives may still have not linked them in a conscious way. The pitmen could have been drastically influenced by market forces, yet still unaware of their emanations. Again, however, all the evidence lies against such a proposition.

It is a leading assumption of the 'isolationist' theorist that the Durham pit-villages were secluded and unchanging. In fact, just the reverse was the case. The county throughout the 19th century experienced a widespread immigration to fill the demands of the developing pits. Furthermore, within the villages there was immense mobility, skilled hewers finding work easy to ^{come by} ~~find~~ as a rule and moving freely in search of better conditions.²² A glance at the rapid increase in population succinctly illuminates:-

1801 -	350,000	
1821 -	440,000	(1.9% migrants)
1841 -	618,000	(9.2% migrants)
1861 -	942,000	(5.3% migrants)
1881 -	1,460,000	(2.8% migrants)
1901 -	1,995,000	(-.4% migrants)

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In examining these figures, one must also keep in mind that such rises in population were augmented by a very high birth rate. Again, it is significant to consider that "... a surprising volume of immigration took place in the 1850s, at a time when communications were still rudimentary and before popular education could have spread knowledge of opportunities for work. These early immigrants came from long distances."²⁴ Many of these immigrants were those starved out of Ireland, whilst others came from Wales and Scotland and other deprived areas. This influx must have introduced considerable awareness

of outside occurrences and indeed one need only examine the D.M.A. records to read constant references to Ireland in monthly circulars, gala speakers, etc. all taking the side of the Catholic,²⁵ even to the extent of sending Crawford and Patterson to Dublin to discuss Irish politics. There could be little introspection in a race composed of "a combination of Lancashire, Cornish, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Northumbrian and Durham accents, dialects and languages"²⁶ Add to this the fact that Durham was almost a virgin land at the start of the 19th century²⁷ and again the conclusion was that Durham pitmen were alive to outside influence is irresistible. What else could there be when thirty years previous the county was desolate? Durham village life was never allowed to stagnate throughout the 19th century. Until the 1890s there was a constant flow of immigrants and afterwards one had not only migrants leaving the area (and surely continuing some correspondence with relatives) but also there was a significant number of young men who ventured to emigrate to America or Africa, to return in later life.²⁸ Two of these - John Wilson and Peter Lee - were to become perhaps the most famous of all union leaders in Durham.

(c) Press

The local press in Durham was strikingly cosmopolitan in its outlook, whether liberal or high Tory. A cursory glance at any of the 19th century papers serves to show that local coverage came a poor second to national reportage,²⁹ clearly reflecting the county's close connexions with the pulse of

national life. It is true, of course, that the rank-and-file pitman would probably not have read such newspapers anyway, so they would have little direct effect, but the point to be stressed is that it would be read by "the earnest artisan",³⁰ destined to be the leaders of the miners in their later struggles and who obviously passed on much of their opinion on political matters to the grassroots.

While discussing the press, it is perhaps apposite to mention what must have been for many pitmen their press - certainly after the early 1870s - the literature emanating from the D.M.A. Here again one is struck by the extensive coverage given to national affairs, particularly in the Monthly Circulars of Crawford and Wilson which covered the period, with brief stops, from 1873 - 1915. It would be pointless to begin to list the very large range from Parliamentary Reform, to Ireland, conditions in German coal mines, the state of America, Gladstonian activity, through to attacks on the Tory antics in the Commons. They pepper the records.

Furthermore, for an 'isolated' people, the Durham miners exercised an amazingly aware trade unionism, even if of choice they retained a parochialism into the 20th century. It ought to be recalled that it was the Durham miners who set afoot the first movements towards National unionism in the 1840s when Martin Jude, centred in Newcastle, became the mainstay of the Miners' Association. Again, for a cut-off region, the county had a surprising degree of activity during

Chartist Times,³¹ which was assigned to the disturbing influences of migration bringing changes in traditional arrangements.³² From the earliest days of unionism the Durham miners displayed an avid concern to seek aid and to assist fellow trade-unionists. The great strike of 1844 saw delegates traversing the nearby counties to enlist support, while the 'Twelve Apostles' went to London to gather funds.³³ The 1879 stoppage saw subscriptions coming to the Durham pitmen from as far afield as Claycross, Derbyshire; Lace Makers of Birmingham and the London Society of House Decorators and Painters.³⁴ The Durham pitmen were to return their debts manyfold over the years, from 1840 when they were the bastion of the Mining Association through to 1919 when they gave financial support to the policemen victimized after their strike.³⁵

(d) Religion

It has become a cliché for historians to comment on the rapid rise and strength of Primitive Methodism in the Northern Coalfields. By the 1880s virtually every pit village in Durham had a local chapel and although it was by no means a majority of the pitmen who attended, their reverence for the Primitive Methodists is reflected in the fact that virtually every leader of the D.M.A. from its inception until 1926 was a member of the sect.³⁶ In spite of this, no writer has yet observed that implicit in this strong religious force lay enduring bonds with the rest of British society, which nullifies any notion that Durham pitmen were excluded from the wider society. In order to comprehend this statement more clearly, one must outline briefly the structural

position of Primitive Methodism, particularly since most of the work done so far has come from apologists eager to defend the reforming zeal of the Chapel.

After the Civil War Protestantism was the religion of England. For two centuries it permeated the social structure. Apart from rather insignificant variants England had but one religion reflected in the Established Church. Such a society-wide religion invariably defends the status quo.³⁷ For present purposes one can delineate a fairly crude relationship between Protestantism and Capitalism. The association is the essential issue here, not squabbles over teleology, so one may point to Weberian and Marxist literature for support.³⁸

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, however, capitalism's rise accelerated. Whatever stimulus or even restraint the Established Church provided this climb, it remained that Protestantism gained considerably from the bond. Beginning with agrarian changes, the rift drawn between the successful and the poor must have been glaring, ^{as} or, more importantly, must have been the fact that the Church gave sanction to the growing wealth of the landlord and yeomanry at the expense of enclosed peasants, driven either to the sprouting towns or to employment as hired labourers.³⁹ Most significant were the charges invoked by urbanization. A proletariat was developed and its growth fatally weakened the hold of the Established Church on the new classes.⁴⁰ However, because the direct hold of the Church was lost does not mean that the working class had no religion. True, the reality of the new social

conditions compelled them to reject the Church and its overt siding with the wealthy but nevertheless it remained that "... neither Christianity nor the Churches are reported to have a low reputation with the working class. Working class people often believe in God and some sort of after-life and they tend to associate religion very closely with basic morality."⁴¹ There existed within the consciousness of the working class an ambivalence in that the Established Church was seen to be good but not for the likes of them. In giving such approval to the Church the working class were indirectly sanctioning the development of a system which worked in a sectional interest against themselves. But that the working class had moved at least physically from the Church made that sanction rather tenuous.

The results of this situation can be seen in the development of Methodism. There was a people who looked to Protestantism but were constrained from its embrace by a consciousness which placed it separate from them in its traditional presentation. Consciousness and structure interacted to bring into being a religion which can be termed working class establishmentarianism.⁴² The rise of Methodism coincided with a period in English history (late 18th - early 19th century) when the link of religion and the masses was at its ebb-point and the people were almost receptive to revolutionary notions. Instead many took to Methodism.⁴³ It is popular to view Methodism as a distinctly working class movement. In a sense it was, but the mistake lies in the type of assertion from MacIntyre that "no writer can avoid

the conclusion that in England after 1800 each social class possesses a separate religious history".⁴⁴ This is at best half true. In the physical sense of structure and organisation, there were certainly blurred class separations, but in the last analysis the basis of the religion - the doctrine, the meanings - were ~~restorably~~ similar. In this sense the development of Methodism can be seen as an emanation from the Established Church gestated by a dialectic of working class formation and incorporation. The origins of Methodism lay firmly in the entrails of the Church, and hence Methodism was little more than a working man's Protestant Ethic.⁴⁵ Indeed, Wesley emerged from Oxford, a hive of the ruling classes, and the leaders were so authoritarian as to precipitate a split within Methodism itself in 1851. One need not go to the extremes of Thompson,⁴⁵ though he is correct, to illustrate Methodism's posture. Hobsbawm describes the Wesleyan leadership as "...extreme conservatives in politics, opposed not merely to social revolution, but also to the liberal and radical reform which later became so closely identified with 19th. century British nonconformity, to trade unionism and other manifestations of labour activity." ⁴⁶ Apologists of Methodism affirm this stance only too clearly.⁴⁷ The hallmark of Wesleyan Methodism was its deep-rooted intransigence. "Essentially Protestant in its reverence for the Bible, in its insistence upon individual conversion and responsibility, and in its stress upon Holiness in the world, Methodism was yet Catholic in its sacramentarianism, in its

authoritarian government and in its emphasis upon the necessity of a corporate expression for religious experience. It was indubitably Protestant but it was a new member of the English Protestant family."⁴⁸ It offered no challenge to the societal order, on the contrary, backing it to the hilt.⁴⁹ In paying homage to the socio-political structure Methodism firmly sanctioned, and indeed was a zealous exponent, of the economic ethic. "At no point did early Methodism display its mood more enthusiastically than in that part of its enterprise devoted to temporal interests. Its ideal was a quality of life vitalized by a religious motive, but present benefits remained in the foreground. Was not the unique theme of every sermon the immediate moral transformation of character, authenticated not by a remotely realized salvation, but by the discernible evidences of social conduct?"⁵⁰ Methodism was a staunch supporter of the work ethic as a duty, Godly and morally proper; a keen controller of industrial misconduct.⁵¹ This was a direct result of "... a firmly entrenched view of human nature, the Christian tradition and the surrounding social situation (which) all combined to elevate the prestige of the activities of the economic life. Each of these laid upon men the necessity of the industrial virtues. All of the most respectable opinion argued that human nature could not withstand the ravages of idleness. Work was a condition of happiness. A persistent industriousness was, also, the mark of moral character. The traditional Christian ethic and the shibboleth of Puritan legalism were at one on this point."⁵²

One can be forgiven for a sense of déjà vu having read Weber on Protestantism but the stance of Methodism must be traced because there have been so many apologists who have defined it as radical. The above has tried to show that Methodism supported the doctrine of the Established Church and hence avidly favoured the status quo. This was not a simplistic relationship since peoples' meanings were involved. Methodism certainly felt the effects of working class activity, for example in its evangelical spread, its open-air meetings, the particular type of hymns etc., but such movements do not negate the fact that the doctrine of Methodism had strong roots in the Established Church. As a result, it was not a movement for the working classes, though it ~~compared~~^{contained} significant numbers of them, because in favouring a doctrine fervently pro-capitalist it was by definition against the interests of the proletariat.⁵³

The development of Methodism, however, witnessed a movement increasingly to the right. The early decades of the 19th century were dominated by the autocracy of Jabez Bunting, a Tory of the first order. Added to this was the radical effect which the Methodist stress on respectability and industry was having on its members. Many were becoming wealthy in turn. This activity had a reciprocal influence on the Methodism movement, as..." the standards and outlook of the leaders of the Wesleyan tended to reflect those of the ruling section of the community. The uniqueness of the new movement as a programme of social reform was adulterated into a pale hue of respectability."⁵⁴ With the shift to the right

and overt defence of the status quo, Methodism began to experience problems in recruiting the proletariat. Indeed, by far the majority of the working classes were excluded from any religion. This did not mean that they were immune to the societal hegemony which deemed Christianity good. Even the lowest class accepted this but they could not come to terms with a sect which so openly followed the existing order. Thus rank and filers in the Methodist movement tried to accommodate the consciousness of the working classes as yet uninvolved with the sect. Primitive Methodism arose in response to the desperate social conditions, particularly of northern miners, and brought a radicalism to English religion not seen for two hundred years.

Hugh Bourne and William Clowes began the movement in the wastes of the Staffordshire coalfield, preaching to workers in the most abject circumstances.⁵⁵ To reach such people the Primitive Methodists had to come on at a very basic level. The miners were a race who clearly knew of religion, even admiring the religious, but so cut off were they from that part of society that practiced either Protestantism or Wesleyan Methodism that only the Primitive Methodists made any real headway. Herein lay the appeal of the "Ranter" sects. Hobsbawm explains "... It was totally untheological, unintellectual and emotional. It is characteristic of working-class sects that they were designed for the uneducated, so that passion and morality, in which the most ignorant can compete on equal terms, were the exclusive criteria of faith and salvation."⁵⁶ The camp meeting outside the traditional chapel

and an appeal to the 'gut' were the defining characteristics of early Primitive Methodism, alongside the novelty of a rudimentary democracy shared amongst the participants.⁵⁷

What is more, Primitive Methodism did not just allow its members democratic participation. Besides this and offering salvation, its members were too involved in day-to-day struggles of existence to escape the web of trade union activities. On the contrary, their preaching gave them a fine training and oratory. Further as Moore noted recently,⁵⁸ their newly-found respectability labelled them as potential moral superiors. Consequently, it is no surprise to find the trade union leaders primarily Primitive Methodists, particularly in the period 1840-1850.⁵⁹ Moreover, these early Primitive Methodists often professed a philosophy which smacked distinctly of socialism.⁶⁰ With such a proletarian view as this it is scarcely surprising that Primitive Methodism should break with the Wesleyans in 1851, or that Hobsbawm in a later paper could observe that "... Primitive Methodism was so closely identified with trade unions as to become, practically, a labour religion".⁶¹

Primitive Methodism was not only distinctly working class but it aspired to a social ideal which at the least could be called radical. However, to conclude that Primitive Methodism responded to the demands of a deprived proletariat is to fail completely to examine the other side of the dialectic. The Primitive Methodists did not simply arrive to answer the call of the miners for salvation. The miners knew beforehand about religion, though they were unable to accept its existing

mediations, but at least they were involved in the system enough to have been prepared for a religion. They were not innately atheistic. On the contrary, it appears that they long held some religious conceptions though they rarely displayed them to institutions.* The pitmen were prepared for a British religion earlier if it came at a level to appeal to them. Further, and even more significant, Primitive Methodism had distinct origins traceable back in English religious history through Methodism to the Established Church. This marked the movement as essentially within the hegemonic structure of British society. Of course, they were radical within what the system allowed, but come the crunch Primitive Methodism was essentially a product of British hegemony. As such when it appeared in Durham it brought firm links with the outside system, negating any notion of 'isolationism'. Primitive Methodism introduced into every village a structural extrapolation of the wider system. Primitive Methodism, radical as religions go, was essentially conservative in being a British religion. Its quarrel with the Established Church was organizational not doctrinal.⁶²

Look to its origins. The founders, Bourne and Clowes, had as their "purpose.. to form a party upon what they called the simplicity and uniformity of primitive Methodism; they maintained that Methodism had lost its original character and its members were conforming to the world in spirit, manners, dress, etc."⁶³ A religion looking back to its founder could not offer any radical break with established belief. Indeed, what is clear is that Primitive Methodism when it was radical

* For example, see the early chapters of Kendall (1906):

was so in spite of itself, and it always held the brakes on any social rebellion. Hence we see Tommy Hepbourn in 1832 mourning that strike action was inevitable and throughout urging law abidness and prayer. The philosophy of the Primitives lay in persuasion, law and order, prayer and diligence - all products of orthodox religion which served to bring the pitmen into the embrace of acceptable Christianity. We read in the official history of Kendall that the prayer-meetings were never a threat to bourgeois order. Most emphatically, "... it would be wrong to describe these lively meetings as lawless. That they could not well be if Hugh Bourne had anything to do with them. 'Our rules', says he 'were strict'. Everyone must keep out of sin and none were allowed to use improper expressions."⁶⁴ Here we witness sin equated with lawlessness, sure sign of established religion. The same author in a later volume observes the Primitives' roles as working-class leaders. "... They were moderators as well as leaders in the struggle; for there were amongst their followers exasperated men smarting under their wrongs and there were also ⁿto inconsiderable number of young hot-bloods, as well as a sprinkling of men of little principle, to whom Revolution delusively promised quick and large returns, while the methods of Reform seemed tame in comparison and slow in yielding but meagre results. For all this, the leaders being for the most part Christian men, and shrewd and patient withal, set themselves resolutely to withstand the temptation to resort to violent and illegal methods; and the cause they

championed was, in the end, the gainer by the self-restraint and wise leadership though in many cases the reward came too late to be of any use to them who had earned it".⁶⁵ Such remarks say much about the sect and place it essentially as an upholder of the status quo. What hallmarks Primitive Methodism is its roots within the Protestant faith; roots which stressed good-will, conciliation, hard work and loyalty. This it brought to the Durham coalfield, introducing a belief which differed chiefly in presentation to that of the Established Church. It was a plebian religion, never proletarian. As such it wrenched the pitmen deeper into the morass of the bourgeois world view of English society. The Durham miners could not be cut-off when within every village the Primitive Methodists introduced a structural component of the cultural apparatus. Being an emanation from mainstream English religion it was captured in British society's hegemonic fabric and compelled to remain within it until that cultural domination was overcome.

An understanding of the situation of Primitive Methodism in Durham helps considerably in explaining the conduct of the Durham miners between 1832-1915, particularly in the leaderships' relation with the grassroots. Moreover, an historical analysis enables one to grasp the changes which Primitive Methodism itself underwent within this period. At the outset its presentation of necessity was radical, though it held fundamental links with established British religion. As the century progressed one witnesses the increasing prominence of

the orthodox aspects of the Primitives, as they followed a similar incorporation to that which Methodism itself had undergone. Earlier submerged roots grew stronger and they in turn encouraged the religious to take that much quicker to Liberalism. By 1880 there had been two Primitive Methodisms - that of the age of Chartism and that of Victorian laissez-faire.

2. Myth of Durham miners continually striking:

An integral component of the contemporary wisdom is the notion that Durham pitmen, up until the Second World War, were the vanguard of the British proletariat, unionized to a man and availing themselves of every opportunity to attack the owners. It is hard to shake the myth of the violent men of the North-East who so worried the die-hard Tories of 1926,⁶⁶ but the fact remains that throughout their history the Durham miners have seemed loth to hit at the owners. The truth of the matter is that it was the coal owners who were the militants in Durham, never letting pass an opportunity to assail the pit-men. The Durham miners, on the other hand, undertook only three strikes from 1832 to 1926 and even these are characterized by an urgent desire of the union agents to end the struggle as soon as possible.

A strike is an aggressive action, initiated by the working class to improve their conditions, whereas a lock-out is a defensive move, taken to continue the status quo in face of assaults from the owners, usually to reduce wages. Taking these definitions as criteria, it is possible to list the

actions of the Durham miners in categories. 1831 saw the miners on the attack, sparking off a strike against the conditions of work. The following year the roles reversed. 1844 was a strike, though it was met by a lock-out from the owners, making the event a peculiarly defensive and aggressive movement of the pitmen. 1879, 1892, 1921 and 1926 were all great lock-outs. Whatever the myth-makers plead, it remains that the most monumental struggles of the Durham miners were in the face of attacks from the owners. They say a lot for the area. The clashes were defensive, on the terms of the owners who could select the field of battle in times of depression (there has never been a strike in Durham when coal was in short supply, surely the best time to launch an offensive) when a lock-out could actually be of benefit to owners who could sell surplus stocks at inflated prices.⁶⁷

This ubiquity of defensive action is all the more astounding in view of the realisation that the two later country-wide strikes were both victories for the miners, although much was lost in 1912 and 1920 due to the temerity of the union leadership backsliding all the way in their desperate haste for a settlement. Ironically, they were the only times that the Durham miners ended a struggle on the winning side.

3. Myth of D.M.A. leadership conspiring against the true wishes of their members:

The thesis that the union officials were the constant betrayers of their members belongs to Dave Douglas⁶⁸ His is an eloquent condemnation of trade union bureaucracy in Durham.

Douglass looks to rank-and-file action as that which ought to be the lead in Durham and concludes his historical survey with "...there were the men, the owners, and firmly between them the full-time agents who negotiated on their behalf but came to totally unsatisfactory agreements and then spent the bulk of the time trying to ram them down the throats of the men."⁶⁹ It was the union leadership that, being, "deeply afraid of independent working class action",⁷⁰ prolonged in Durham the anomalies of the Sliding Scale, fighting all the way the wishes of the grassroots.

The cause of this situation Douglass lays firmly at the door of trade union bureaucrats, that as the D.M.A. employed full-time officials it was due to the "particular character" that developed from this position which led to the split between the agents and their members.⁷¹ Unfortunately, Douglass' assertions create a number of problems. For instance, not once does he ask why the members, if so dissatisfied, did not "kick them out" as he informs us happened at lodge level.⁷² Indeed, Douglass conveniently overlooks the fact that these agents throughout the 19th. century stood for re-election every year and yet were opposed only on 4 occasions between 1869-1926 (and then to be returned with thundering majorities).⁷³ Why, if so much displeasure, did not the membership mandate their lodge sections to sack the incumbent agents at the annual council? Further, if the officials gave such poor service; why was it that the Executive Committee, changed by rule every six months, was so frequently

filled by the same personnel on lodge votes?⁷⁴ Again, why is it that the Durham pitmen elected agents "drawn from the ranks of the moderate, self-educated, temperate miners" (Douglass) when what they should have been doing in the author's own terms is electing hard-line militants? While not being so naive as Garside,⁷⁵ his statement of individual power in the union carries the weight that if things were so unsatisfactory the agents could have been displaced. The activity in the union from lodge level is yet another factor overlooked by Douglass and yet how would he square the immense amount of local involvement in union affairs with the assertion that the officials were cut off?⁷⁶ In short, given the high activism in the union, then if there had been such conflict within it, how was it that the agents were never dismissed? (even though there were occasional lodge resolutions calling for their resignation)?⁷⁷ How would Douglass explain the phenomenon, for instance, of the Council at times asserting its power and overruling the Executive Committee? That this happened at intervals throughout the period is surely witness to the democracy of the union, and, more importantly, the power available to the rank-and-file if they became thoroughly disaffected.⁷⁸

Douglass's analysis, of course, is very much akin to that of Michels.⁷⁹ In fact it suffers from precisely the same fault as does the classic statement on oligarchy in that it confuses structural with psychological bases of oligarchy.⁸⁰ What is underestimated by both writers is the necessity for a confidence

in the leadership, with psychological links between the heads and the grassroots, for successful oligarchy to endure. Conspiracy theories always fall down in that they overlook that the rank-and-file can in a democracy ultimately displace the old and create new leaders. The only way for a democratic oligarchy to survive is to retain the respect of the led. Otherwise it will fall. Such was the case within the D.M.A. up until the second decade of the 20th century. There were certainly structural factors which led to shortcomings in the democratic machine. One need only consider under this heading the issue of power in the D.M.A. and it is quickly realized that it was the Executive Committee and not the Council which had the largest influence, in that it met frequently and dealt with the day-to-day union affairs, while the Council sat bi-monthly, and although it theoretically had supreme power, in fact it rarely exercised its prerogative. Again, the Executive Committee, as it changed every six months, gave the agents unexpected authority, since they were permanent members of the committees and hence able to master the complexities of the job whereas normal members could only gain a relatively brief experience. The agents, and particularly the secretary, clearly came to enjoy a position which must have assisted their continuation in office in that they became expert in their job while the rank-and-filer was stuck in the pit;⁸¹ they sat on all committees; had great respect because they held the supreme positions of the union; they decided what was to appear on the Council agenda,⁸² and the secretary

controlled, devised and saw to the publication of all the union news - in practical terms this meant that he had the right of attack and answer to his critics, assisted by the weight of formal appearance and distribution.⁸³ Added to the above was the by no means inconsiderable influence of power to call committee meetings (and to dispense them) lying with the secretary,⁸⁴ while a general rule disallowed any criticism of the officials unless it was presented via the officers.⁸⁵ Such were the structural advantages enjoyed by the leadership once elected (though it does not explain why a particular type was elected), and any reading of the history of the Durham pitmen shows that, whatever its shortcomings, there is much to vindicate Douglass' accusations as the grassroots began to challenge what almost became a crude autocracy under John Wilson, who in answer to the undermining of his authority by 'agitators', turned increasingly to structural reinforcements of his power, such as attempting to have agents elected permanently in 1893,⁸⁶ and the adroit change of rule in 1906 which hamstrung annual councils.⁸⁷

What stands out chiefly in the history of the Durham miners is not that the leadership was cut-off from the members. On the contrary, what is most striking is the immense support and confidence invested in the leadership. It stands true that Crawford had a much more secure situation than did Wilson who was increasingly out of touch with feeling at local level, but nevertheless one still cannot avoid the conclusion that to a major extent it was these two men whom the grassroots wanted at the head of the D.M.A. How else does one explain the

permanency of their posts in face of annual election? How else the reverence and influence exerted by this duo wherever and upon whatever they spoke? How else could Crawford stand in such a confident position as to tell striking lodges to return to work and still retain his authority?⁸⁸ How else could these men be so unanimously elected to represent their members on arbitration boards and as M.P.s⁸⁹? The crucial point to make is that Douglass attacks the D.M.A. leadership because they acted within a Gladstonian-Liberal framework, not that they were cut off from the membership. It is clear that, on the contrary, for most of the 19th century the rank-and-file wanted such leadership in that they placed their confidence in Wilson and Crawford.

There are two other points made by Douglass that need mentioning. The first may be dismissed quite briefly. This refers to his selection of 'militant' lodges to back up his thesis that the officials were out of touch with local activism. Apart from the atypical nature of such selection (who not select a quiescent pit to prove precisely the opposite?), even within his own terms the lodge that he centres on, Thornley, leaves a lot to be desired. Fair enough he expounds on the hue-and-cry and attacks on the agents over the Lax affair in 1860,⁹⁰ but Douglass overlooks the fact that Thornley, a hive of 'militancy', took some amazingly reactionary decisions in this period, such as a refusal to contribute to the defence fund (surely the first stage of militant trade unionism); voting against the need for national conference (more parochial than even the agents); and even urging a vote of censure on

the agents for daring to delve into politics instead of stickily to "trade" affairs.⁹¹ Thornley lodge, whatever its propensity to strike, was scarcely a shining example of foresight.

The second, and major, evidence which Douglass refers to is the ubiquity of local strikes in the county throughout the period 1869-1926. That there was a continuous stream of localized stoppages is undeniable⁹² and many certainly reflected a dissatisfaction with existing conditions in the county, evidenced further by the frequency of illegal stoppages rising as the rule of Wilson came to an end. It has to be conceded that these strikes bear witness to profound frustration with conditions. However, what Douglas fails to supply is an acceptable reason for stating that this is indicative of the unsatisfactory behaviour of the agents. On the contrary, there is nothing in these stoppages which can allow one to argue that they were initiated as a conscious attempt to undermine the officials, surely the first action of disaffected members.⁹³ That they were a practical sign of disillusionment from the men is certain, but invariably there was no articulated critique of the agents within them. It was only in the struggles of the second decade of the 20th century that local stoppages began to carry overt attacks on the union leadership.⁹⁴ This issue of local strikes will be returned to below.

The three myths of Durham miners leave a number of points to be explained:-

- (a) The paradox of unofficial strikes undermining the leadership and the agents protesting, yet there was no conscious attempt from the local lodges to throw out the officials.
- (b) Why was the industrial militancy of the lodges not reflected at the county level by a militant trade unionism? Why were there strikes at the lodges and yet the pitmen waited to be locked-out over county disputes?
- (c) What was the effect of the close links with the rest of British society on the pitmen?

The solution must lie in the question of the consciousness of the pitmen. It was their interpretation of events and their consequent action which is the crucial factor in an analysis of Durham miners. The central issue is why did the miners diagnose their situation in such an apparently self-contradictory way? This question in turn evokes a discussion of the connexions of Durham and the wider society. What matters is how did the miners get their ideas? The weight of this ~~paper~~^{thesis} is that the ties of Durham to British society, particularly through the initiatory role of Primitive Methodism, gave impetus to the incorporation of the pitmen into the wider culture. The Durham miners to an unusual extent were influenced by the hegemony⁹⁵ of British capitalism throughout the 19th and into the 20th century. Indeed, after the 1880s their history is one of a fight from militant rank-and-filers to break the majority from this hold. The defeat of 1926 attests to their failure in this regard.

What must be realized is that at the time the big coal booms began in the North East- in the early 19th century the whole society was geared to the interests of a ruling class. Religion was their religion, education was their education, politics were their politics. The system possessed none of the subtlety it was later to gain, rather it worked for a ruling class who overtly operated the mechanisms. One should hardly express surprise at the radicalism coming from the working class in view of such monopoly. Indeed, when one considers the appalling working class living conditions, particularly in mining, what needs to be explained is not why they rebelled, but why they ever stopped the revolt. The reason lay primarily in the cultural hegemony of the ruling class. Contemporary morality - their morality - legitimated their control in the eyes of the masses who were its receptors.⁹⁶ It was not, naturally, a one-sided relationship but the fact remains that the working class rarely had any political answer to this hegemony and as a result had only the outlet of a reaction to their economically subservient role. Protest rather than revolt. Not that this did not pose a threat - particularly in later years, but rarely, if ever, was the legitimacy of the system questioned. It was no accident that the zenith of British capitalism brought with it a moral recititude without precedent. With the workers threatening frequent industrial action and iniquities staring even a cursory observer in the face⁸, there had to be a reciprocally strong ~~pressure~~ moral pressure to justify the continuation and health

of the system. It is a necessity to grasp the ascendancy of bourgeois morality, especially from 1850 until the end of the century, a time when the ruling class was particularly active in drenching the society with moral justification for their superiority. Indeed, it is surely significant that the period 1825-1850, when the established order looked in danger, especially from the Chartists, it coincided with dissection within the ranks of the ruling class itself as it adapted to allow in the nouveaux riches and utilitarian bourgeoisie. This hegemony was prevalent in Durham county from the start of the 19th century, mediated by the press, capitalists, clergy, and even such working class institutions as the union and the chapel.

At the pit-head, however, conditions of work had been so overtly destructive that the men for many years had been aware of their subservient position. As early as 1662 there had been a petition of some 2,000 miners appealing to the King for better facilities, but it appears that "... the petition was never presented because the men were cajoled, and bullied, into withdrawing their signatures from the document."⁹⁷ In spite of failure, there clearly was a practical expression of dissatisfaction from the pitmen. Acute physical constraints at least forced them into some sort of consciousness against their state, although there was no notion of a replacement. It seems that such spontaneous acts were common signs of protest. Fynes observes of the 18th century that "... from time to time the men rose in rebellion against working any longer in a certain pit and after remaining idle for a week or more, and

sometimes after committing a number of extravagances, such as throwing the corves down the shaft, or upsetting the gin which was used for drawing the coals to bank, would return again to their dangerous and unhealthy labour, none the better for their resistance."⁹⁸ Clear too, from the research of Douglass, is the fact that the rank-and-file often rose in spontaneous rebellions,⁹⁹ impelled into a consciousness of their position by physical factors, and actually still do, whatever the actions and pleas of the union. The point is that mining is a job that thrusts upon the pitmen acute physical constraints at the pit face. Crises frequently arise here where there is no chance of avoiding them. Responses to a hard seam or domineering manager are immediate.* It is a form of "gut" reaction. With so much chance for emergencies, the high level of local stoppages is not surprising, particularly when one considers the peculiar structuring of pit life under the 'marrowing' system. At the same time it is vital to grasp that the rise of consciousness as against conditions at the pit did not extend to a rejection of much of the remainder of the cultural apparatus. They may well have been acting out the class struggle in their working lives, but the pitmen did not necessarily recognize it as such. In understanding that the meanings of the miners in a socio-political sense were still governed mainly by the hegemony of conservative order, one can go far to explain why it was that trade union agents and leaders were consistently Primitive Methodists, an indication that at the grassroots the status quo was scarcely

* Or, of course, to the imposition of wage reductions.

questioned.¹⁰⁰ It is central to this ~~study~~^{study} that Primitive Methodism was an offshoot of the cultural hegemony, not in a simplistic one-to-one relationship - Methodism was made as much by the working class as for them - but in the last analysis it was for the established order and heavily involved in the contemporary ethos. With such a schema in mind it becomes possible to understand the separation of the industrial militancy of the rank-and-file miner and the D.M.A. agent. To the agents, as Primitive Methodists, the strike was a last resort, smacking of illegality and on a higher level hence immoral. In turn the men, even where not Primitive Methodists, would have voted for these leaders as both groups shared the societal hegemony that practitioners of religion were 'respectable' people. The pitmen could still hate religious coalowners, but from their own ranks they could feel a sense of deference for the respectable man fighting on their side. There was in no sense a conspiracy of D.M.A. officials, because they in turn, being Primitive Methodists, were more enveloped within the system than the rank-and-file. They were more involved in its hegemony and hence their consistent conservatism and desire to quell pit-head troubles. Further, Primitive Methodism itself, in encouraging thrift, temperance, morality and industry would assist the agent to rise higher in the society and to be enveloped all the more. The split between rank-and-file and agent would widen with time. Certainly this was the case with John Wilson as he grew into an increasingly staunch Liberal while the membership turned towards socialism.

The moral order of the day, in respecting capital, was heavily in favour of the capitalist class. It was the struggles of the working class, reflecting and shaping the established hegemony that created changes in our socio-political atmosphere. Lane and Roberts underline this coincidence of the hegemony and social structure when commenting on the obdurate attitude of Lord Pilkington during the strike at St. Helens. "...This forthrightness, we would suggest, is a function of two things. Firstly, a conviction of moral rectitude uncomplicated by doubt. And secondly, and more importantly, because the prevailing system of authority has never, in the history of the firm, been seriously challenged by its employees."¹⁰¹ Such a statement applied as aptly to Lord Londonderry over a century ago. Examine the moral rectitude behind his infamous statement to the strikers at Seaham in 1844:-

"...I have pointed out to you the folly, the destruction awaiting you, by your stupid and most insane union. I gave you two weeks to consider whether you would return to your work, before I proceeded to eject you from our houses. I returned...and I found you dogged, obstinate, and determined:- indifferent to my really paternal advice and kind feelings to the Old Families...who had worked for successive ages in the Mines. I was bound to act up to my word,-bound by my duty to my property, my family, and station. I superintended then many evictions, it had no avail...(continues to state that he was compelled to bring over Irish blacklegs)...Power will be at hand to protect the good men and the strangers; you may rely

upon it MAJESTY OF THE LAW; AND THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY will be protected and prevail."¹⁰² This was the sort of diatribe that could be evoked without a twinge of guilt because the system was permeated with such beliefs. In a significant phrase the authoress continues "...it must be remembered that Lord Londonderry's attitude was in keeping with the generally accepted opinion of the day and most certainly shared by other coal-owners and employers of the period."¹⁰³ That the owners enjoyed such a moral climate so suited to their interests was advantaged even further since their hegemony diffused through to the pitmen. Describing evicted miners, McCutcheon gives a striking example of this permeation through the social scale. "For these pitmen were often put out of their homes and were to be seen on the highways of Durham, a pathetic sight with their pitiful worldly goods packed on to some pony-drawn flat-cart, driven away in their search for work...On the cart would be seen their modest possessions: table, rocking-chair, chest of drawers, cradle of rockers, mangle and wash-tub, clipping-mat, iron bedstead and bedding, two or three children disposed in crevices on the laden cart and, surmounting all, with incongruous dignity, a gilt-framed picture of Queen Victoria."¹⁰⁴ It was precisely because this sort of ethos permeated throughout mid-19th. century Britain that the owners could control their workers so well. Their rule was not only logical in pursuing direct economic interests; it had also saturated heart and spirit.

That there existed a hegemony on the moral plane should not

blind one to the existence of a structural supremacy which was an integral part of the societal institutions. The coal industry in Durham was from the outset controlled by aristocrats who exercised immense power throughout Britain. They were a significant force in developing the laws and policies which served as bulwarks to their, sectional interests. As it was, the political echelons could be occupied or influenced by the coal magnates with considerable ease. The 1842 Coal Mines Bill was stripped of much of its sting by the "...coalowners and their allies, opposing the bill, (who) were a powerful force. In the upper house sat influential figures like Lord Durham, Lord Melbourne, Lord Granville and - most hostile and intransigent - Lord Londonderry. They were easily able to induce their fellowpeers to pass ammendments, limiting the scope of the Act..."¹⁰⁵ In the Elizabethan era the Earl of Dudley was an enthusiastic supporter of the coal barons at Newcastle to such a degree that he was rewarded by direct interests in Durham collieries. Later, in the 19th. century, the Home Secretary, Lord Castlereagh, was Londonderry's brother, and the owner of Seaham Harbour was a former Ambassador in Vienna, still wielding enormous power in the Lords. It is not difficult to understand why parliamentary reform was so slow.¹⁰⁶ Yet even more crucial to grasp is that to a considerable extent the right of these aristocrats to occupy such positions was not questioned by the Durham pitmen for many years.

Again the ruling order was institutionalized in the law of the land. The law is by definition conservative, aiming to preserve order wherever a threat arises. That the law has

changed considerably says much for the courage of the British working class and their middle-class friends, but in the early 19th century there was little subtlety. The judiciary in Durham was stacked with parties directly interested in coal-mining.¹⁰⁷ It was consistently against the efforts of the pitmen to better their lot because it was established by and for a system which found threatening the combination of workers to etch into profit. The unionist was an economic, legalistic and a moral affront.¹⁰⁸ It was this combination which led to widespread abuse of the law against unionism in the Durham coalfield.¹⁰⁹ The Combination Laws had been repealed in the 'twenties, but the assumptions behind them were still prevalent amongst the judiciary,¹¹⁰ so it was regarded as no serious offence to harrass and ^{go} ~~g~~ any strikers (indeed when Cuthbert Shipsey was shot by a special constable named Weddle while on strike, the latter was sentenced to six months hard labour for his crime, while pitmen who had assaulted blacklegs were often transported for life).¹¹¹ At the same time, the irony was that so many of the pitmen regarded the law as impartial, the sceptics being exceptional.¹¹² Challinor and Ripley articulate the widespread feeling..."some miners had a naive belief in the ultimate fairness of the law. They thought the coalowners, by guile and knavery, had succeeded in temporarily twisting the law to suit their own purpose; by employing Mr. Roberts, the pitmen would redress the balance. But soon it became clear that despite the tremendous efforts of Roberts, this would not happen. The law possessed a built-in bias favouring the employers: the situation could only be altered by changing the

law...¹¹³ The tragedy was that so few of the pitmen appreciated the structural limitations of the legal system.¹¹⁴

Durham felt the potency of capitalist hegemony throughout the 19th. century, but at no time was it more pronounced than from 1860-1890 when the Primitive Methodists had established a plebian sect which injected into every village, in a circuitous manner, part of the cultural apparatus. What is perhaps more crucial is that the Primitive Methodists were not so much the primary cause of consensus politics, but more they were the harbingers of the other elements of the culture. Primitive Methodism vaulted the pitman from a life of indolence, but more significant was that having taken the first steps, the temperate miner would then be led into the wider spheres of Gladstonian-Liberal politics, reform, newspaper reading and all attendant phenomena. Such characteristics of Primitive Methodism, particularly after 1860, had more in common with the respectable middle class than with the miners' own kind, making the convert that much more likely to imitate the standards of the former while disdaining the latter, yet lead fellow pitmen to recognize amongst them one who was worthy of meeting the owners on their behalf.¹¹⁵ It is clear that herein lies the explanation for the reluctance of the D.M.A. to initiate strikes at a county level. At this stage it was the union which organized events and being led by Gladstonian Liberals, it fought all along the way to prevent them.¹¹⁶ The records of the D.M.A. resound with an abhorrence for militant trade unionism from the agents, such that there was rarely a cessation of labour until the owners' demands had become so

outrageous that the rank-and-file, who felt so acutely the effects of capitalist crises and greed, impelled the leadership into the struggle.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, this was after the union had publicized their weaknesses and allowed the owners to fight on their own terms. Little wonder that the Durham miners lost every struggle they entered in such a manner. Again, it explains why the pitmen did relatively so badly out of conciliation when the trade was booming.¹¹⁸ This is not to argue that Durham pitmen did not fight. They were frequently urging the need of struggle to make advances. But the voting for a strike does not necessarily mean, as Douglass interprets, a desire for a new order. The Durham pitmen from what evidence can be found, were militant in trade affairs, but their militancy did not prevent them from supporting and indeed actively encouraging Gladstonian Liberals. They struggled for more from the existing system, and carped when it refused to pay, but not until the early 20th. century - and then only a small minority - was an articulated opposition forwarded to the bases of the coal trade. This accounts for the fact that the pitmen continually struck only when on the defensive. When wages were reduced they usually reacted to the cuts with venom, but they saw no way of preventing them other than an obstinate resistance. Similarly, because they were so enveloped in the wage-price ethos they could easily be bought off by the owners when trade thrived, while the capitalists reaped proportionately much greater profits. The separation of the agents from the grassroots lay in the degree of incorporation of the groups.

The agents were to a man Primitive Methodists and followers of Gladstone, removed from the pit-face and its realities. As such, they were thrust that much deeper into the societal hegemony, enough to recognize and attempt to practise the free-trade doctrine. The pitmen on the other hand were there at the grassroots, that much further down the scale of laissez-faire. That they accepted the essence of the doctrine will be shown below, but the day-to-day existence of pit life compelled them to react against severe wage-cuts, even when they recognized them as justifiable. The split of industrial militancy and political articulation was not clear-cut and Crawford, close to the pitmen, was at times himself confused.¹¹⁹ Wilson's office, however, displays the increased incorporation of the Primitive Methodist sect, with the result that there was an ardent Gladstonian fighting a losing battle to retain the Liberal confidence of his members in face of the socialist rise.¹²⁰

Far from political radicalism coming from the Durham pitmen in the early days of the D.M.A., quite the reverse was frequently displayed. Despite Douglass' claim, it is clear that Crawford's stance was more visionary than that of the rank-and-file. It is true that he was one of the chief proponents of the Sliding Scale and attendant conciliations. Often the pitmen showed marked antipathy towards these agreements but more significant was that they reacted always to the results, never questioning the political principle behind them. Crawford, on the other hand, inveiled frequently against the structure of Victorian society, the iniquitous class system

and the inequality of the economic order and urged men to move for reform. One cannot avoid the conclusion that Crawford was a Liberal because there was no political alternative for him, but the dominant ideology was never strong enough to prevent Crawford speaking as "a pitman and the son of a pitman"¹²¹ The rank-and-file reflected this contradiction in practical terms by their persistent localized stoppages but throughout the period they acquiesced to Liberal standards in politics. In trade union business they could be radical through their obstinacy towards wage cuts but until the 20th century few pitmen attacked the economic rationale of capitalism. On the contrary, the pitmen looked constantly for solutions within the system, from emigration to 'ca canny'.¹²² One need only look at the assumptions behind the Sliding Scale to see the stance of the Durham men. Even after a period of intense conflict, the Council in 1881 could resolve that "... We believe that the Sliding Scales are the best arrangement which can be got for regulating wages of workmen, under the present circumstances."¹²³ There were many motions condemning the Sliding Scale, it is true, but even the attacks were couched in similar principles.¹²⁴ The Sliding Scale was thrown over before 1890 but the pitmen still voted in the Conciliation Board in 1894, which was in practise the same organ, acceding to the wage-price connexion.¹²⁵ The abolished it in 1896 but it was re-established within a few months, though by now there were pitmen and "especially the young men"¹²⁶, who were voicing opposition.

There was a reverence for Gladstone amongst the miners which lasted well into the 20th century, though signs of dissent were creeping in by the early 1890s.¹²⁷ By far the majority of Durnam pitmen were Liberals right up until 1910,¹²⁸ and indeed the change over to the Labour Party in 1913 was more a new label than a real transformation. As late as January 1914 Lloyd George came second in the poll for four Gala speakers. This caused considerable dissent but nevertheless is indicative of the hangovers of Liberalism at a time when radical politics were supposedly ascendant. Time after time the Council voted motions of thanks to Gladstone and his cohorts¹²⁹ and it ought to be remembered that these motions were passed by delegates mandated by their lodge members who had earlier voted amongst themselves on the Council Programme. 1885 was a very active year for the D.M.A. politically. Crawford and Wilson were both nominated as parliamentary candidates, with no dissent from the members¹³⁰, surely indicative of strong Liberal views throughout the County. Admittedly, there was never again such unanimity within the ranks but it took a long time before there was a move from protest to an opposition. 1889-1893 were years of unprecedented militancy in the pits, moving on to a county demand for reform, yet there was little in the action which suggested that liberalism was on the wane. The rising tide of militancy was rather a mood which indicated the shortcomings of Liberalism, though the miners saw the panacea in chiefly getting more working class members elected to Parliament.¹³¹ Certainly there was a growing cadre of agitators but the

Liberal control was much greater.¹³² It says much for the strenuous work of the I.L.P. agitators that Wilson became so increasingly out of touch with the views of the rank-and-file.¹³³ But again, the parochialism of Durham and its fight against the M.F.G.B. cannot be altogether ascribed to the machinations of John Wilson (and incidentally that was strongly liberal itself). There had been a number of militant lodges for some time attacking the lethargy of the Miners' National Association¹³⁴ and after the M.F.G.B.'s assistance in the 1892 struggle the D.M.A. affiliated with them.¹³⁵ Yet the following year Durham was expelled for refusing to support the national stoppage. That Wilson's chicanery had a lot to do with this is beyond doubt¹³⁶ but, nevertheless, there remained the vote of 20,782 in favour of supporting the strike, with 19,704 to work on. This was half the pitmen voting against the progressive union. Even in such crises as the early 1890s Durham still had a large percentage of pitmen keen to follow Wilson's Liberalism.

The early 1890s marked the start of the break between the agents and the grass roots, Wilson moving further to the right, while "outside agitators" began to make significant inroads into the county. Even within the union executive a strong challenge was to appear in the young Joseph Batey whose consistent pleas for the minimum wage were only matched by the regularity of his election to the executive committee. The first decade of the century saw Wilson defeated on three major counts, affiliation with Labour, the Eight Hour day and the Minimum Wage. Just before his death in 1915 the area was

solid Labour. Unfortunately, the change for the officials was more in name than in action. They had many traits left over from the Liberal days in which they had been reared, but perhaps more important was the Labour stance itself. The agents had been drawn into approval for the party because of its willingness for moderation. It seemed in most respects nothing more than an expansion of the Liberal hope of more working-class representation and further it envisaged change coming via parliamentary procedure.¹³⁷ Strikes and militant syndicalism were not part of its vocabulary. The pitmen would simply vote in their representatives and the agents would do the rest. There was visualized no notion of conflict which could not be solved inside the debating chamber. A number of the officials certainly had hopes for a more just and even socialist society, but there were immense limitations in their 'liberal' approach.¹³⁸ Added to this was the fact that a number who had been Liberal members merely changed their name and not their beliefs. On the other hand, the Durham pitmen had been startled into an unprecedented militancy during and just after the Great War.¹³⁹ They now looked to the Labour Party and its plans for the nationalization of the pits as their future salvation. Some 50,000 of the young men of the county had been at war and they returned eager for better things. The Labour M.P.s were safely elected and the miners placed their trust there, being quickly informed that their industrial militancy was unnecessary. Labour was the political outlet that was available, but it was an emanation of the British parliamentary tradition and foredoomed to inactivity in the

great industrial struggles of the 1920's. The pitmen dissipated their aspirations in men who were Labour in name only and those that promised socialism were committed to only talking about it.

1921 saw the pattern of 1926. The owners were allowed to pick the battleground. The agents of the D.M.A. were as usual shunning a strike,¹⁴⁰ but were thrust into it by the industrially militant membership with an overwhelming vote to resist wage reductions.¹⁴¹ The defeat was a portent of the future. The agents had opposed its inception and urged an end to the lock-out as soon as possible. Direct action was anathema to them. All faith was placed in the ballot box, even while the lock-out had begun. The agents could only carp at the owners disobeying the rules.¹⁴²

In the years 1921-1926 the Durham pitmen continued their virtually uncritical support of the Labour Party¹⁴³ in line with the officials of the union who took eulogy to a fine art.¹⁴⁴ The split lay in the fact that the miners faced life in the pits and had to work the pits while the Labour representatives sued for socialism in the Commons. The pitmen had to face the increasing attacks of the owners at the pit-head. The union lethargy was even getting through to some of the lodges, but few could envisage an alternative to Labour politics. In 1925 and January 1926 the agents faced motions of censure for their inactivity.¹⁴⁵ When the lock-out began in May it represented the culmination of the capitalist offensive. The D.M.A. agents continued to urge their trust in the Labour Party's

parliamentary manoeuvres while the owners attacked trade unionism. The failure of the D.M.A. to act during the struggle itself guaranteed the owners victory. They preferred negotiations while the owners and the government actively undermined the pitmen's stance. The parliamentary tactics were a lamentable failure, yet both the men and the agents were surprisingly uncritical. The former had expressed some exasperation with the union's dilatory stance, but the Labour Party appeared to promise a better life for all - if only slowly. The fact was that the pitmen's militancy found no political expression. They saw the Labour programme as their desires, but the Labour Party and the union leaders lacked the teeth to fight. That the pitmen were eager to fight is evidenced not only from the mushrooming of organizations in spite of the union in Chopwell and the Newcastle Strike Committee,¹⁴⁶ but without the organization of the D.M.A. the pitmen were destined to stay always on the defensive. Only an offensive movement could have beaten the Baldwin machine. A lead from the D.M.A. would have provoked the gravest crisis, but it never came.¹⁴⁷ The miners were left frustrated. Their only outlet was in their adoration for A.J.Cook - he was the one official who reflected the rank-and-file militancy in a political form - and their determination to stand firm.¹⁴⁸

After the 1926 defeat the D.M.A. remained intact, the same personnel occupying the central posts. They were still solid Labour, with its roots deep in British culture. The pitmen still continued to accept a separation of politics and coal mining. There was still a lack of congruity between their

industrial militancy and political awareness. They were still ensnared by the cultural apparatus from which their political activity had sprung. They had struggled to throw off the yoke of Liberalism only to be duped by the verbal epithets of Labour. Harold Wilson's comment that the Labour Party owes "more to Methodism than to Marx" contains a kernel of truth. He might as well have said that it owes more to capitalism than it does to socialism.

NOTES

1. Henry Tudor, "Political Myth", Pall Mall 1972.

"a political myth explains the circumstances of those to whom it is addressed. It renders their experience more coherent; it helps them to understand the world in which they live" p.139

2. i. cf. J. Wilson, "Memoirs of a Labour Leader", Unwin 1910.

anecdote he relates of a publican in Shoreham, Sussex, who thought that pitmen never left the mines. "It was not long before I gathered from many other quarters that he was not alone in his ideas, for there was a generally held opinion that the coals their ships brought home were dug out of the earth by a class of people who were little removed from barbarism and whose home was down in the eternal darkness" p.95

- ii. J. Nef, "The Rise of the British Coal Industry", Vol.2, Routledge 1932.

"... colliers, except in a few of the less developed coalfields, had come to be regarded as a peculiarly uncouth race, little better than the savage tribes of Africa and America."

iii. "Durham County Advertiser", September 28th 1822. "They (pitmen) form a very distinct race, inasmuch as they marry almost exclusively among themselves and bring up their sons to their own course of life. They also live very much together, keeping little society with other classes of people; hence there is a very strong sympathy and little improvement of understanding among them."

- iv. For Lawrence's idealization of the 'life-body' of the primitive miners see "Nottingham and the Mining Country" in

"Selected Essays" p.114-122, Penguin 1950, reprinted 1961

e.g. "The people (miners) lived almost entirely by instinct" p.117.

Also, though on a different tack, the picture of the ignorant, yet next-to-nature Morel in "Sons and Lovers", Phoenix ed. 1913, Hein. 1955.

3. Sid Chaplin, "Durham Mining Villages" p.5. Working Papers in Sociology, Durham University, May 1971, Dept. of Sociology.

4. Mark Archer "A Sketch of the History of the Coal Trade", Part I, King, Sell and Railton Ltd. 1897.

".. In Bishop Pudsey's time, the "Bolden Buke" 1180, mentions that the smiths of Coundon, Sedgefield and Bishopwearmouth, in the County of Durham, all used coals". p.3.

5. Robert Galloway, "Annals of Coal mining and the Coal Trade", David & Charles Reprints 1971, first published 1898. Intro. by Baron F. Duckham p.44.

6. cf. "Coal and the London Coal Trade", Hylton B. Dale, Howlett & Son 1912 - and Constance M. Fraser "The N.E. Coal Trade until 1421". "Trans. of the Architectural and Archeological Society of Durham and Northumberland" Vol. XI 1958-1965, p.209-220 and especially p.210 for 13th century trade, and the following
".. in Newcastle the scanty evidence surviving all points to a regular trade in shipping coals. In addition to the well-known reference to a merchant of Pontoise in France who sailed in 1325 to Newcastle with corn and returned with a cargo of coals, the previous year a ship of 70 tons burden laden with coals and belonging to Hugh Haekyn, a burgess of Newcastle, was seized at Great Yarmouth for debt." p.213.

- also see J.B.Blake, "The Medieval Coal Trade of N.E.England: some 14th century evidence", "Northern History" Vol.II, '67, p.1-26
7. cf. Barrington Moore, "Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy" 1966, Pelican 1971
 8. cf. J.U.Nef, "The Rise of the British Coal Industry" Vols.I & 2, Routledge 1932, and P.Sweezy, "Monopoly and Competition in the English Coal Trade; 1550-1850", Harvard Uni. Press 1938
 9. e.g. cf. Nef, op. cit. Vol.2, p.11, for the intrigues of Sir William Gasgoine of North Yorkshire.
 10. cf. Sweezy, op. cit., p.32
 11. Nef, op.cit. Vol. I, p.21

1564	-	32,951 tons from the Tyne =
1592	-	112,128 tons
1609	-	239,271 tons
* underestimate		1659 - 529,032 tons
coals not logged		1685 - 616,016 tons
- and also see the estimate for 1615 of R.Fynes, "The History of the Miners of Northumberland and Durham", p.3 Sunderland 1873
12. cf. Barrington Moore, op.cit.
 13. Sweezy, op.cit., p.24
 14. And of course in so opening up the region to the west of the county go further to disprove the 'isolation' theory. See C.J.Allen, "The North-Eastern Railway", Ian Allen 1964, especially Ch.5, which gives 'an account of the rapid rise of railways in Durham.
 15. Nef, op.cit., Vol.I p.123

1750	-	1,193,467 tons
1800	-	2,520,075 tons
1864	-	18,349,867 tons
- and T.S.Ashton and J.Sykes, "The coal Industry in the 18th century", M.U.P. 1924, they estimate that the 1745 North-East coal exports to London were $\frac{1}{2}$ m.tons plus a year, while from 1745-65 other areas' exports did not exceed 7,000tons. p.194

16. Sweezy, op.cit., p.135

17. Ibid., p.58-9

18. E. Hobsbawm, "Industry and Empire", 1962

19. cf. "The 3rd. Marquis of Londonderry and the North-Eastern Coal Trade" A.J. Taylor, "Durham University Journal"; Vol.48, 1955-6 p.26 and "The 3rd. Marquis of Londonderry and the End of Regulation, 1844-45", "Durham Uni. J.", Vol.51, 1958, by D. Large.

20. See Nef's volumes, op.cit. for the thesis that the coal trade was axiomatic for the rise of 19th century capitalism.

Mid 17th century, Nef, Vol.I "The vast majority of all the workers employed both in the mining and the transport of coal were hired for wages, and had come to depend for their living entirely upon the adventurers who employed them. There was no other British industry of equal importance which had advanced so far on the road to modern capitalism." p.349

21. e.g. Sidney Webb, "Story of the Durham Miners", Labour Publ.Co. 1921 where he notes (p.2-3) that second shafts were not sunk until 1862 (when ordered by Parliament after 204 men and boys died at single-shafted Hartley) to give an outlet to stagnant air and hence ease the risk of explosions, even though this was known over 200 years previously. It had not been carried out on the grounds of economy.

also of course, F. Engels, "The Condition of the Working Class in England", 1844, O.U.P. 1958 p.278-283

22. See Jack Lawson's "Peter Lee", 1949, for an account of Lee's wanderings, which were said to be by no means untypical.

23. J.W. House, "N.E. England: Population Movements and the Landscape

since the early 19th century", Newcastle 1954, King's College, University of Durham Research Series No.1, p.56

24. Ibid., p.12

25. For example see, Monthly Circular March 10th 1881 "The Gov. and Coercion"

July 1881 - Parnell was a speaker at the Gala.

April 1st.- Council sent Crawford and Patterson to Dublin delegates to the Land League Convention.

Jan. 25th 1883- Council D.M.A., motion from North Brancepeth to send £100 from the funds to "aid the distress in Ireland" Parnell and Michael Davitt, among others, were consistent nominees for galas throughout the 19th century

January 1887, Monthly Circular

April 9th 1887- Council passed a motion thanking Gladstone for his efforts to pacify Ireland and his opposition to the coercion of the Tory Government.

26. Jack Lawson, "A Man's Life", p.36-7, Hodder & Stoughton 1932

27. "The county between the Weare and Tees is most singularly unfortunate in regard either to civil or religious instruction. Within the last ten or twelve years an entirely new population has been produced. Where formerly was not a single hut of a shepherd, the lofty steam-engines of the colliery now send their volumes of smoke into the sky, and in the vicinity is a town called, as if by enchantment, into immediate existence..."

James Mitchell's report on South West Durham, from "Children's Employment Commission", p.143, William Clowes & Sons 1842.

28. Jack Lawson "Peter Lee" op.cit. Lee in his youth went to America and South Africa to hew in the mines.

J. Wilson "Memoires..." op.cit. tells of a number of years he spent in America. Wilson further recounted often his youthful travels in the D.M.A. circulars in the 1890's.

29. See for example any issue of the "Durham Chronicle" or "Durham County Advertiser" between 1830-1890.

and, Maurice Milne, "The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham", Frank Graham, Newcastle 1971.

"It would be a great mistake to see the 19th century press in the context of the 20th century distinction between national and local newspapers. London newspapers and provincial morning newspapers both dealt with the same subject matter in more or less the same way, with, in the latter part of the century, little to choose between them in speed or in quality of leader-writing." p.14

30. Ibid., p.29

31. R. Challinor and B. Ripley, "The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists", Lawrence & Wishart 1968

"The North-East was not only one of the best organized regions of the Chartist movement, with strong links extending to villages throughout the area, but it was also dominated by advocates of physical force Chartism." p.12

and one Thomas Alexander Cockin (manager near Bishop Auckland) says in passing, "The Chartists have given a great deal of trouble, but the men have not committed any act of violence."

"Childrens' Employment Commission", op.cit. p.150.

32. "Wherever they (miners) came from, they introduced a new and unassimilated element into a population that had lived with a

settled culture, accepted patterns of work, and traditions connected with the occupation of mining...In this atmosphere of movement and unsettled social conditions, strongly felt grievances arose and strove for expression."

William Henry Machl, "Chartist Disturbances in North-East England, 1839", "Internat. Revue Social History" Vol.8,1962 p.392 p.389-414.

33.E.Welbourne, "The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham" C.U.P., 1923, p.79.

34.D.M.A. records, May 28th 1879
- and similarly in 1892 struggle. Sept.27th 1892 D.M.A. records show that aid came from all the other national regions, plus some 42 individual South Wales pits. French and Belgian miners sent £23.9s.7d, plus smaller groups such as the Saltmakers of Norwich £20.

35.D.M.A. Council October 31st. 1919

36.And in particular, Crawford, Wilson, Galbraith, Cann, Richardson PeterLee etc. cf. K.S.Inglis, "Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England", Routledge 1963.

"Before wondering why people stop doing something it is worth asking whether they ever started; and the social historian of religion in modern England could find a worse guide than the clergyman who remarked in 1896, 'It is not that the Church of God has lost the great towns; it has never had them'". p.3

37.A.MacIntyre, "Secularization and Moral Change" p.12 O.U.P. 1967.

"Religion, when it is the religion of a whole society, may have functions other than the expression of the natural and social order, but it is always at least an expression of a

society's moral unity, and it lends to that unity a cosmic and universal significance and justification."

38. M. Weber, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" 1930

M. Dobb, "Studies in the Rise of Capitalism" 1947

39. W. R. Ward, "Religion and Society in England 1790-1850" Batesford, 1972.

"The same forces which were raising the clergy were depressing the labourers, and it was easy to regard them as clerically contrived, for the parsons were there to be seen promoting and executing enclosure schemes, restricting poor relief, and putting down rural crime" p.10

40. E. J. Hobsbawm, "Primitive Rebels", M.U.P. 1959

"..the working classes...the children of an unprecedented era, were probably as a group less affected by traditional religions than any other social group of men...This does not mean that workers were or are predominantly agnostic or atheist. It merely means that the historical or individual step from village to town, or from peasant to worker, has in general led to a sharp reduction in the influence of traditional religions or churches. The enquiries which have been made into the religious affiliations and practices of the working classes from the 1840's to the 1950's have almost without exception observed that they are characterized, compared with other classes, by an abnormal degree of religious indifference."

41. MacIntyre, op.cit., p.17-18.

42. Ward, op.cit., p.50-51, catches this interaction unconsciously:-

"The asset of the lower orders lay in their numbers; these were being welded into a social coherence with some independence of

the official management of the parish. It was the secular solidarity of the village community against the upper classes which the prayer-leaders exploited to gain entry to the cottages and it was the moral pressure of numbers in the prayer-meeting itself which broke down resistance and incorporated one small group after another into the circle of the praying faithful. The prayer-meeting gained its evangelical reputation as the power-house of the Church by virtue of the initiative of quite humble people taking advantage of, and themselves intensifying, a sense of social alienation."

43. One need not go all the way to recognize some validity in the statement that Methodism rose in a "...period of general disturbance. A political crisis was aggravated by an economic crisis. On all sides there were strikes and riots...The popular ferment took shape as an outburst of enthusiastic Christianity." p.341, Elie Halévy, "A History of the English People in 1815", Trans. E.I. Watkin and D.A. Barker, T. Fisher Unwin Ltd. 1924 Vol.1

44. MacIntyre, op.cit., p.15

45. cf. "Weber and Tawney have so thoroughly atomized the interpenetration of the capitalist mode of production and the Puritan ethic that it would seem that there can be little to add. Methodism can be seen as a simple extension of this ethic in a changing social milieu and an 'economist' argument lies to hand, in the fact that Methodism, in Bunting's day, proved to be exceptionally well adapted, by virtue of its elevation of the values of discipline and of order as well as its moral opacity, both to the self-made mill-owners and manufactureres and to foremen, overlookers, and sub-managerial groups..."

E.P.Thompson, "Making of the English Working Classes", p.355
Gollants 1963.

46.E.J.Hobsbawm, "Labouring Men", p.23, Weid.&Nic. Goldbacks 1971
1st.ed.1964

47.e.g. E.R.Taylor, "Methodism and Politics, 1791-1851", C.U.P.1923

"...a man who has found himself at variance, either with his vicar or with the system of the Established Church, has transferred his membership to the 'Chapel'. English Nonconformity has been more than a positive statement of ecclesiastical ideals it has been a religious 'safety valve'. Many a Christian democrat, after a quarrel with an autocratic vicar, has found a more congenial spiritual home in a dissenting Chapel." p.5
and again on Wesley; "...the new movement was led by a man who was a clergyman of the Church of England, and who was not anxious to weaken his Church. For a long time he regarded his Societies as auxiliaries to the Established Church, and, as a rule, he did not try to set up any Societies in those places which were already served by an efficient Parish Church." p.56

48.Ibid., p.21.

49.cf. W.J.Warner, "The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution", Longmans 1930.

Methodism, being a spiritual aspiration "...aroused no sense of enmity to society's processes. Judgement was guided by the conviction that social maladjustments were due, not to any necessary defect in the organized community but to human will. It was men who failed, not the arrangements of the social structure, which, in fact, were held to possess an element of providential prescription." p.128.

and J.R. Wearmouth "Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England, 1800-1850". The Epworth Press 1937.

"The charge against the Methodists that they were disloyal can find no support in Methodist literature or practice. There is no evidence in the official records of any disloyalty to the State or any intention to be disloyal. On the other hand; they always advocated loyalty to the constitution. John Wesley, the father of Methodism, was a Church of England clergyman, who constantly professed his allegiance to both Church and State... Although they organized themselves on the principle of Republicanism, in politics they were wholeheartedly monarchial." p.56

50 Warner, op. cit., p.137

51 cf. Thompson, op.cit.,

Methodism was the "... desolate inner landscape of Utilitarianism in an era of transition to the work-discipline of industrial capitalism. As the "working paroxysms" of the handworker are methodized and his unworkful impulses brought under control, so his emotional and spiritual paroxysms increase.p. 365.

52. Warner, op. cit., p.139-140

and, *ibid.* p.161 This "... was the obvious deduction from the view that there is a divine and compelling power to account for success in the economic world and that success is itself a mark of divine approval."

53. For example, see Wearmouth, op. cit., p.62-63 for an account of Mr. Isaacs' (the Methodist minister) attempts to break trade unionism in South Shields.

54. Warner, op. cit., p.273.

55. cf. H.B. Kendall "The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church". Vol.1, p.20 Edwin Dalton 1906. describes conditions facing the sect "... rugged and bleak, dotted here and there a few grey roughly-built cottages, that might have been the outcrop of the rocky ground, so well did they correspond in form and hue with their environment. And the moral and manners of the people who lived in these cottages and wrought the quarries or won coal in the adjacent pits, were in keeping with the physical aspects and conditions amid which their lives were spent, being rough and rude. But they were worse than rough and rude, for those who lived nearer those days speak of the district as though it were an enclave of heathendom".

56. E.J. Hobsbawm, "Primitive Rebel" op. cit., p.132.

57. cf. Halévy, op.cit. p.364.

".. large religious meetings in the open air, known as camp meetings. These lasted for several days and inflamed to the highest pitch the imagination of the pious crowds which frequented them. The new Wesleyan bureaucracy met these camp meetings with the same opposition which the Church of England had formerly displayed to the open-air preaching of Wesley and Whitefield. The 'Cloweses' formed themselves into a separate sect ^{which} ~~and~~ in 1832 adopted the official title of Primitive Methodists. It continued to be governed by a Central Conference, but the Conference was elected by the laity and two thirds of its members were laymen. Unlike the Wesleyan Conference, it did not assure a fixed stipend to all its ministers. Each circuit might fix what stipend it pleased.

and "...the pioneers among the Primitives determined to guard against ministerial vetoes. They drew up a constitution in which the principle was incorporated of two laymen to one minister in conference, district meeting, and all committees. Sovereign power belonged to Conference, though a form of restricted autonomy was given to the lower courts. Legislation required endorsement from below."

in R.F.Wearmouth, "Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes", p.120, Leicester, Edgar Backus 1954.

58.R.Moore, "Religion as a Source of Variation in Working-class Images of Society" Summer 1972, S.S.R.C. Conference, Durham Uni.

59. See Hobsbawm 1959 op.cit. p.138 for an account of the 1844 strike, when Lord Londonderry evicted his miners, two-thirds of the Durham Primitive Methodist circuit became homeless.

60. Ibid, p.190-191, quotes the following:-

"We don't believe in lords and ladies, priests and their wives being considered sacred and peasants being vermin. We do not think it right for idleness to sit at the banquet and the industrious gather the crust and the crumbs. I venture to say that we have done more for the emancipating of England's white slaves than all the modern priesthood put together...I believe the time is not far distant when God will send apostles and prophets to his Church who will visit the aged poor and investigate how they live on three shillings a week, the annuity allowed from the parish, when rent, coals, and lighting is paid out of it, and enter a strong protest against such cruelty and preach with much force the gospel of God, that it will kill or cure barren and fruitless professors...There is sign of the

grand union that is coming when prince and peer and peasant shall combine and co-operate for the good of one and all. As many as are led by the spirit of God and they only. Some day, it is going to be as big as the whole world, the world in union!"

61. Hobsbawm, (1964) 1971 ed., p.26 op.cit.

62. cf. Henry Pelling, "Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain", Macmillan 1968.

"By mid-century (1850), the Primitive Methodists...had also made substantial inroads in rural districts, where they satisfied the desire of many an active village craftsman or agricultural labourer to show his qualities of leadership and earnestness. The quarrel with the Church was not doctrinal, but organizational: in the 'radical' sects, a man could play an active, perhaps even a key, role without having to be ordained or formally to qualify as a minister." p.21.

63. Kendall, op.cit., p.101

64. Ibid, p.32

65. Ibid, Vol.2., p.187

66. Winston Churchill was, and still is, a man hated in the North-East. It was he who in 1926, responding to the fear that the Durham pitmen would take over the mines, ^{his romantic view} ~~sent~~ ^{billeted} troops ^{near} ~~at~~ Durham, drafted in the notorious Hull police, and blockaded the Tyne.

67. e.g. D. Large, op.cit., p.5

Referring to 1844 struggle, "This, paradoxically enough, was extremely helpful to the Londonderry collieries. Continual rumours of the strike had stimulated demand for coal, both in

London and among local manufacturers, and at the concerns coal was selling at full prices. More important than that, the stocks in hand were high - 10,000 chaldrons was the figure mentioned by Mr. Hindhaugh. This was the consequence of the poor vend of 1843, and a symptom of the fact that the Londonderry collieries could produce more coal than the conditions of the Regulation permitted them to sell. What improved the concern's position still further, it seems, was that its stocks were higher than those of its competitors, for the general position was that in Northumberland, at the beginning of the strike, stocks were small. The strike meant that embarrassing stocks could be sold off, and savings made on wages, not to mention that pit-horses could be diverted to useful agricultural work. As the auditor remarked at the beginning of the strike, 'your lordship will do well without the pitmen for a month or six weeks'. All that needed care was 'the repression of any attempt at violence intended to hinder the loading of coals'" p.5.

68. David Douglass, "Pit Life in County Durham", History Workshop Pamphlets No.6, February 1972.

69. Ibid, p.81

70. "From the earliest days the D.M.A. leadership showed itself deeply afraid of independent working class action. In economics they accepted the total subordination of wages to the market, and were the upholders, defenders, and to some extent the devisers, of the 'sliding scale' system, which tied wages to the market price of coal. They were the advocates of co-operation with the coal-owners, however heavy the price at which it had to be bought, of conciliation, even at the expense

of their members. In June, 1870, very shortly after the D.M.A. had been formed, a new rule was introduced to say that any colliery which struck in an 'unconstitutional' manner would be denied union aid. And as part of the 1872 wage agreement the D.M.A.'s full time agents pledged themselves to do everything they could to 'prevent idleness', to 'reduce to a minimum the number of petty local strikes', and to advance productivity. In fact they can be seen as pioneering some of the methods of modern industrial relations in which the trade union appears sometimes as a direct agency of the employers." Ibid, p.48

71. Ibid, p.81

"When the Durham Miners' association was founded in 1869, the county was divided into three districts and an agent appointed to each of them...the number increased as the union prospered.. their full-time officials soon developed a particular character. Almost invariably they were drawn from the ranks of the moderate, self-educated, temperate miners. Once elected, they thought their role was to inflict upon their members their own moderation and lead rather than serve. As early as 1870 they ruled that 'any colliery which struck in an unconventional way should be denied union aid'. The members found that they were being policed by the men to whom they were paying wages. The officials became more and more preoccupied with arbitration as a cure for all ills, and more and more impatient of local action which ran up against it..."

72. Ibid, p.82

73. In 1879, 1889, 1893, and 1910.

1879, Annual Council Meeting (period of great discontent),

Voting on agents:-

Financial Secretary	Mr.Patterson	212	majority	168
	Mr.Simpson	44		
President	Mr.Forman	238	majority	196
	Mr.Jackson	42		
Corresponding Secretary	Mr.Crawford	209	majority	137
	Mr.Wilson	72		

1889: Dec.7th, Programme Annual Council Meeting, only Crawford opposed by Thomas McDonald of Hamsteels, re-elected no vote recorded.

1893: President unopposed
Patterson (Sec.), 2 people against
Wilson (Treas.), 2 people against

All agents re-elected, Annual Council Meeting, Dec.16th 1893.

1910: Programme of Council Meeting, Dec.3rd. 1910

All agents opposed

<u>1</u>	3	for Presidency
<u>2</u>	2	for General Secretary
<u>3</u>	3	for Financial Secretary
<u>4</u>	5	for General Treasurer
<u>5</u>	5	for Joint Committee Agent

Dec.17th 1910, Annual Council Meeting, all agents re-elected.

74."The Executive Committee shall be elected by the county every six months. The said Committee to be nominated by the lodges; and any member to be eligible to serve on the said Committee who has been a member of our Association the last six consecutive months, and to be eligible whether present at Council meeting or not. Half the Committee to retire after six months and not be eligible for re-election for the next twelve months!

"Rules of the D.M.A." 1869 (Revised Dec.31st. 1889)

Any examination of the Executive Committee minutes of the D.M.A. will serve to see familiar names being re-elected year

after year, e.g. W.Indian, Peter Lee, J.Batey, W.Lawther.

75.W.R.Garside, "The Durham Miners 1919-1960" G.Allen&Unwin 1971

"...real power was vested, according to rule, in the individual member of the Association since it was he who elected the executive and its agents and who decided who should express lodge opinion at Council level." p.67

76.e.g. So great were the number of nominees for the election of the E.C. and Auditor from the start of the union until Dec.18th 1883, that a new rule had to be introduced which allowed only one nomination per lodge for each position. Even so, this only had the effect of dropping the number of nominations from the usual 200 plus for E.C. (e.g. June 22nd.1881) to an average of some 110-120 (e.g. May 20th 1887; June 6th 1890, Dec.1st.1891, May 29th 1896, May 18th 1900, Oct.25th 1904) The number of nominations went up in the early 20th century with the rise in the size of pits, to an average of about 140 nominations (e.g. May 2nd.1907, Nov.4th 1910, Nov.20th 1911). There were never more than 200 lodges, so one can readily appreciate the very high involvement in union affairs. Again, one can point to the huge number of appeals not only as assign of conflict, but also to exemplify the high degree of involvement in union affairs. In fact, there was only one council meeting in the period up to 1926 in which I can find no appeals, and that was in the time of Patterson as General Secretary, November 1890.

77.e.g. March 16th 1889, Programme of Council Meeting:-

"That having lost confidence in our officials, we call upon them to resign their offices" Rynope (went off the board at the Council Meeting).

September 13th 1893:- Programme of Council Meeting,

2 motions; "We move that the whole of the members of the Executive Committee and Agents, after the rising of this Council, receive one month's notice to terminate their present position as leaders of the county" - Oakenshaw.

"That our Agents and Executive Committee be given 14 days' notice to dispense with their services." - Rynope.

30th Sept. 1893, Council Meeting, both motions went off the board.

Council Meeting, Jan. 30th 1926:-

"That the Agents and Executive Committee be asked to resign for the following reasons:-

(a) Inability to lead and advise

(b) A ballot for the strike at this time and in one district of the Federation is to play into the hands of the owners.

(c) The attitude of some of our Agents and Executive Committee in this County is an attitude which cripples and insults the grand efforts of the Federation Officers at the Royal Commission." - Went off the board.

78. e.g. Feb. 22nd. 1879 circular from the E.C. recommended the men to accede to owners' wage cut of 10%, Council 1st. March 1879 rejected the E.C. advice and offered open arbitration on the whole issue.

March 10th 1879, a circular from the E.C. told the men to settle. Council meeting of 15th March despite the strong circular, voting by lodges was 111 for E.C.'s suggestions and 160 for open arbitration.

March 17th 1879, another very strong circular from Crawford,

yet on the 19th March, voting was still 118 to 155 against E.C. recommendations.

March 21st.1879, the E.C. issued a special notice saying a vote for arbitration was a vote to strike. The men struck regardless.

The E.C. was often over-ruled on definitions of sacrificed men, settlement to members and whether to give support to striking pits or not.

79.R.Michels, "Political Parties", 1912, Dover 1959

80.Michels does, of course, forward some psychological grounds for oligarchy in democracies, but all are crude and unsatisfactory, such as the "need for leadership" (cf.Ch.5). Even his grounds for the oligarchy are very suspect, particularly when he enters into the realm of conspiracy among the leaders, who juggle with the masses as they please (p.156). Michels argues that leaders cannot be voted out as they are indispensable, so long as they remain in a 'closed caste'. Of course the masses could easily overcome this by creating a new leader. Even Michels has to admit of the necessity for some psychological links between the leadership and the led. p.162-3

81.Akin to Michels' analogy, *ibid.* p.89

"Just as the patient obeys the doctor, because the doctor knows better than the patient, having made a special study of the human body in health and disease, so must the political patient submit to the guidance of his party leaders, who possess a political competence impossible of attainment by the rank-and-file."

82. As the century progressed, and Wilson relied increasingly on procedural sharp practice to retain his authority, this device was used more and more, for example, Minutes of Committee Meeting June 14th 1909 show that the E.C. kept 35 motions off the Council Programme for such reasons as "against rule", "cannot appear", "out of order", "impracticable", "as it is impossible", "it is annual business". And this number was by no means unusual.

To its credit it ought to be acknowledged that as early as Jan. 20th 1899 the Marsden lodge began a long fight to attack this power with the resolution that "We move that the following be struck out of the Standing Orders:- 'The Executive Committee shall have the right to say whether or not motions shall appear on the programme or not'".

83. This power was used increasingly in the 20th century when 'agitators' began to undermine the leadership. Especially see Wilson's later circulars (from 1897-1915) and those of Cann (1915-1920) who displayed a true-blue fear of the left wing militant.

Again throughout the history of the D.M.A. we see circulars from the E.C. and agents sent out to lodges defending the former's actions or proposing innovations.

84. "That the General Secretary alone have the power, both to call and disperse Committee Meetings". D.M.A. "Rules for the Guidance of the Executive Committee." April 29th 1876.

85. Rule 76; "Any member or members having a complaint to make against the doings of any of the officers (General or local) of the Association, must forward the same to the Executive

Committee on the earliest day possible. But should any member or members be known to go to any place or places vilifying, detracting, or in any way condemning the work of any of the officers, without first having made complaint as aforesaid, such member or members shall be dealt with by the Committee in such manner as to them may seem right, either by fine not exceeding 21 shillings; or expulsion from the Association. Should any person feel aggrieved, he shall have the right of appeal to the Council meeting." "Rules of the D.M.A." 1869 Revised Dec.31st. 1889.

86. Programme Annual Council Dec.2nd.1893. (Although Wilson was not yet secretary, he was clearly the man in charge. Sidney Webb, "Story of the Durham Miners", op.cit. does not even credit Patterson with an existence, referring throughout to Wilson). The E.C. recommended the following change in rule; "The President, Treasurer, and Secretaries, having been once elected, shall hold their offices permanently, subject to the control of the Executive Committee and Council Meeting." To the credit of the delegates it was rejected (cf. D.M.A. records Dec.16th 1893) and later attempts under Wilson, notably Dec.15th + 22nd.1906 were also rejected. The annual elections stood until the 1920's.

87. At the annual council of Dec.23rd.1905 it was agreed; "That the rules remain unaltered for this year, and the Executive Committee be empowered to revise them between now and the next Annual Council Meeting." and at the Annual Council of Dec.15th-22nd.1906, the E.C. came up with the suggestion that a slip vote should be taken annually before 1st.June to determine

whether the rules should be changed for that year. This was passed and of course led to the increased security for the authority of the officials.

88. For example, as often happened, May 17th, 1871, in response to a strike at Seaham, Crawford sent the telegram:-

"Do go to work. You must know you are wrong. You will get no support. Liable to punishment. Do return."

Quoted P.69, G.H. Metcalfe "A History of the D.M.A. 1869-1915.

(Unpublished, 1947, Copy in Durham University Library and in the D.M.A.)

89. e.g. February 1881, Voting for 2 arbitrators.

Bradlaugh	-	14	Morgan	-	-
Carling	-	4	Patterson	-	8
Crawford	-	240	Reynolds	-	2
Dover	-	6	Roper	-	1
Forman	-	31	Wilkinson	-	29
Jones	-	104	Wilson	-	97

90. Douglass, op. cit., p.67.

91. cf. list of contributors to the defence fund 1880-1885.

Thomley is conspicuously absent.

and cf. Council Meeting, January 30th 1885 for attempt to move note of censure and January/February 1885 Monthly Circular for Crawford's reply.

92. There was never a year went by without unofficial stoppages, though the number varied with depressions or booms. For list of strikes, see for example, Joint Committee Meeting, 13th February 1880 - Auckland District and the regular list of stoppages and appeals for 'constitutional' action in the D.M.A. records:-

August 12th, 1882: "Pits Illegally Stopped"
 April 1888: Monthly Report under heading "Pits Idle"
 May 15th, 1890: "Illegal Stoppage of Pits"
 May 6th, 1891:
 February, 1894: Monthly Report
 January 1896: Monthly Report "Stoppage of Collieries
 against Rule"

December 1901: Monthly Circular
 December 30th, 1908: "Pits being Laid Idle Against Rule"
 February 12th, 1909:
 November 16th, 1909:
 August 23rd, 1909:
 February 1910: Monthly Circular
 June 4th, 1910: List of

January 1914: Monthly Circular - List of 1913 illegal stoppages.
 January 1915: Monthly Circular - List of 1914 illegal stoppages

and on until 1926...

93. That is, none but the very unusual Bearpark action of

August 1877, which carried with it a strong condemnation of the union.

.. "the men of Bearpark struck to resist a local reduction. they refused to submit the matter to arbitration... In September, at a mass meeting, the Bearpark men attacked the whole policy of the union. They said that arbitration had become a farce, that in every case the owners asked for twice as much as they expected to get, sure that the umpire would halve their demands. They complained that local lodges were too much under the domination of the central executive of the union..."

P.185. E. Welbourne "The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham" C.U.P. 1923. However, even Bearpark was attacking the symptoms of the trouble, rather than offering an alternative to the cause.

94. e.g. See the Washing^{ton}/Glebe Affair in "Durham Chronicle",

April 23rd. 1915. Shows an articulation of a fundamental opposition of interests to the owners, a new phenomena in the politics of the Durham miners.

95. There are a lot of relevant publications on this issue, but my theoretical stance has been influenced particularly by:-

Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology", Law.&Wishart 1970 Pt.1

C.W.Mills, "Power, Politics and People", O.U.P. 1963

Nicos Poulantzas, "Pouvoir Politique et classes sociales", Paris, Francois Maspero 1971, 2Vols.

A.Gramsci, "Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci", trans. Q.Hoare+G.M.Smith, Law.&Wishart 1971

G.A.Williams, "The concept of 'Egemonia' in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci", "J. of Hist. of Ideas", 1960, p.586-599

John Merrington, "Theory and Practise in Gramsci's Marxism", "Socialist Register", 1968, p.145-176

A.Martinelli, "In Defence of the Dialectic", "Berk.J. of Soc." 1968, Vol.13

E.Genovese, "On Antonio Gramsci", "Studies on the Left" 1967

R.Miliband, "The State in Capitalist Society", 1969

Nigel Young, "Prometheans or Troglodytes? The English Working Class and the Dialectics of Incorporation", "Berk.J. of Soc." 1967, p.1-43

and the important papers of Naim and Anderson which appeared in the "N.L.R." during the early sixties, plus E.P.Thompson's critique "Peculiarities of the English", "Socialist Register" 65

And especially Naim's pungent comment;

"...the problem of the English working class cannot be separated from that of the growth of the English bourgeois society as a whole - that is, it is one part of a wider enigma, and:

is normally obscured like everything else by those liberal mystifications the English have erected in honour of their past..." Paper reprinted in Blackburn ed. (1972)p.188, "Ideology in Social Science", Fontana 1972

96. This is not to present some gigantic conspiracy theory. The obvious assumption that the actors who get most benefit from the system are its most likely receptors has been borne out by the research of W.H. Form and Joan Rytina, "Ideological Beliefs on the Distribution of Power in the U.S.A.", p.19-31, "A.S.R." 1969 (34)
97. Metcalfe, op.cit., p.2
98. Fynes, op.cit., p.10
99. See note 92.
100. This factor - the role of the idea in forming consciousness - has been overlooked to give an overly-determinist stamp to much sociology, e.g. D. Lockwood, "Sources of Variation...", "Soc.Revue" 1966, and strangely enough, in a reverse manner, to Frank Parkin's seminal paper "Working Class Conservatives", "B.J.S." 1967, . Parkin reverses the order, but still relies heavily on a mechanistic stance for his account of Labour Party voting. Some notion of the dialectic is a necessity to comprehend the complexities of the inter-relationships.
101. T.Lane+K.Roberts, "Strike at Pilkingtons", p.43, Fontana 1971
102. Quoted in "Frances Anne", Marchioness of Londonderry, p.234-5
Mac.1958
103. Ibid, p.235
104. J.McCutcheon, "Troubled Seams", p.123, Greenwood & Sons, Seahan, Co.Durham 1955. My emphasis;

105.R.Challinor+B.Ripley, "The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the days of Chartism", p.211, 1968

106.e.g. The 1825 petition of miners' grievances was sent by Londonderry to the Home Secretary with a request for help to smash the union; and in 1850 the same lord threatened to leave the miners' inspector at the bottom of the shaft if he interfered at his collieries.

107.cf. David Philips, "The Black Country Magistracy, 1835-1860", Unpubl.,Uni. of Sheffield, for a very competent examination of coal-owners and the law, and;

"Coroner and sheriff, magistrate and grand jury, even the petty jury of lick-spittle tradesmen, were all on the side of the owners, and they seldom troubled to conceal a bias which was at once a badge of respectability and a witness to sound political principle." Welbourne op.cit. p.20-21. My emphasis.

and "... to state the relationship between the local magnate and those people who lived within his sphere of influence solely in terms of economic domination is to over-simplify the situation. At least some of his power to interfere with those who were not his tenants was derived from the fact that, as a considerable land-owner, he was extremely likely to be also a justice of the peace. As such he would exercise wide but perfectly legal administrative as well as repressive powers in his own totality. It was not simply as a landowner but also as an agent of governmental authority that he was able to influence and direct the society around him." p.46;

D.Marshall, "English People in the 18th century", Longmans 1946

108.cf. "Fairles was an indefatigable magistrate, closely

connected with both the coal and the shipping interests, and very much on the lookout for signs of disaffection among the workers." Norman McCord, "Tyneside Discontents and Peterloo", p.104 "Northern History", Vol.2 1967, p.91-111

109.e.g. in 1832 "...more special constables were...sworn in, and arms supplied them; part of their instructions being that whenever they found a few miners standing together they were to take them and lock them up in either the colliery stables, or in the empty houses...(and)...it was not the riotous and disorderly persons that were mostly punished, but chiefly those who had taken no part whatever in the disorders."

Fynes, op.cit., p.28-29.

Such abuses were standard, right up to the 1926 lock-out when the notorious Hull police were drafted into the area, and gained a reputation for dispensing strikers with alarming force.

And the accusation of the "Miners' Advocate", Dec.2nd 1843, "...it would appear that the police have done their best to irritate the men to acts of violence." Bell Collection Vol.12

110. See, for example, the comment of Justice Parke in 1832 sentencing William Jobling to death (who had been publicly accused as soon as arrested). "...I am afraid that this is one of those numerous crimes which have arisen out of the extensive combination amongst workmen, which has unhappily existed for so many years in this country - a combination alike injurious to the public interests, and to those persons who are themselves concerned with it. Your connection with that body induced you to stand by while another individual

inflicted the mortal wounds, for no reason than that the unfortunate gentleman had been actively engaged in endeavouring to put the combination down..."

The same judge hanged 21-year old William Parkin and 20-year old Thomas Varty for assaulting a blackleg. He reprieved Varty's mother by reducing sentence from death to life transportation. Bell Collection, Vol.11, p.537.

111.cf. "Report on the Trials of the Pitmen and Others".

Durham Summer Assizes, 1832. Copy in Durham University Library, Reference L343.1.

and D.N.Pritt and R. Freeman "The Law Versus the Trade Unions". Lawrence and Wishart 1958, who make the assertion that the premise of the law of industrial relations being based on the premise of "fair play" in a capitalist society is akin to the 'fairness' expected when "the elephant attends the chickens' dance."

112.Interestingly, Crawford himself was one of the most suspicious, though first-hand experience was converting many pitmen into cynics by the 1880s.

e.g. December 1882, Monthly Circular:

"Much has been written and said about the demerits of the great unpaid magistracy. From all parts of the country, complaints come about their partiality and unfair decisions. In nothing has this been so apparent as in trade matters - questions arising between employers and workmen, inasmuch as ninety percent of magistrates are themselves employers of labour and the remainder are priests, which are much worse still.."

113. Challinor and Ripley, op.cit, p.9.

114. Roberts, the miners' advocate and an active Chartist was an exception. Writing in 1851 he observed that "It never happened to me to meet a magistrate who considered than an agreement between masters not to employ any particular 'troublesome fellow' was an unlawful act; reverse the case, however, and it immediately becomes a formidable conspiracy which must be put down by the strong arms of the law." Quoted in Challinor and Ripley, op. cit., p.99.

115. I am not sure whether the Primitive Methodists were so much revered by the pitmen but what seems more probable is that the pitmen acknowledged their own unworthiness and left to the respectable amongst them the work of negotiating with the owners, while not necessarily believing the Primitive Methodists were better than themselves. In short, accepting the bourgeois standards of credibility, at least on a formal level.

116. Vic Allen: "Militant Trade Unionism: Merlin, 1966. p.27. His comment is doubly apposite in view of the embroilment of the agents in the cultural mores:

"Strikes take place within a hostile environment even though they are a common everyday phenomenon. They are conventionally described as industrially subversive, irresponsible, unfair, against the interests of the community, contrary to the workers' best interests, wasteful of resources, crudely aggressive, inconsistent with democracy, and, in any event, unnecessary. The morality which assesses strikes in these terms acts on employees so that they approach

strike action with serious inhibitions. Union officials are particularly prone to the anti-strike environmental influences because they are frequently made out to be responsible for the behaviour of their members. Once they are committed to a strike call, union officials tend to become defensive, apologetic, and concerned about taking avoiding action. When they are actually engaged in a strike they are frequently motivated by a desire to end it quickly, irrespective of the merits of the case". p.27

117. I intend to go into greater detail ~~in my thesis~~ ^{later} but one may take a couple of examples.

The first county-wide stoppage took place in 1879, evidencing all the reactions from the Executive which were to become standard (though it must be said that in these early days Crawford had the economic frailty of the union to consider, whereas Wilson in later years refused to take action even when strong). The background to the strike was chronic depression of trade following which came a series of wage reductions from 1874-1879. The crisis came in February 1879, when the owners demanded a 20% reduction. The agents offered 7 1/2% but this was rejected, as was open arbitration. February 22nd 1879 saw the Executive Committee publish a circular on the crisis which stated.

"What, then, is the best course to pursue?.. to stop, unless forced to do, would be the very acme of imprudence. Looking at the matter from all points, our advice would be to offer the Owners the ten and seven-and-a-half per cents,.. as a settlement of the whole question.. Let this be your first

offer. If the Owners refuse to accept this as an ultimatum, then offer them 7½% reduction on the underground workmen, and six per cent from other labour; and let any further claim they may make, go to open arbitration, leaving the sum claimed in an indefinite form."

Whatever the caution of the officials, the pitmen were very militant, throwing out the advice, and offering open arbitration. On March 10th 1879, the E.C. sent out a further circular urging the men to settle, but to no avail, for on the 15th a lodge vote was 111 to 160 against the executive policy. March 17th 1879 saw a further circular urging conciliation, yet on the 19th the vote was still 113 to 155 against the E.C. recommendations. On March 21st 1879 the E.C., now desperate, issued a special notice saying a vote for arbitration was a vote to strike. The men struck regardless. The lock-out began on April 5th, but the owners, faced with action from the pitmen, rapidly came to arbitration, a pro-temp settlement under Judge Bradshaw giving 8½% reduction (May 15th 1879). What is interesting is that the men gained by action a better settlement than the officials were willing to give to the owners without a fight, and the men had established by struggling the principle of arbitration. Later in the year, the final settlement under Lord Derby's arbitration gave a further 1½% reduction for underground workers (July 1879). The agents found themselves very unpopular for a long while, being opposed in the elections of the annual council meeting, and having to defend themselves against circulars from Thornley lodge (July 4th 1879), and

"Unconstitutional Meetings" (August 30th 1879). The fact that the officials were all comfortably re-elected and the Council of September 27th 1879 resolved that "...this meeting cannot too strongly condemn the District meetings, which have recently been held, considering them detrimental to the best interests of the Association" shows much for the authority of the officials even when dissatisfaction was prevalent.

In the 1889 wage negotiations we see again the fear of striking from the agents. In the previous year or so there had been much criticism of the existing Sliding Scale, and the pitmen, encouraged by the national wave of militancy, were calling for wage increases. May 25th 1889 Council passed a resolution "to demand 20% advance". June 24th saw the owners offer a 5% increase, which the officials urged on their members ("we advise you to accept the offer now made by the Owners", Fed.Ass., July 10th 1889). The men refused the owners' offer, and balloted 25,820 to 5,667 for a strike. In the face of such aggression the owners immediately upped the offer to 10%. Another circular came from the union officials; "This ought to be accepted. Every one ... must be fully alive to all the dangers to our social, and it may be, our permanent condition, which always follows a strike, such as we should have in this county... It does not mean a few hands, but the entire county... laid commercially prostrate, and who can conceive the social and moral disaster, arising from such a state of things? Looking at all the surrounding circumstances, and the immense, and almost insuperable,

difficulties, which, on our part, attends a strike of such magnitude, as ours would be, we do, in the interests, and for the good of the whole country, emphatically say, that you ought to accept, without reservation, or the slightest delay, this ten per cent. It is the best course we can adopt" (Fed.Ass. July 31st 1889). A lodge ballot on the same day got the men back to work, though the pitmen were only 169 to 168 for accepting. There was clearly much displeasure, but significantly the miners evidenced no opposition towards their agents, going to the extent of voting 202 to 90 (Sept. 14th 1889) to allow the officials to settle the future negotiations even though the latter immediately proceeded to try to stem the militancy by appeals to loyalty for the union, conciliation, and peace (cf. Appeals! Circular, Dec. 7th 1889 in answer to Hamsteels! motion for a further 15% rise on top of the 20% received in past months).

If at times Crawford could appear to be forcing conciliation on the members, John Wilson made it a permanent feature. He had been an agent since 1881, and when Crawford died in 1890, it is clear that Wilson, though not secretary, became the leading member of the executive. Within two years he was in a crisis, fighting back the demands for a strike from the members. In late 1891 the owners claimed a 10% reduction. The Monthly Circular of January 1892 contained a lengthy appeal to peacefully negotiate the crisis, and above all to avoid a strike. But a ballot issued on February 10th 1892 showed that the miners were militant, the Fed.Ass. refusing the cut by 41,887 votes to 605, with 2,050 cast for arbitration, and

7,102 for the Fed. Board to settle the officials, horrified at the thought of a strike, rushed back for further talks, returning to ballot again on a 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ % reduction, or two 5% reductions. The result was indisputable, 40,468 voting for a strike, 926 for acceptance of the 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ % reduction, 1,155 for the two 5%, and 12,956 for the Fed. Board to settle (March 4th 1892). To the shame of the agents they exercised nothing short of deception, pointing out that despite the huge vote for a strike, so many members had abstained that another vote would be necessary. It was a clear attempt to stall decisive action. A Special Council of March 12th 1892 resolved "That we ought to accept no reduction", but still the agents did nothing. A month later the second ballot (March 16th 1892) made clear the wishes of the members - 43,056 for a strike against 11,256 for the Federation Board to settle. In spite of this mandate the Fed. Board was appealing 3 days later for power to settle (Fed.Ass. March 19th 1892). In fact on the very day that the final ballot came out (March 16th 1892), the Federation Board issued a circular reprinting their words of January 20th 1892 that "To this (power of settlement to the Fed. Board) we still adhere, as the wisest, surest, and best course to be pursued, and have no doubt that if it were adopted, a speedy settlement might be arrived at, and all the misery and hardship that is necessarily attached to a strike or lock-out, whether it be of short or long duration, would be obviated." Such dalliance could only be exceeded by a further meeting on March 26th 1892 which decided to ballot again to ask whether the men wished to strike or give the

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Fed. Board power to settle. This, in spite of a 4 to 1 mandate given a week before. Time was further wasted, and April 16th 1892 saw the inevitable - 28,151 to 17,598 in favour of a strike. The agents could argue that in frequently balloting they were merely following rule, but this cannot cover up that it was an attempt to forestall action (or at least to hasten its end), an attempt which was never again attempted in such brazen style.

The dilatory attitude of the agents seemed to give sign of weakness in the union (cf. Metcalfe op.cit. p.156 "The Agents as members of the Federation Board were opposed to the strike, and this tended to weaken the men's cause"). Wilson, "History of the D.M.A.", Durham 1907, bemoaning the "slander and vile names" received by his associates "...all because they, realizing the dangers of the situation, dared to advise the county and take an unpalatable but manly stand" p.234. Whatever type of stance it was, the action of the agents gave the owners enough encouragement to increase the demand for a wage cut. The men responded with a ballot of 33,451 to 4,425 in favour of resistance (May 28th 1892), and it was three months later that they went back when the Bishop of Durham negotiated a 10% cut.

Such hesitancy from the agents was typical in face of industrial action throughout the period right up to and including 1926 (and was actually a major cause of the defeat of that year), but it would be a profound error to assume because the agents resisted direct action the rank-and-file were opposed to them. On the contrary, the grassroots held similar views

to those of the leadership. When the pitmen demanded more money, it was not a call for a different social order. Their consciousness did not extend beyond wanting more from the system. They attacked its symptoms, never its cause.

118.cf. June 1889 table of wage changes since 1879 from district to district. Durham's wages had risen 5%, compared to 10% in Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and Cumberland; 15% for Staffordshire; 20% for Lancashire and Nottinghamshire. Only Northumberland (2%) and Cleveland (same) were worse than Durham.

119.e.g. Compare these statements from Crawford, one very socialistic, the second ambiguous and the third Liberal;

(a) Monthly Circular, Dec.1880: Referring to a strike at South Moor, after the owners, Hedley Bros., refused an arbitration agreement.

"After wealth has been produced by the workmen, until Hedley Bros. might well be satiated with it, then when they refuse compliance with the most arbitrary and despotic demands they (the Owners) turn round and throw the aged, the weak, the ailing and the helpless into the open streets. This, too, with all our advanced civilization and in the midst of a christian community. If you will not learn to take care of yourselves, the rude and savage handling received from men like these, will most effectually tell you what you have to expect. One of these gentlemen could boast, that he had a cart load of sovereigns. Who has produced them? Not himself. If he possesses all this wealth, it is only what should have been distributed amongst the workmen in years gone by. All wealth or capital is surplus labour, produced

by the workmen, to be now used for their own self-aggrandizement and the men's destruction..."

(b) April 1864: Monthly Circular - Commenting on the opening of a Conservative working-Men's Club in Newcastle:

"In speaking, this young tory puppet screeched out, and asked whether they wanted the Liberalism of Lord Hartington, or that of Mr. Henry George. Mr. Henry George is their great bane. The doctrine he advocates is not that of king's possessing rights divine but that the land is the people's and it ought to be unconditionally restored to them. No reason can be assigned why working men should be Conservatives. All, or nearly all the reliefs we have got has been the work of Liberal Governments."

(c) February - April 1885: Monthly Report.

"As you all know I am no advocate of strikes. I believe in an appeal to reason and not to brute force. Strikes ought to be a thing of the past and the person or persons who force a strike are responsible for both the social and commercial disasters, which are sure to follow to the district in which such strike takes place. I believe in a mutuality of action but a mutuality based on the principles of justice and fairplay. There can be no mutuality where one party dictates and the other must obey. This is not mutuality but its very antithesis - despotism..."

120. Compare the above with Wilson's conclusion to his history of the D.M.A. op.cit. p.341;

"We have come from a chronic state of open and avowed antagonism to (if not complete conciliation) at least a great approach to it. The history in describing the various

stages in our path, will prove that the old era of contention was wearying and wasteful, as it was sure to be when the two parties considered themselves as two armies and their strength of numbers and increase in capital were for purposes of crushing the other side. These ideas, like that of national superiority and large armaments, were hard to destroy on either side. Their presence made the attempts at compromise more difficult and often helped those who were wishful to retrograde. They brought about the abolition of the sliding scales and the first Conciliation Board. It may be that at some future stage they will effect the same with the second. This will not be, if the past teaches any lessons and the workmen of Durham recognize the tendency of the times. That is towards conciliation and no step should be taken except to perfect it.."

122. Durham established an Emigration Fund on August 2nd 1879 (Council Meeting) and the Council of Nov. 3rd, 1881 was urging surplus labour to emigrate.

Restriction was a favoured device of the pitmen in Durham, though Wilson, true to his Liberalism, rejected it. It worked on the assumption that to control supply meant the ability to raise the price and hence wages. See, for example, Monthly Circular, November 1882, commenting on restriction:-

"This is required, and, I am convinced, is the only panacea for the evil, altho' it is difficult to say how it can be carried out. Striking for a week or two is of no avail whatever, if, at the end of it, men have to return as is now

done, almost everywhere, to new coals 8, 9, 10, 11 and even 12 hours per day. Markets are glutted with coal and we are still going on, producing more, in order that markets may be still more glutted, or if that is not the object, that, at least, is the effect, resulting in low prices and ruinously low wages..."(also see March 15th, 1880 Council resolution advocating county restriction).

For a convincing argument that 'ca canny' underlay the M.F.G.B's efforts for 8-hours see B. McCormick and J.E. Williams. "The Miners and the Eight-Hour day, 1863-1910". Economic History Review, Vol.12, p.222-238, 1959-1960.

121.e.g. Monthly Circular, October 1880.

"The doctrine which teaches, the entire subservience of Labour to Capital, and that the law of supply and demand shall determine, whether the workmen shall be fairly fed and clothed, or literally starved or ill-clothed, shall have at all times, my most strenuous opposition. Such doctrines are both pernicious and destructive.."

123.D.M.A. Council, 24th September 1881.

124.e.g. Special Council Meeting on the Sliding Scale, February 28th 1882 - 2 Resolutions were passed:-

- (1) "That in our opinion, the basis of the Sliding Scale drawn up by the Federation Board is just and equitable and we cannot, therefore, offer any other terms to the Owners as a means of settlement."
- (2) "Should the foregoing resolution be not complied with, we request from the Owners an advance of twenty per cent in the wages of all men and boys, believing that trade warrants such an application."

and, even the apparently militant resolution put by Houghton-le-Spring at Council Meeting, May 25th 1889.

"That we form no more Sliding Scales, until the Sliding Scales at present in force in other countries, terminate, and that we draft a resolution for next National Conference, stating that any county wishing to form a Sliding Scale, may do so, but all must begin on one date and end on one date. The duration, and dates of beginning and ending, be fixed by Conference". (Ruled out of order).

125. Council, March 10th 1894.
126. Monthly Circular, February 1896.
127. c.f. S & B. Webb "History of Trade Unionism" Longman, 1896:
p. 360. "Laissez faire, then, was the political and social creed of the Trade Union leaders of this time (1875). Up to 1885 they undoubtedly represented the views among the rank-and-file
128. March 1884. Monthly Circular: Crawford, in praising a newspaper "The Northern Leader", added "this is a new penny paper, recently issued from South Shields. It is essentially a Liberal paper and as such will represent the political views of the great number of our members..."
- The Liberal opinion amongst the pitmen was further reflected in the ascendancy of the "Durham Chronicle" over its rivals and its decision to devote more space to the D.M.A.'s affairs in 1872, which upped its circulation to 12,000 in 1879. c.f. Mr. Milne: "the Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham", p. 139-140. Frank Graham, Newcastle 1971. In the early years of the 20th century, when militant lodges constantly urged affiliation with the L.R.C., Wilson often repeated the warning

that "we cannot afford to ignore the great body of Liberal opinion", which even if biased, had a strong element of truth

129. March 15th, 1880, Council: (passed)

"That we, the miners of Durham, unite with the miners of Northumberland and the other organized bodies of workmen in the North, to hold a mass meeting on the Town Moor of Newcastle on Whit Monday, in order to advocate a policy of peace, retrenchment and reform. And that Mr. Gladstone be invited to attend, so that we may thank him for the life-long and transcendent services which he has rendered to the Liberal cause".

Council, December 13th, 1884:

"This meeting, composed of two hundred representatives and directly representing forty thousand working miners, desires to express to the Rt. Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, its sincere thanks for the very complete and comprehensive measure of reform, which, by indefatigable perseverance, he has been able to pass into law and by which two millions of capable and trustworthy citizens have been enfranchised."

130. Council, February 7th 1885:

131. c.f. records of the D.M.A.

132. e.g. 1890 Gala nominees included W. Broadhurst and H. George but also Gladstone and H.R.H. German Emperor.

133. This activism of the agitators will be examined at considerable length in a later work, but at this stage should be mentioned the effective work of Batey in particular, who has been considerably underestimated. From 1904 he had considerable support in his campaign for the Minimum Wage, doubled by the fact that he held a seat on the E.C. so that dissent was all

the more crushing.

c.f. F. Bealey & H. Pelling "Labour & Politics, 1900-1906.

Mac.1958. Ch.9 "The Politics of Coal", p.215-232.

134. November 24th, 1888: Programme of Annual Council:

Harwell: "The Coal Owners of Great Britain are thinking of forming^a a syndicate to buy up all the coal mines in this country, this Council deems that it is time steps were taken to counter-act any undue action on their part, insofar as we the workmen are concerned, such as the forming of a general Association, embracing all miners in the United Kingdom".

(Significantly, the motion failed).

135. Council, June 18th 1892.

136. Wilson was much frightened by the M.F.G.B.'s militancy and bent over backwards to panic the Durham men into leaving it. See circular on M.F.G.B., Dec. 7th 1892.

137. Indeed, there seemed a time when the Liberal Party appeared capable of absorbing the Labour representatives, cf. Bealey & Pelling (1958) op.cit.

Bill Purdise: "Arthur Henderson & the Barnard Castle Election in 1903. New Poly. 1973, unpublished.

138. For an analysis of the Labour Party's shortcomings, see, R. Miliband "Parliamentary Socialism" George Allen & Unwin 1961. Leo Panitch "Ideology and Integration": Political Studies 1971.

139. For example, there was insurrection from Washington Glebe in 1915. Fourteen big pits supported the Glebe's circular, which horrified the patriotic D.M.A. agents who avidly sued for peace in the pits to aid the war.

"Darnham Chronicle" April 23rd 1915:

"We are faced with a situation without parallel in our history. Never were we stronger in point of numbers (counting our soldier and sailor comrades), never did we produce more wealth, and never did we receive in wages so small a percentage of that wealth that we do to-day. The mineowners have grown into millionaires... while we, the producers of wealth, are grovelling in the gutter and vegetating in poverty... We submit to you that there is something rotten in our organization and machinery. Our Union basis is that there is a common interest between master and men, and, believing in this mutual interest, we have been led (by our leaders largely) to erect machinery for conciliation, arbitration, and joint committees. There has been conciliation on our side, but little on the side of the masters. That was because the masters knew they had a different interest to us, an interest apart from and opposed to ours, and when they came to "conciliate" with us, they came animated by selfish class interests, thirsty for dividends and underneath their conciliation sheepskin they had their mailed fist ready to strike and grab; and they have struck us so often and grabbed so much that we have become utter slaves, looked upon as part of a profit producing machinery... Fellow workmen, this is no one colliery grievance. The County is sick and tired of this Joint Committee farce, with its chairman always picked, or 'selected' from the non-producing class. We can tolerate it no longer. A more humane system we shall have, and this is the time to strike out for it. If we cannot win now we never shall do so. We

are demanding a special Council meeting on Saturday May 1st 1915. May 1st is Labour Day, a fine day on which to assert our right to a greater measure of justice..."

140.D.M.A. Circular March 19th 1921;

"With no money in the industry, and very little in the various Miners' Associations, coupled with the vast army of unemployed and under-employed, we have got to recognize that the tide is against us, and that it is very doubtful whether we could successfully carry through a strike."

141.June 11th 1921, 69,991 to 20,744 for resistance.

142.D.M.A. Circular Dec. 30th 1921;

"Nobody in the past has condemned more strenuously the adoption of Direct Action Methods than the Party in question (Labour); but directly we attain sufficient vision to realize that we can obtain by purely Constitutional Methods the goal we aim at, then they (owners) immediately realize that the old methods of political propaganda cannot be applied. Their constructive policy has been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and they cannot afford to run the inevitable risk involved in putting their constructive policy against that of the Labour Movement, and trading upon the fact that wages are at low ebb, they appeal to all that is selfish in mankind, in the hope that by means of a smoke cloud of lies and gross misinterpretation they hope to achieve the end that they know could not be attained by clean hands."

143.With notable exceptions such as Morrison, Follonsby and Wardley.

144.cf. February 24th 1925 circular in praise of Labour after the 1924 government.

145. October 24th 1925 Council;

"...we deplore the apathy and wait-to-see attitude of our Agents and Executive Committee in the recent crisis, and demand an explanation of their position in not publicly supporting the policy of a hundred per cent organization and a living wage for the miners, of A.J.Cook, Secretary of the M.F.G.B. and National Executive." Shotton.

January 30th 1926 Council;

"That the Agents and Executive Committee be asked to resign for the following reasons:-

(a) Inability to lead and advise.

(b) A ballot for a strike at this time and in one district of the Federation is to play into the hands of the Owners.

(c) The attitude of some of our Agents and Executive Committee in this County is an attitude which cripples and insults the grand efforts of the Federation Officers at the Royal Commission."

146. cf. Julian Symons, "The General Strike", Part 3, Ch.7 "What Happened at Newcastle?" p.124-132, Cresset 1957.

A.Mason, "The General Strike in the North-East", Uni.Hull 1970

A.Mason, "The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham, with special reference to the General Strike of 1926",

Ph.D. thesis, Hull 1967, especially Ch.7

R.Page Arnot, "The General Strike, May 1926", 1926, this ed. 1967 M.Kelley U.S.A.

147. cf. Symons op.cit., p.126; "The D.M.A. was so lethargic that it did not set up a Strike Committee of any sort."

R.Page Arnot, "The General Strike in the North-East", "Our

History", No.22 1961.

148.A.Mason, op.cit., p.433 (1967);

"Durham was the last coalfield to resume work. In fact a ballot taken among the men showed a simple majority in favour of rejecting the owners' terms. The voting was 49,217 to 40,583. Perhaps the most significant aspect was that out of a membership of 142,403, only 89,800 had voted. The E.C. of the D.M.A. used the failure to secure the necessary two thirds majority, as the lever by which the men were instructed to work, which they did on November 30th."

For Arthur Cook's popularity one need only look to the attendances at the three meetings at which he spoke on June 18th, July 17th and August 14th 1926.

In July 1926 Burnhope was the scene of an 'alternative' gala, the officials having urged an abandonment due to the strike. They were not invited, and there was much ill-feeling in the county. Cook spoke at the meeting to some 35,000 people, who had brought 50 banners.

"Imagine, where is the man today I don't care who he is... could draw the crowds like that Cook could do. Imagine in Durham, tramping to Burnhope anything up to thirty or forty thousand people and that was typical wherever he went anywhere in the county." Will Lawther to J.F.Clarke, interview published in "Soc. for the Study of Labour Hist." Bull.19,'69 p15 see also "Durham Chronicle", Aug.14th.1926 for their report.

1850 - 1844

"On calmly considering the injustice of society towards the working man, we almost tremble with apprehension for the consequences - the retributive consequences to the oppressor, when the workman shall become wise - shall learn his own strength and value to that society, which repays him with oppression and injustice - with insult, contumely, and scorn for all his worth, his labour, and his forbearance towards them. And yet we are told of the kindness and charity of society! Aye, the kindness of the tiger to the lamb - of the hawk for the dove! Then again we are told of their charity. Yes, they rob the labouring man of the honest fruits of his toil - of the fair and just reward for his labour, - in other words, they rob him of pounds - make him poor and dependant, by their vile arts and tricky practices, and then relieve him with farthings, in the spirit depressing, soul-humiliating shape of charity. Curses on their charity, it is deceitful; perdition to their kindness, - it is cruel. Let us have justice, we want not their charity."

"Miners' Advocate", Vol. 3. No. 2, June 1845, p. 9.

Durham pitmen displayed a marked volatility from as early as the 16th century. In view of the monopoly combines stemming from the days of the Hostmen it is scarcely surprising that men who lived under such abject conditions should rebel against an order which inflicted upon them occupational dangers without precedent;¹ a contract tie which relegated the miners to virtual serfdom,² bolstered by a complex of

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crippling fines;³ hard toil of immensely long hours for both men and very young boys;⁴ and an infamous truck system known locally as the 'Tommy-Shop'.⁵ There had been a transitory combination of some two thousand workmen in 1662,⁶ but there was no effective union from the miners until the 19th century. Instead, there remained a populace smarting under its wrongs occasionally rising in protest,⁷ while continuing to be inherently malevolent.⁸

It was in 1810 that the pitmen entered their first major struggle with the owners. A meeting of colliers resolved that October to resist attempts to lengthen the bond agreements and a seven week strike ensued. The pitmen staged a pitiful revolt. Since combination was still illegal the miners formed themselves into confederacies by 'brothering' under solemn oaths of secrecy and loyalty, but the owners reacted with alacrity. A legal and moral right to crush the insurgents, and, more importantly direct coercion - with no qualms about using it - made the action of the owners akin to squashing a pestering fly. The delegates were hunted by the owners and magistrates, assisted by the military until there were so many arrests that some three hundred colliers were imprisoned in the Bishop of Durham's stables when the Durham Gaol and House of Correction overflowed. Durham Volunteers, special constables, and the Royal Carmathenshire Militia were drafted into the area to defend the owners. The struggle petered out with the bond system remaining in the status quo.

However the 1810 struggle was a portent of things to come. The Northern Coalfield was rapidly expanding in the early

decades of the 19th century. A wave of migration was commenced which kept the area in a state of flux. Connexions with the industrial and commercial centres of England were consolidated and as the Durham pitmen grew in numerical strength, so too developed an increasing sensitivity to national events. The end of War in 1815 had ushered in an ultra-reactionary government to counteract a wave of radicalism and the culmination at Peterloo sent waves into the North-East. Tension was increased in the region by the coincidence of bitter strikes from the keelmen and sailors of the Wear and pitmen were angered when laid off as a result. There were worried communications with the Home Secretary, warning "that the circulation of the 'Black Dwarf' is very great among our people and that its poison is received with avidity."⁹ The relations between pitman and master, never good, were reaching a much more dangerous position. Replacing the standard grudging servitude was evolving an overt enmity (which had always been reciprocated) towards the owners.

The 1820s plunged Britain into severe depression, providing further calls from the working-class for amelioration of their position. The Durham pitmen in 1825 sent out two appeals to the coalowners to remonstrate chiefly on the iniquities of the bond.¹⁰ Their requests were met at once with a series of repressive measures to restrict free speech and combination, backed by an excessively severe magistracy, military force and economic privation. The embryonic union in the county was smashed, though not until an alarmed Lord Londonderry had written to the Home Secretary demanding troops to crush a movement which threatened his livelihood.¹¹ What could not be

quashed, however, was the growing call for change from the pitmen, which the antics of the owners were exacerbating with their persistent calls to arm in face of the slightest disturbance.

The following decade heralded a major crisis in England as a whole. The national exigency was highlighted in Durham, not so much as a call for political reform but as a menacing revolutionary mood from the pitmen. There was not in Durham a significant middle-class which Grey's concessions could satiate and hence remove the articulate part of the reformist alliance.¹² In the North-East those involved in the call for reform pursued not political incorporation but radical changes in the distribution of wealth. The spokesmen for the pitmen were pitmen themselves, voicing the grievances of their people. If nationally there existed a revolutionary threat,¹³ then in Durham the danger was doubly so. The county drew up on two sides facing one another to display a hostility which had been gathering force for the past century. The Tory press of Durham enunciated with glaring accuracy "... the whole elements of society are broken up and a civil war appears to be on the eve of breaking out. The divisions between the working and the other classes of society are everyday becoming greater and greater, whilst the former are gradually becoming more informed, more united and more determined in their endeavours to obtain what they call their rights. These 'rights' as they demanded, are quite incompatible with the existence of the present government, or the present distribution of property, in England: they comprehend

universal suffrage, vote by ballot and annual parliaments, under which the limited monarchy of England could not exist a single twelvemonth; - and although not openly avowed, there is very widely spread an opinion in favour of a Spencean division of property, which only requires opportunity to be brought into action. In such a state of things, it may be soon necessary for every man, who has anything to defend, to arm himself in defence of it..."¹⁴ The coal magnates needed no encouragement to fight but this time they were challenged by a militancy rampant throughout the region. Maleficent were the sentiments of a miner named Larkin, who announced in Newcastle "Should not William the Fourth recollect the fate of Louis the Sixteenth? Should not a Queen who makes herself a busy intermeddling politician recollect the fate of Marie Antoinette? From this hustings I bid the Queen of England recollect that in consequence of the opposition of that ill-fated woman to the wishes of the people of France, a fairer head than ever graced the shoulders of Adelaide, Queen of England, rolled upon the scaffold."¹⁵ Again, there remains the note sent from a pitman who the night before had ransacked the house of the local viewer.

"I was at your house last neet and myed mysel very comfortable. Ye hev nee family and yor just won man on the colliery. I see ye hev a greet lot of rooms, and big cellars, and plenty wine and beer in them, which I got ma share on. Noo I now some at wor colliery that as three or fower lads and lasses and they live in won room not half as gude as yor cellar. I don't pretend to now very much, but I now there shudn't be that

much difference. The only place we can gan to o the week ends is the yel hoose and hev a pint. I dinna pretend to be a profit, but I now this, and lots o ma narrows na's te, that wes not tret as we owt to be, and great filosofher says, to get noledge is to now wes ignerent. But weve just begun to find oot, and ye maisters and owners may luk oot, for yor not gan to get se much o yor own way, wer gan to hev some owers now. I divent tell ye ma nyem, but I war one of yer un-welcome visitors last nest¹⁶

The afflictions of the pitmen were voiced at a mass meeting at Black Fell on March 12th, 1831, centring on issues of hours and wages. Little over a week later 20,000 men demanded a profound change in the bond itself.¹⁷ They refused to renew their contracts with the owners on April 5th and a strike was initiated carrying with it a pugnacity which persistently erupted into open battle. Collieries which continued working became the objects of violence. Machinery was smashed, corves thrown down shafts, blacklegs beaten and houses of colliery owners and agents regularly robbed.¹⁸ A great number of special constables were enlisted to protect property, the Northumberland and Newcastle Yeomanry were called out and a detachment of marines sailed to the Tyne from Portsmouth within an hour of hearing of the crisis to quell any attempt at revolution.

The rapidity with which the strike had got under way took the owners off guard. They had no hidden stocks of coal and buyers with contracts were kept waiting. The violence from the pitmen also had a considerable effect in advantaging the

miners against the unprepared opponents. Damage to pits was extensive and there were not enough constables and troops to mount an effective protection. The press began a campaign smearing the "artful and designing" leaders of the miners, but the policeman's theory was a sign of weakness. It was the rank-and-file of the pitmen who were the instigators of the violent attacks on property. Indeed, the leadership was suing for regard for order and sobriety. By June the owners succumbed to the strikers. The pitmen won a 12 hour day and an end to the Tommy Shop. They returned to work leaving the owners to satisfy orders and crave revenge. The enmity between the two forces had characterized the struggle from the beginning, but what was also a crucial phenomenon was the failure of the pitmen to envisage any alternative society to that in which they lived. They were certainly aware of their oppression and wanted to be better off. This in itself was a threat to the establishment, particularly in the intensity of the clashes, but there was little constructive notion from the pitmen. They reacted to the symptoms, not the cause of their maltreatment. In short, they possessed no alternative strategy for the establishment of a future order. In failing in this they negated their temporary victory of June 1851 and allowed the owners time to recover. The following year it was the turn of the union to be routed.²⁰ Furthermore, the pitmen's leaders even at this early date were Primitive Methodists, selected at this stage for their tenacity, intellect and coherence. These early 'Ranters' were a very different proposition to those of the end of the century, being close to

their own kind, and seeking in the sect a way to mollify the harshness of pit life with a consolatory metaphysic. Their faith of necessity became interpreted as radical in the dilution. Despite the change, however, the Primitives still possessed the essentially Protestant traits of conciliation, order and good will. Thomas Hepburn, the strike leader, had throughout urged the men to keep the peace, but to no avail. He never acknowledged that the violence of the men could have effected any victory for them. Whatever their contribution, the effect of the success of the 1831 strike hoisted a wave of confidence to the miners' leaders. In August of that year Hepburn was elected full-time union organizer, and Primitive Methodists established influential positions in the movement.²¹ To have men at the helm who could advise that "great results cannot be achieved at once, to know how to wait is the secret of success",²² was an inauspicious way to start a year when the owners would leap onto the offensive.

By April 1832 the owners had experience enough to realize that unionism was anathema. They combined to refuse employment to any union member, and locked the pits. This time they were doubly prepared. The marines were again summoned from Portsmouth, a strong force of London police was introduced and a detachment of Queen's Bays came into Durham. The blacklegs were armed, while squadrons of cavalry scoured the countryside. Special Constables were sworn in and this time given weapons, plus instructions to disperse any crowd of strikers. This time it was the owners who took the initiative against pitmen whose leaders had made no preparations for a

struggle since the past year. They had a number of important advantages, not the least of which being the reversal of public opinion against the pitmen since the previous year. The miners were made to appear as greedily menacing the coal trade. Now the owners enjoyed an overwhelmingly superior coercive power plus a moral justification for any attacks they made. The pitmen, on the other hand, were firmly under the leadership of Hepburn who urged observance of the law for fear all else would be lost.

The owners were actively seeking an excuse to thoroughly smash the union. The press was peppered with tales of outrages engendered by the pitmen.²³ All that would be needed was a clash of forces for which the miners could be held responsible and the owners could use all compulsion for a final showdown. The forces of capital used every intimidation, from forced evictions at Hetton and Friar's Goose (at which there were fierce riots and over forty arrests), to everyday harrassment of colliers in the streets. The county by June was in a state of virtual military occupation. The miners protested strongly, divining the play of the owners; "While the pitmen...are quietly appealing, merely by the Force of Argument, to the candour and good sense of their employers and the community at large; the Coal Owners, armed with Civil and Military power, appear wishful to appeal only to the Argument of Force. To accomplish their own sinister purposes, they have employed every means, every stratagem in their power, but hitherto in vain - viz. hiring the Press to circulate statements which the least boy that enters the coal mine can

contradict - threatening to starve us! - swearing in Special Constables to intimidate us! - calling up the Yeomanry Cavalry, and bringing troops, both horse and foot, from various parts of the Kingdom, and also some Naval force. - In some cases the Riot Act has been threatened to be read amongst us, when peaceably assembled to discuss our grievances! All this has been done with a view to intimidate us, and, we believe, to excite us to a breach of the peace; but thank God, hitherto without any effect, or indeed any prospect of accomplishing their wicked purposes."²⁴

The crunch came on June 11th when Nicholas Fairless, a 70 year old magistrate notorious for a history of strike-breaking activities,²⁵ was accosted and beaten by two colliers. He died from the wounds inflicted in the attack a fortnight later. This was the event the owners were searching after. William Jobbling, one of the two, was arrested and declared guilty in the press before his trial. Mass arrests followed throughout the county. A striker from Percy Main, Cuthbert Skipsey, was deliberately shot through the head by a special constable in early July. The killer, Weddle, was tried and sentenced to only six months hard labour. The Fairless murder provided a justification for all the atrocities inflicted in the name of the capitalists. The press hummed with macabre details on the trial and consequent gibbeting of Jobbling. The summer assizes at Durham demonstrated the bias in the law. Hard labour and transportation were rife. Justice Parke hanged two men just out of their teens for assault on a blackleg, while reducing the mother's sentence from death to life

transportation.²⁶ The same judge tried Jobling. The defendant claimed that it was his companion who had killed the magistrate. His plea was accepted but it was to no avail. He was a marked man from the very beginning.

Parke expounded the position: "I am afraid that this is one of those numerous crimes which have arisen out of the extensive combination amongst workmen, which has unhappily existed for so many years in this country - a combination alike injurious to the public interests and to those persons who are themselves concerned with it. Your connection with that body induced you to stand by while another individual inflicted the mortal wounds, for no reason than that unfortunate gentleman had been actively engaged in endeavouring to put the combination down"²⁷ The Combination Acts had been abolished in the twenties, yet Justice Parke saw fit to put on trial trade unionism. It was not the substantive issue of a murder that was important but the movement which had initiated the present crisis.

Jobling was sentenced to be hanged and gibbeted. The gloating of the media continued even beyond the final expiration. The execution took place August 3rd, after which Jobling was stripped and covered in pitch. The body was then taken under heavy military escort, from Durham to Jarrow Slake taking a route through many colliery villages. At the river Jobling "... was cased in flat bars of iron, of 2 3/4 ins. in breadth, the feet were placed in stirrups, from which a bar of iron went up each side to the head and ended in a ring

by which the body was suspended; a bar from the collar went down the breast, and another down the back; there were also bars in the inside of the legs which communicated with the above, and cross bars at the ankles, the knees, the thighs, the breast and shoulders; the hands were hung by the side, and covered with pitch; and the face was pitched and covered with a white grave cloth."28 There it was hung, sixteen feet above the water, until someone stole the body in early September, risking, incidentally, an automatic sentence of transportation.

That organ of the coal-magnates, the "Durham County Advertiser" was ominous indeed; "The trials in our Criminal Court last week - and the dreadful spectacle of the body of Jobling, Mr. Fairless's murderer, now exhibits - fluttering in the wind, and the horrid sound of the iron fetters clanking in the ear of the passenger - naturally draw attention to the cause of these enormities which have taken place in this district; and induce the inquiry, whether anything can be done to prevent them in the future? Mr. Justice Parke justly traced the origin of the outrages out of which this crime has flowed, to the repeal, some years back, of the combination laws. This was a favourite measure of the Liberals: the Tory ministry fell in with it, to oblige Mr. Hume; and, like most experiments in the same line of policy it has miserably failed. What was intended for the benefit of the workmen has phrased their curse; the honest industrious operative, has been led into practises, which he must have revolted from; he has been the tool and the slave of the designing and

intriguing demagogue in humble life; and has been led, step by step, from the bare assertion of his own rights, to the commission of crimes of every scale of enormity. It is a truth that more outrages have been committed, and more murders have been perpetrated; by the workmen of England since the repeal of the combination laws, than was ever before known to stain the character of the same class of people; and, after all, they have not attained their ends."²⁹ The owners were now bringing the dispute to a climax, victimizing left right and centre, stocking the pits with blacklegs, and continuing widespread evictions. They delighted in absolute coercion coupled with a moral legitimacy to stamp out trade unionism. Could they not point to its awesome results? The pitmen returned to work (where it was available) at the end of the month, bulldozed into submission. All along the route blazed the lesson of William Jobling "...at once smear, threat and salutary example. If the great idea behind the union was to be burned out then there was no better way to do it through a figure which would strike fear and terror into the hearts and minds of all who passed by, all who read and heard of it. That was why Jobling's body, pinioned in iron, was hung higher than Harman's over the great water wastes of the Slake: as an instrument of murder, the victim being an idea."³⁰

1852 ended with the pitmen in the status quo ante, weighed down under the bond, its attendant fines, and no unionism. The irony of the year had been the attempts by the miners to keep the peace. Their 'Ranter' leaders had implored them to be law-abiding, yet had failed to recognize the way in which

the owners stacked the law against their employees. The colliers in retaining order allowed the capitalist class to hit at them with alacrity. The violence of 1832 stemmed chiefly from the one side. The twist was that having been crushed by the direct action of the owners, the pitmen accepted the contemporary opinion that it was violence from themselves which had doomed them to failure. Such an interpretation meant that the pitmen shelved force as a weapon virtually permanently. From 1832 the characteristic of the struggles of the Durham miners has been a marked antipathy towards compulsion. In turn, such an explanation consolidated as leaders the Primitive Methodists who, however militant in oratory, were advocates of abiding the law of the land.

The defeat of 1832 did nothing to improve relations between master and man. Nor did the owners make any attempt at amelioration, rather aggravating the running sore by pursuing a series of wage reductions against the dispirited pitmen. The colliers acquiesced temporarily, but were acutely conscious of the injustices done to them. They began to look around for an alternative approach to better conditions. Some miners took to Primitive Methodism in these years, but it was a contending variant. The sect gained much respect due to its early leadership and its apparently verified prediction that violence would always fail in a strike, but the pitmen who took up its banner did not shed their aggressive calls for a better life. The new Primitive Methodists demanded justice for the pitmen, but this was to be achieved by a soccer

trade unionism. At the same time; many colliers began to feel the embrace of Chartism as it spread to the North-East, often bringing a coherence to the militancy of the rank-and-file. Towards the end of the 1830's Durham became an active centre for physical force Chartism.³¹ The ultra-left Harney came North in 1839 to find Newcastle ripe for propaganda.³²

Whatever was the contribution of the 'shopocracy'³³ it was the surrounding pit villages which supplied the fodder and bite to make the region feared nationally.³⁴ Chartist meetings became typified with slogans like; "He that hath no sword, let him sell his shirt and buy one" and such exhortations were put into practise at Winlaton where workers started to manufacture arms.³⁵ In July 1839 the high-point was reached for local militant Chartists. The call for a National Strike was answered in the local colliery villages where "the strike was almost total, an estimated nine-tenths of the miners coming out,"³⁶ while there were riots,³⁷ and near riots³⁸ in Newcastle and Sunderland. The militant politics of the Coalfield became reflected in the journal "Northern Liberator", the most extreme of the Chartist publications,³⁹ which managed a distribution throughout the region.

However, in arguing that physical force Chartism gained a considerable backing from Durham pitmen it is necessary to closely examine the contradictions within Chartism itself, which were undoubtedly introduced into the region in view of their centrality in the movement. The problem with Chartism was that, in uniting divergent groups, it entailed a streak of sectarianism which was to contribute immensely to

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its downfall. the political philosophy of Chartism, enshrined in the Charter, was a thing rather different from the reality of the social movement. The programme had been devised principally by William Lovett, the leader of the 'moral' force section. Especially significant is that, given the peculiar outlook and intellectual stature of the Durham Primitive Methodists, this outline would appeal particularly to that group of North-Easterners who found in it a marked congruity with their world-view. Indeed Lovett's preface could have been the work of the Ranters;

"Being desirous of exerting the humble abilities God has given us towards procuring for our brethren equality of political rights, and placing them in such a social condition as shall best develop and preserve all their faculties, physical, moral, and intellectual, we have presumed to put forth the following pages for their consideration...Believing that the proposed act of parliament, entitled 'The People's Charter', is calculated to secure to all classes of society their just share of political power, and forming one of the most important steps to all social improvement, we are desirous of seeing the energies of all peacefully concentrated to cause that measure to be enacted as one of the laws of our country."⁴⁰

It is scarcely surprising to read of Primitive Methodists lending support to the Chartists in view of such an articulation. But the crucial point is that this support was qualitatively different from that volunteered by the grass-roots pitman. At this level the appeal of Chartism was not as a political programme, but as a social movement which

personified everyday grievances. It was the revolutionary mood that made Chartism a danger, not the particular demands of the Charter. The appeal of Chartism to the pitman was not the hope for a vote, but that the working man could grasp what was his due. This was the essence of the Chartist movement, a groping towards an attack on capitalist society. Herein lay its danger and the reason why; "not a single article of Chartist policy had the remotest chance of becoming law until the movement had expired. It was only when Chartism had ceased to be a name of terror that the process of giving effect to its programme was taken up by the middle-class Parliaments of the later Victorian age."⁴¹ It was the intention of Chartism that threatened the social order. It lay in the working-man who acted against his superiors in a call for fundamental changes.⁴²

Chartism was to peter out in the North-East in the early 1840's following disasters on a national level, but the

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 * I ought to add here that though implicit in my account is the notion that force was essential if the Chartists intended introducing fundamental changes, I find myself in considerable agreement with R.Challinor's observation on the twin paths of 'moral'+ 'physical' force Chartism; "Both these tendencies represented a dead-end simply because, given the conditions then prevailing, there was no way forward. To petition Parliament proved to be futile. It was done on three occasions-1839, 1842+ 1848-and each time the Commons threw out the petitions by large majorities. Yet, if that was a waste of time, then the only other course of action would result in a waste of lives. The army prudently provided a display of its sophisticated hardware to dampen the ardour of the revolutionaries+give them some idea of the bloodbath that would await them."

R.Challinor, "The Rise of the Bureaucracy", "International Socialism" June/July 1971 (48) p.16.

formal dwindling in face of governmental repression did not extinguish the influence of the movement. Right up to the 1844 dispute can be seen the confused and often contradictory stimulus of Chartist ideas. It was largely from the Chartist movement that the first national miners' union (the Mining Association) gestated, carrying a membership of upwards of 100,000 and having its bastion in the Durham coalfield. Formed in Wakefield in 1841 the association mushroomed rapidly. Connexions with Chartism assisted a national development and particularly important were the militant Chartists Roberts, the miners' attorney and Martin Jude, the founder of the organization who lived in Newcastle. The Durham colliers rapidly raised £500 for the law fund of the Association but the thrust of the union was to attack the established order. The enthusiasm for an improved livelihood enunciated in a confederacy of Chartist influences roused the pitmen to regain a former militancy.

The opening years of the 1840's evidenced a menacing hostility in the county. The Royal Commission of 1842 observed the opprobrium of the pitmen, remarking that they; "will steal any little thing they can lay hands upon, especially if it belongs to the owner or master."⁴³ Managers spoken to noted that; "the Chartists have given a great deal of trouble",⁴⁴ and the investigators themselves could not avoid a conclusion centring on the mood of distrustful animosity; "A prominent feature in his (pitman's) character is jealousy of his superiors, and deep-rooted suspicion of his employers. It would seem to be assumed by him as a truth, amply estab-

lished by experience, that his master can have no desire to benefit him; and any expression of such a wish appears to him as the mere forerunner and disguise of an unpalatable proposition. If then their suspicions of the motives of their employers were deeply found, assuredly it was but a step further when their doubts of the benevolent objects of the Commissioners grew almost into certainties of unbelief. In the ideas of some, the rulers of the land would never have contrived a mission to their colonies, and an examination into the minutest particulars of their labour and their gains, without a view to the imposition of a tax upon their resources; and they were deterred that they themselves would afford no facilities and no information that would conduce to their own detriment. Even where evidence could at last be elicited from them, it was so intermingled with extraneous remarks, explanatory of their opinions upon politics and public and private affairs, foreign to the questions addressed to them, that it was essential that a large portion of it should be 'laid out' by a process analagous to their own separation."⁴⁵

The lines were drawn in Durham provoked by the Chartist experience and stimulated by the oppressive conditions at the collieries.

The crisis ended in 1844. Against the wishes of the leadership of the Association, who feared for the survival of the union,⁴⁶ the Northumberland and Durham pitmen plunged for action. They could no longer be held in restraint. The contracts were withdrawn on the 5th of April, to which the owners replied by withdrawing the horses from the pits and

preparing to starve the men into submission. There were a number of stocks of coal which could be sold at artificially inflated prices in such a way that some owners could actually benefit from a strike.⁴⁷ The pitmen were out for eighteen weeks, eventually compelled to return by sheer want, under worse terms than they had begun with, the owners having demanded wage reductions and stricter conditions shortly after the dispute commenced. There were mass evictions, blacklegs imported from as far as Ireland and refusals to grant parish relief to the families of strikers, in the armoury of the owners. Londonderry's extreme action epitomized the stance of the coal magnates.⁴⁸ In answer to the intimidation of such attacks the pitmen were astoundingly quiescent. They had learned the lesson of 1832 and both groups of spokesmen urged observance of order. The Primitives because of its moral correctness, and the Chartists as it would give the owners an excuse to use the army to smash the union. W.P. Roberts; "made an eloquent appeal for non-violence. He said the owners had resorted to mass evictions for two reasons: first in an attempt to coerce the strikers into submission and, second, to provoke disturbances. This would give them a justification to use the troops. The master would be delighted to employ savage repression, slaughtering many and getting others transported."⁴⁹ In taking such a position from necessity, the radical leadership bolstered the stronghold of the Primitive Methodists' leadership which was particularly to the fore in Durham.⁵⁰ The colliers were constrained to stoically bear the brunt of the masters'

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aggression. The latter strove to find a legitimate reason to permit them undertaking mass arrests, the standard tack being to accuse the pitmen in the press and in the process to undermine the real enemy, trade unionism. Threats in the vein of April 19th were the order of the day. "The 'strike' of the pitmen still exists, and violence and intimidation continue to characterize the proceedings of the deluded men. Everywhere we hear of parties being desirous of going to work, who are prevented by a dread of the violence of the unionists. But this cannot be permitted any longer. In aid of the civil power the military has been called in. Two troops of cavalry are already in this city; whilst a party of soldiers and a detachment of infantry are stationed at South Hetton, and reinforcements are expected which will be placed in situations where their services are likely to be required."⁵¹

As the dispute lengthened into months the hold of the Primitive Methodists was increasingly established. The lull in Chartism since 1841 had given the religious further credibility as leaders, added to which was the undoubted radical stance of the 'Ranters'. The pitmen in 1844 evidenced a confused amalgam of sympathy to militant Chartism oscillating to the prudence of the Primitive Methodists. The Durham leadership was steadfastly urging an observance of law while the owners actively advanced against the pitmen. They "manifested great anxiety, from the very outset, to conduct the contest in peace and good order, and with a view to carrying out this plan, they lost no opportunity of bringing the importance of proper conduct before the men"

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whenever they were assembled together in anything like numbers. With them, it had to be a fair stand-up battle between Right and Left and they wanted no desperate or violent conduct on the part of the men as auxiliaries in the struggle."⁵² This was the most prominent characteristic of the Ranters in 1844, the apparent contradiction in their militant demand for justice and their constant refusal to adopt force as a useful tactic. The result of their belief in sobriety was the same as the rationale of Roberts. Had the law been flagrantly broken the authorities, acting overtly in the interests of the owners, would have smashed the union. The colliers were caught in a cleft stick. As things turned out, the insistence on peace merely prolonged the Association's existence until 1848. Whatever the sincere pleas of the union leadership in Durham, the managers' press scapegoated the Association by reviving the Chartist links. "Mr. Richardson does not deny that the agitators of the strike are all avowed Chartists, but he 'assures us' that 'not one of the leaders, or at least the officers, are allowed to inter-mix Chartist, Whig, Tory, or any other political principles whatever, with their advocacy of the rights of the Association'...We need no better proof of the movement being in connection with Chartism, than the fact of its being promoted by such men as Beasley, Daniels, Roberts, Byrne, and the whole tribe of Chartist orators, and Chartist conspirators, in this district."⁵³ All respectable opinion was fearful of the Chartists, hence the owners' activities received little criticism.⁵⁴

For the owners it was an easy task to find excuses to quell the strikers. There certainly were amongst the pitmen some revolutionary elements,⁵⁵ though the majority were striving for a structured ideology where none was available. Charles Carr of Seanill reported that throughout the crisis the colliers were swayed by Chartist literature, to the detriment of the firm's library which; "fell off at least twelve months before the strike, when the men's minds got filled with what they were told by their leaders. They then read nothing but the Miners' Journal and the Miners' Advocate and the Chartist papers, such as the Northern Star. The library remains still, but is little used..."⁵⁶

Primitive Methodists without doubt took a prominent role in articulating the dissent of the pitmen. Members of the sect had much sympathy with the Chartist philosophy, even to the extent of one preacher at Earsdon and Backworth pits reading the 'Northern Star' to his congregation. The drawback was that the Ranters would rarely square their ideals with militant action against the owners. Their version of Protestantism in 1844 had much in common with Chartism but it was peculiarly Lutheran in its stress on sticking to the judicial orders. This stance took much of the bite out of the movement. Nevertheless, it did not prevent the Primitives co-ordinating with the less vociferous Chartists, so achieving a situation in 1844 in which; "The people were entirely under the influence of Chartist leaders, delegates from the 'Colliers' Union', and their local preachers, chiefly of the Primitive Methodists."⁵⁷ Again the Ranters

were accused as the "worst agitators" in South-West Durham,⁵⁸ and the manager of Seaton Delaval pointed to the extremes to which the sect could adapt their religion to coincide with abuse of blacklegs.⁵⁹

The dispute of 1844 marked the culmination of the anti-pathy between master and man in the county. The owners had commenced the affair with a clear view of their opponent and no scruples about marshalling both legal and illegal force to overcome. The enmity had been returned in equal measure by the pitmen, but in crucial respects the miners began at a disadvantage. Militancy had achieved a peak and there was little danger of breaks in the ranks, but there were grave shortcomings in the miners' conception of the struggle. For a start, they firmly adhered to the view that any form of violence would end in their sure defeat (though their hatred for blacklegs even transcended their peaceful resolutions). This was in face of the standard infliction of institutionalized violence from the owners. The pitmen in rejecting all compulsion took an immediately defensive position in a hopelessly uphill struggle against immensely wealthy opponents who were far removed from the realities of possible starvation. Furthermore, although amongst the colliers there were men of foresight who envisaged an alternative to the system under which they were yoked, the most prominent ideologies were those calling for justice to the pitman. This group was particularly articulated by the radical Primitive Methodists whose views coincided considerably with those of the 'moral' force Chartists. This call for justice was a

plea for a metaphysical utopia, quite removed from the facts of coal economics. All would be well, according to this creed, when the tyrannical owner was brought to a Godly state. There was conceived no notion of inherent conflict between wage labour and capital. On the contrary, the 'Miners' Advocate', perhaps the most striking illustration of this coalescence of militant trade unionism and capitalist hegemony, encouraged a policy of industrial action which would work within the boundaries of the status quo. There was no searching for a fight when it implored; "our employers (to)...examine our principles. Ask what it is that has reduced your profits and our labour? We say over-production and competition. When we worked less hours we were better paid, and we are certain that your profits were greater. Aid us to protect your capital and ours from the inevitable ruin which must succeed the present state of things if they be not altered. We wish to be at peace with you; but there cannot be peace or happiness where men and masters are at continual variance. We are not so ignorant as to believe that he who sinks his capital should not be remunerated. We think he should. But while we admit this, we claim the same protection for our capital, namely, our labour. Do not then offer any obstruction to our simple plan of amelioration and protection."⁶⁰ The owners shared no such naiveté. They knew that a strong organization was a danger to profitability. Predictably, they fought it tooth and nail so long as it displayed even the remnants of its early vehemence.

Notes:

1. Sidney Webb, "The story of the Durham Miners", Lab. Pub. Co. 1921 estimated that up to 1921 100,000 miners in Britain had been killed.

See P.E.H. Hair, "Mortality from Violence in British Coal Mines 1800-1850. p.545-561 "Econ. hist. Review" Sec. Series (XXI), 1968.

R.F. Wearmouth "Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes 1850-1900." Edgar Backus, Leicester 1954.

"Returns from the coal mines showed that at least one out of every eight colliers meets with a violent death, and that out of 250,000 colliers now at work in Great Britain 30,000 are certain to be killed, unless the present negligence be remedied.." p.143.

Durham was particularly prone to explosions which caused immense loss of life. See tables for years 1750 to 1849 (1873), op.cit. P.151. Fynes.

Of course, the figures of death cloud the day-to-day carnage.

The best account available remains that of Engels: "The Condition of the Working Class in England" (1844). Published O.U.P. 1958, see especially p.276-283 for an horrific chronicle of illnesses ranging from developmental ailments such as bandy legs, stunted growth, delayed pubescence, knock-knees, spiral deformities, splayed feet, to rheumatism, arthritis, premature death, most of respiratory diseases, heart diseases, stomach ailments, ruptures, etc.

Zola's "Germinal" 1885 Penguin 1954 - p.24 & 26, particularly the portrayal of old Bonnemort is strikingly authentic.

Predictably, however, the contemporary Tory press questioned

the extent of the dangers, e.g. "D.C.A. September 11th 1863, with unassailable logic argued:-

"The North of England pitman lives, on an average, 3 years more than the aggregate of Englishmen; whilst his life is longer than the Cornish miners by 8 years, exceeds that of the Staffordshire miner by 9 years and is longer by 12 years than those who work in the mines in Wales. Thus it seems that there is nothing in the occupation or habits of the miner of this locality detrimental to health. He may stoop and have a sallow and sickly look, he may labour in constrained positions until he twists his body out of its proper form yet he lives longer than most men and only a year less than those who reside in the healthiest districts of the Kingdom.."

2. The infamous Bond was the contract entered between the master and men, tying the parties usually for a year. In fact, it was much in favour of the owners, since, for example, they could lay off men - without pay - in times of depression, but if the workmen took other work they were in danger of prosecution, having broken the law. Similarly, if the pitmen undertook industrial action such as a strike they broke the bond and hence were liable to imprisonment.
3. For example, in 1844 at Tyne Main Colliery,

"A man sent nine corves to bank, eight of them were laid out because they were not chalked. He is a newer in a place two yards wide. One part of the place was bright coal and the other rusty.. When the coals were rusty the man was to chalk them; when bright, he had not to do so. This man

worked for 1/0d. and there was 2/-d. kept off him, so that he laboured all day for nothing and had to pay the masters 0d. for allowing him to do so.." (quoted in Fynes, op.cit. p.55)

4. The standard shift until 1844 was 12 hours, though "this is true only of the well-regulated mines. There are still in this district (S. Durham) collieries in which the hours of work are extremely long.." "Children's Employment Comm" 1842 William Clowes & Son. Children of the age of 4, 5 and 6 were common in South Durham. "The returns of the Schedules for 14 collieries in this district show that out of 235 trappers there are 135 under 10 years of age and 100 above that age. There is, therefore, a decided majority under ten."(ibid. p.16) Further, "... it is by no means uncommon in some mines in this district and occasionally boys and young men work in the pits, what is termed double and treble shifts, that is, for 24 or 36 consecutive hours, and some instances are stated of their having worked quadruple shifts, that is, for 48 consecutive hours, a period which it is scarcely credible that the human frame can sustain such labour" (ibid. p.116).
5. This, if not owned by the master, would be in the hands of the viewer. Pitmen were often compelled to buy food there - at exorbitant prices - and then have their pay stopped to pay the debts. The worst collieries gave the wages in kind from the Tommy shop's supplies.
6. They had organized a petition of grievances for the king, but "... the petition was never presented because men were cajoled

and bullied into withdrawing their signatures from the document" (p.2. Metcalfe "History of the D.M.A.", Durham 1947, unpublished).

7. "From time to time the men rose in rebellion against working any longer in a certain pit and often after remaining idle for a week or more and sometimes after committing a number of extravagances, such as throwing the corves down the shaft, or upsetting the gin which was used for drawing the coals to bank, would return again to the dangerous and unhealthy labour, none the better for their resistance." Fynes, op.cit. p.10
8. For example, "In the beginning of 1696, a scheme was in agitation, between the king of France and the abdicated King James, to make a descent upon Great Britain, in the vicinity of Newcastle upon Tyne. It was stated, in a memorandum drawn up on this occasion, that most of the inhabitants of the northern districts were Jacobites; that the cavalry might be easily mounted in this county; and that 20,000 carriages and cart-horses, which carried coals from the mines to Newcastle and Sunderland, would be useful for carrying the baggage of the army." Bell Collection, Vol.7; p.79.
9. Rev.Charles Thorp of Ryton to Home Secretary, 1819. Quoted by Norman McCord, "Tyneside Discontents and Peterloo" p.99, "Northern History", Vol.2, 1967, p.91-111.
10. These were "A Voice from the Coal Mines" ("or a Plain Statement of the Various Grievances of the Pitmen of the Tyne and Wear... addressed to the Coalowners, their Head Agents and a Sympathising Public, by the Colliers of the United Association of Durham and Northumberland"), Vol.2, Bell Collection, and

"A candid Appeal to the Coalowners and Viewers of Collieries on the Tyne and Wear, including a copy of the Collier's Bond, with Animadversions thereon and a series of proposed Amendments, from the Committee of the Colliers' United Association!"

11. See R. Page Arnot, "The Miners: A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, 1889-1910"; George Allen & Unwin 1949 Londonderry wrote; "...the Union of the pitmen is entirely established, and if the Coalowners do not resist their Combination, they must surrender at Discretion to any Laws the Union propose'. The coalowners, however, did resist: indeed, 'would not recognize or treat with such a body of men' and the union disappears from record." p.35.

12. The agitation for the Reform Bill had taken the form of an alliance of the new working classes and the utilitarian bourgeoisie. The outcome of Grey's measures was to split the alliance and leave the masses in a vacuum. The two groups had both called for reform, but their interpretations of the concept were markedly different. The working classes had wanted more material freedoms, while the bourgeois elements desired incorporation into the political machine.

cf. "Concession or Cure: The Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act." D.C. Moore, "Hist. Journal" lx, 1, 1966, p. 39-59

"The ministers were not trying to provide a means by which the forces generated by industrialization could be transmitted into the political world. Nor were they trying to increase that political individualism which, to many men, ... was synonymous with anarchy. Rather, they were trying to prevent those factors which they could not control from destroying

the existing balance of power and the traditional forms of social power." p.43.

13. cf. E. Hobsbawm, "Age of Revolution", Mentor 1962. Observes "something not unlike a revolutionary situation might have developed in 1831-32.." p.139

E.P. Thompson, "The Making of the English Working Class", Gollancz 1963; "...in the autumn of 1831 and in the 'days of May' Britain was within an ace of revolution.." p.817

14. "D.C.A.", Dec. 9th 1831

15. 15th May 1831, quoted p.11 by John Oxberry, "Thomas Hepburn of Felling: What he did for the Miners", Gateshead 1938.

(Copy in Durham University Library Pamphlet Box L331.8)

16. Quoted in Fynes, op.cit. p.21, written April 1831 from Cowpen Colliery.

17. Meeting on Newcastle Town Moor, March 21st 1831.

18. For an account of incidents see Fynes, op.cit. p.19-24.

Just one example from the Summer Assizes at Durham in 1831, (Bell Collection Vol.2, p.357) illustrates how ugly were the day-to-day assaults. At Mount Moor Colliery a 'safety' man was ducked, stripped, severely beaten and then covered in cow dung.

19. "D.C." 16th April 1831; The miners are "the dupes, ... of a set of artful and designing individuals who are, indeed, styled their 'delegates', but who live on the credulity of their victims."

20. Of course, this is the weight of Anderson's remark; "...the tragedy of the first proletariat was not, as has often been said, that it was immature, it was rather that, it was in a crucial sense premature. Its maximum ardour and insurgency

coincided with the minimum availability of socialism as a structured ideology. Consequently it paid the price of the forerunner."

P. Anderson, "Origins of the Present Crisis", p.21 in Anderson + Blackburn eds. "Towards Socialism" Cornell U.P. 1966. (My debt to this article and those of Nairn, rings throughout this study.)

21. Among the leaders that can be definitely identified as Primitive Methodists are the following; Thomas Hepburn, Benjamin Embleton, Charles Parkinson, Ralf Atchinson, William Hammond, Ralf Heron, John Iley, George Charlton, James Wilson and John Richardson.

See R.F.Wearmouth, "Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England, 1800-1850", Epworth Press 1937, p.250

22. Thomas Hepburn, quoted in Metcalfe op.cit. 1947, p.7

23. cf. for example, "D.C.A." July 6th 1852 under the headline, "Outrages in Colliery Districts".

24. Appeal from the pitmen, Bell Collection Vol.2, p.280

25. See Norman McCord, op.cit. 1967;

"Fairless was an indefatigable magistrate, closely connected with the coal and the shipping interests, and very much on the look out for signs of disaffection among the workers" p104 and Fynes, op.cit.

"..on 16th May (1851), a number of men on strike attempted to prevent several bound men from going to their work at South Shields Colliery. The bound men insisted on going to carry out their contract, and others, belonging to the colliery, assisted them. There was every prospect of a serious riot resulting,

when Mr. Fairless, a magistrate, appeared upon the scene with a party of marines, and the men on strike at once prudently left the field in possession of the workmen." p.22-23

26. See "Report on the Trials of the Pitmen and Others, Durham Summer Assizes, 1832." (Copy Durham Uni. Lib. L343.1).

27. Bell Collection, Vol. 2, p. 537.

28. Fynes, op. cit. p. 34.

29. "D.C.A." August 10th 1832.

30. Sid Chaplin, "The Smell of Sunday Dinner", p. 98 Frank Graham, Newcastle 1971.

31. That the pitmen took to a physical force approach is not surprising. Compare for example, the following observation; "Merthyr Tydvil (read Durham), the centre of a district where a little group of ironmasters had made princely fortunes, had no lighting, water, or drainage. Here the King's writ scarcely ran, for all the laws against truck were disregarded. It is not surprising, therefore, that a miner who slept with fifteen other persons in a room in Merthyr Tydvil and worked for a master who lived in the palace of Cyfarthfa Castle, was often a different kind of Chartist from the London mechanic for whom the injustices of life were less outrageous and who looked to patient and steady education as the true remedy for England's wrongs." J.L.+B. Hammond, "Age of the Chartists, 1832-1854", p. 270, Longmans 1930.

32. "The fact was that Newcastle Chartism was dominated by extreme advocates of physical force, and the town was to prove one of the most revolutionary localities in England." p. 43. in A.R. Schoyen, "The Chartist Challenge" Hein. 1958.

53. "The shopocracy were the most articulate of the disillusioned liberals of the thirties. Prominent in the unions of 1831 and 1832, they had been the party workers of municipal politics but were denied a share in the spoils; at least in the north-east they had reacted by contributing to the Chartist movement, and in the forties and fifties had been the body of the ratepayer and sanitary associations. It was the shopocracy rather than the working class - depressed or prosperous - which had the opportunity to sustain a radical movement in successive elections."

T.J.Nossiter, "Shopkeeper Radicalism in the 19th century", p.411 in T.J.Nossiter, A.E.Hanson, S.Rokkan eds. "Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences: Essays in memory of Peter Nettl", Faber and Faber 1972.

See also D.Phil thesis, "Elections and Political Behaviour in County Durham and Newcastle, 1832-1874" T.J.Nossiter, Oxford '68

54. "The North-East was not only one of the best organized regions of the Chartist movement, with strong links extending to villages throughout the area, but it was also dominated by advocates of physical force Chartism." p.12 in R.Challinor + B.Ripley, "The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists", Lawrence and Wishart 1968.

55. Schoyen, op.cit. p.42

56. Ibid, p.84

57. Ibid, p.80. There was a riot in Newcastle on 26th July 1839, but; "more threatening still was an outbreak on 30th July, which developed into a hard-fought struggle - later called the 'Battle of the Forth' - involving some 6,000 Chartists,

half of whom were armed, and a force of two companies of infantry, a troop of dragoons, and 500 police and special constables. This was almost on a scale of regular warfare. And when it is noted that the closest reinforcement to Newcastle was a small contingent of troops sixty miles away at Carlisle, and that the Chartists involved were only a portion of the thousands in the colliery and iron-working villages clustered around Newcastle, it is hardly overstatement to describe the situation as being potentially revolutionary."

38. July 9th 1839 was a meeting of the Durham County Chartist Association in Sunderland; "It (the meeting) proceeded as planned but in its midst a long train of railway wagons drew up alongside the moor and discharged a load of men from the colliery districts (about 1,000)...The men came from Thornley, Haswell, and South Hetton, all collieries, in the recently developed and more unsettled east Durham coalfield...They (miners) set off for the Sunderland meeting, stopping at Haswell and South Hetton to collect more followers. On the way they forcibly took possession of wagons and trains on the Durham and Sunderland Railway and compelled the engine drivers to run them into town, arriving with sensational effect." p3956 in W.E. Maehl, "Chartist Disturbances in N.E. England 1839", "Int. Rev. of Social Hist." (8), 1962, p.389-414.

39. R.G. Gammage, "History of the Chartist Movement, 1837-1854", Newcastle, Browne and Browne 1894, p.18

40. Preface to "Chartism: A New Organization of the People", W. Lovett + J. Collins, intro. by Asa Briggs, New York, Leicester University Press 1969. 1st. published 1840.

41. M. Lovell, "The Chartist Movement", p. 302, Man. U. P. 1950, 1st. ed. 1912.

42. Asa Briggs, "Local Background of Chartism";

"The People's Charter was the work of Lovett, but when its virtues began to be extolled on the platform at mass meetings or at torchlight gatherings on the northern moors it was being used in a very different way from that which the L.W.M.A. had first intended. All the social grievances of a discontented Britain were poured into the political vessel... Its basic strength lay in its power to unify discontented people in all parts of the country." p. 25 in "Chartist Studies", Asa Briggs ed. Macmillan 1967, first publ. 1959.

43. 1842 Royal Commission, op.cit., p. 661

44. Ibid, p. 150

45. Ibid, p. 515

See also; "Boys of 17 or 18... were repeatedly found to be either astonishingly ignorant or wilfully stupid; and although subjected to repeated interrogations, could or would give utterance to nothing more than some sweeping condemnation of their labour, and clamorous declaration of the insufficiency of their remuneration... Nearly all the notions of the parents, and commonly of the boys, respecting belief, resolved themselves into an anticipation of an increase of pay, or a diminution of labour for the same remuneration. An abbreviation of the duration of daily labour, an increase of the demand for and supply of the means of education, improved habits, orderly and moral conduct, if hinted at, were contemplated by too large a number of all ages, as so many illusions employed to amuse and delude them into an assent to some arrangement

46. cf. Challinor and Ripley, op.cit. p.117

47. See D. Large, "The Third Marquess of Londonderry and the End of Regulation, 1844-1845", "Durham Uni. Journal" 1958, Vol. 51 p.5

and Welbourne, op.cit. 1923, p.20-21

Add to view that the owners could benefit from a strike,

Colonel Sir Hew Ross, in charge of military forces in Durham

in 1831-32, wrote to inform his commanding officer; "that so

far from the coal owners being anxious to come to an immediate

accommodation with their workmen the very reverse is the case,

they consider it for their interest to enhance the price of

coal by a temporary stand." quoted p.71 in "The North-East

Engineers' Strikes of 1871", E. Allen, J.F. Clarke, N. McCord,

+D.J. Rowe, Newcastle, Frank Graham 1971.

48. cf. Metcalfe, op.cit., p.8-9 and

Fynes, op.cit. Chaps.9-20 for a detailed account of 1844 strike

49. Challinor and Ripley, op.cit., p.135 and

"Miners' Advocate", No.1, Dec.2nd 1843;

"The masters have, it would seem, determined to drive the men

to desperation, by insolence and base oppression; and it would

appear that the police have done their best to irritate the

men to acts of violence. We do hope they will be disappointed.

We earnestly entreat the men to keep the peace. Let no act of

the masters or police cause them to break the law. If they

wish to succeed they must refrain from any act having a

tendency to disturb the peace."

50. Among the Durham leadership were at least; Mark Dent, Robert

Archer, John Tulip and Thomas Pratt who were all extremely active in guiding the pitmen. Wearmouth, op.cit. 1957, p:230-31.

51. "D.C.A." April 19th 1844, see also April 12th+May 17th 1844; "The owners enter into a voluntary agreement with each other, and no one is forced to enter into that agreement. Should anyone object to the conditions proposed to him he can act upon his own responsibility. But it is far different with the members of the pimen's union. Once embarked in it, he is no longer entitled to the exercise of free will, but becomes the bound slave of the leaders of the union, and any attempt to act upon his own responsibility would be immediately visited by the threats of physical violence; if not by violence itself. What can be more tyrannical or worse in principle than the refusal of the unionists to allow the application of men who desirous of returning to their work, because they have nothing to complain of, merely because all the collieries cannot come to an agreement at the same time?"

52. Fynes, op.cit. p.63

53. Bell Collection, Vol.2, p.265

54. Though the July issue of "Punch" was mildly censorious of Lord Londonderry.

55. The following letter appeared in the May 18th 1844 edition of the "Miner's Advocate" No.13, which deserves full quotation "Fellow men,- We have arrived at a period in the history of our trade which calls for the serious consideration of every man connected with our Association, therefore, without further comment, I say, Miners, and all that are employed in the bowels of the earth, beware, I say, beware! A very short time

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will fix our doom, either for the better or the worse - if not for the better the fault will be our own, for now we have it in our power to better our condition and free ourselves from slavery! Brethren, you may be ready to ask now this boasted of liberty is to be attained, and I would say, that I know of no other way but by union. It is union alone that will better our condition, for union, on an extensive scale, has raised our own empire to a greatness if not inviolable, at least powerful among the nations of the earth - by union the tyrant of France and terror of Europe was made to lay his blood-stained crown at the feet of our own conquerors - and by union many of our stupendous works are begun and brought to a profitable close. Witness the various companies throughout Britain, and surely none will deny that if union and co-operation is good for all these it will also be good for the Miners - if union be good for the masters, it must also be good for the men, and by following out the principle of union we will alleviate our sufferings. What a pity it is that such a class of men as the miners should thus be taken advantage of by a parcel of tyrants who never wrought for a shilling in their lives. What a pity it is that a class of men, above all others the most useful, should be so little thought of, for by the sweat of the Miner's brow, the whole trade of Britain is kept in motion, nay, defiance is bid to the winds of heaven - see our steam-boats how proudly they plough the watery main to the most distant ports of the world and enter their appointed ports, with their cargoes, in the time specified, whether the wind is fair or not. By the sweat of the

Miner's brow London is brought, by our railways, within a few hours travel of our doors, so that the merchant can turn his money twice in the same time he formerly would have taken to make a purchase - by the sweat of the Miner's brow our streets and shops are beautifully illuminated and all our factories set in motion; even those that are propelled by water are obliged to us for light and heat - in a word, by the sweat of our brows the whole trade of the globe is kept in motion, and could by us be stopped; why then, should such a class be no better than beasts of burden. Arouse, then, my fellow-men, to action, and let us not our silence give consent to our own degradation. Brethren, the time has at length arrived when Miners must be up and doing - when they must either assert their rights like men or at once tamely sink into the arms of a despotism as cowardly as it is cruel. No tyranny more treacherous, no conduct more vile, has been displayed by the greatest monsters that ever appeared in human shape to disgrace our world, that has been displayed by some of the coalmasters of this country for some time back. What then is to be done? - how is our trade to be saved from ruin, and ourselves from destruction? Nothing, we believe, can save us but to hurl the despots from their seats of tyranny so that justice may be given to all and injustice to none. But one thing is necessary in order to accomplish this mighty achievement, and that is, one vigorous co-operation of all our oppressed Brethren. I, therefore, call upon you all, individually, to be up and doing. Unite, therefore, and be free! - act and you shall conquer! - be loyal, but be brave!

and then we will convince the greatest tyrant that lives that till he be able to extinguish yonder sun, to draw the planets from their orbits, yea, till he is able to pluck truth and justice from the throne of the Eternal, he is unable to awe, into abject slavery, a people who know their rights and are determined to have them. Brethren, the tyrants, at this moment, triumph over us; writhing in our chains. Tyranny and oppression defies truth and justice and dares them to be content. If our freedom be worth having it is worth a struggle - it is within our reach now if we have the courage to seize it, but if we refuse to exert ourselves now it may be lost, and so far as we know for ever. Let us assemble, then, Brethren, for freedom - claim our own and our children's rights - and let us be free as the wind that blows over the graves of our forefathers..."

MYSTERIOUS

Coxhoe, April, 1844.

56. Report on "The Mining Districts, 1846" by Seymour Tremenheere, Bell Collection, Vol.10, p.101
57. Ibid, p.99
58. Ibid, p.97
59. Ibid, p.99

"The three leading men in the strike here...were Primitive Methodists and local preachers. They frequently assembled the people, from 100 to 400 together, on the road-side, and offered up prayers for the success of the strike, and also that the men who were brought from a distance, to work in a colliery, the 'black-legs' as they called them, might be

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injured, either lamed or killed; and they rejoiced when any-
thing did happen to them...These men...encouraged the people
to rejoice at these accidents, and met the men themselves,
and abused them..."

60. "Miners' Advocate", No. 7, Feb. 24th 1844.

1844 - 1869

"Let us not be surprised to see a single society riven, at a given moment, by divergent or even contradictory currents. Does it not happen constantly that the individual is divided against himself; that one part of him is pulled in one direction, while all the rest is pushed in another direction? Now these divergencies, indeed, even these contradictions, are perhaps more normal in society than in the individual. Above all they are inevitable in periods of crisis and transition."

"Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings" trans. A.Giddens, C.U.P.1972

The crushing defeat of 1844 left the Durham miners disillusioned and lethargic. Unionism was floored for the next twenty-five years and its resurrection then only permitted on the terms of the managers. The National Association, despite attempts at revival in the 1845-46 period, had petered out by the end of the decade. Agitation on a county level was not experienced until 1863. Meanwhile the pitmen's grievances were limited to occasional remonstrations at the pit-head. A monthly bond had been established after the dispute which aided the employers to root out unionists, but it boomeranged in that it allowed the disaffected colliers to leave at short notice. The walk-outs were a reflection of the miseries at grass-roots, while the owners were extremely inconvenienced by an unreliable workforce, particularly when production soared after 1845 and created a shortage of labour.

A deep-felt anomy¹ descended over the North-East pitmen. All their efforts at unionization having failed, a pervading

scepticism towards any large-scale confrontation seized the men. It was not so much a question of the colliers' accepting their lot and remaining acquiescent in face of the employers' offensives, but more a loss of faith in organized struggle. They stagnated in a void wherein they could envisage no way of retaliation other than localized, usually spontaneous, action. In addition, the Durham miners had another obstacle in the triumphant owners who rapaciously scotched any groping attempts at rebuilding the Association where some enthusiasm had survived into 1845. The day-to-day realities of pit-life were compelling the men back into organized opposition, but restraining the movement by the sobering lessons of the Great Strike.

The frustrations of the pitmen were unleashed on the black-legs on the return to work in August 1844. Peaceful exhortations from the union leadership were lost in these clashes.² The owners left unprotected the Welshmen who had been enticed to Durham as strike-breakers now they had served their function. A murder at Ravensworth and a veritable battle at Seaton Delaval made the news, but the everyday persecution, enshrined in the "Blackleg Miners"³ and clearly vindicated to the Durham miners, drove most of the immigrants out of the region.

There was more than just a depressed mining populace left after the 1844 drubbing. The Primitive Methodists, the leaders of the strike, were hit even harder than the other pitmen. Because of their prominence in union affairs, the Ranters found the owners vindictive. Marked men were driven

to seek work out of Durham,⁴ while the survivors divined the futility and dire consequences of confrontation. Like their mates down the pit, the Primitives also underwent a profound despondency and turned away from vigorous attempts to unionize. The difference, however, was that they had available a religion to bring consolation. The Primitive Methodists experienced a period of renewed activity within the sect. The traits lying nascent in Methodism were brought to the fore. Following the cataclysmic years of 1844-1845 there was a wave of pleas for conciliation, compliance and amicability from the Primitives. It was the natural consequence of the failure of the strike and the revitalization of the Protestant doctrine. It was a slow process to be sure, but the Primitive Methodists of the late 1850's were not the Chartist sympathizers of earlier days. Rather they were approaching a religious manifestation of Liberal reformers.

One thing that had not changed since the strike was that the Primitive Methodists remained the leaders and spokesmen of the colliers. Indeed, their martyrdom and the resolute manner with which they faced victimization, consolidated their prominence in the eyes of their followers. Moreover, these were the commencing years of an astonishing passivity nationally in labour agitation. With the Chartist decline, there developed no succeeding ideological basis to channel working class discontent. Durham was no exception, so it is not surprising to realize that these were years when the Primitive Methodists not only became increasingly respectable, but concomitantly gained deeper support from the other colliers.

The Durham miners themselves, with no structured opposition to Victorian ethics, added to which was a decline of confidence in independent organization, were considerably enshrouded within the cultural apparatus. As they witnessed the augmented reputability of the Ranters, so too their opinion of them was enhanced. The pitmen were judging by the criteria of the bourgeois state. The period 1846-1870 was the beginning of what was to result in the almost complete incorporation of the Durham miners into Gladstonian-Liberal society. Primitive Methodism was the major instigator of this reception. From 1850-1870 there was a widespread movement towards the Primitive Methodists, but nowhere more so than in the North-East. Not only numerically, though this development was remarkably rapid,⁵ but more crucial was the additional acceptability of Primitive Methodism both towards Liberal politics and the Durham colliers.

However, if the colliers were relatively compliant, the problems of the owners were not altogether resolved. The strike had induced the decline of the Vend agreement between the masters and thereafter, despite attempts to resurrect the monopoly, they were never completely successful. Times had changed and British capitalist development weakened the stronghold of the North-East in the coal industry. Now competition from outside snapped at the heels of the Durham cartels. The railway mania had raised a revolution in transport, opening up new markets for previously unexploited areas. South-west Durham became linked to the centres of British industrialism by steam engines whose efficiency was not surpassed for a

century. The result was previously unimagined investment pouring into coal-mining. Iron and steel grew into the basic product of the country and swelled the demand for coking coals. Export orders escalated.⁶ Durham pits were unable to satisfy such a market and other areas thrived on the competition. In the north-east even the victimization of unionists was eased to allow pits to retain full production so that the owners could cash in most profitably. In such a situation the owners could countenance no stoppages at the pits, so strenuous efforts were made to stem any embryonic signs of organization amongst the colliers. The managers resorted to the standard tack of attempting to retain and advance markets by keeping down the expenditure on labour and quelling any possible attempts to interfere with their terms. The 1850's were epitomized by the helter-skelter of the expansion of the industry and the periodic chastisement of recalcitrant pits, administered in the form of scapegoating militants, instant eviction and importation of blacklegs. It was already clear that when a recession in the boom came there would be a showdown. It was also obvious that unless the pitmen began to reorganize they would be pulverized in the first crisis.

There were a number of localized disputes throughout the 1850's, notably a strike at Seaham in 1854 involving 13,000 men, but they were essentially transitory: more irritations than a serious threat to the coal-owners. By the 1860's however, there was a new generation of pitmen in the county who, though sharing the bitterness of '44, had experienced little of the suffering. On top of this, the owners were beginning

to screw the pitmen increasingly in order to hold them at the collieries. Since the big strike the Durham men had worked generally under a system of monthly contracts, but the old method of yearly binding was gradually being reintroduced as the managers pushed up productivity. The owners' avidity to resurrect the former ties provided the impetus for another union to arise. It began in Northumberland, but 15,000 recruits sprang from Durham in October 1863. The union immediately ran into a dispute which was to cripple it. It had the misfortune to clash with an owner who possessed all the acid managerial traits of laissez-faire England. That was Mr. Love, a preacher for the New Connexion Methodists.⁷

William Crawford, the future leader of the D.M.A., had earlier toured the Bishop Auckland district advocating unionism, his labours being rewarded at a mass meeting held on October 17th at Tanfield which showed that Durham was strongly in support of organization.⁸ The rising tide of unionism, however, encouraged the pitmen to protest instantaneously against their grievances and a number of localized stoppages peppered the county. These wracked the union, leaving the clash at Love's Willington collieries to break any remaining coherence. Mr. Love knew what it was like to be a pitman. That had been his earlier occupation before astute investment and a fortunate marriage vaulted him along the path of prosperity.⁹ Love was also aware of the dangers inherent in unionism and when his colliers complained against his unfair practises he determined to root out the agitators. The dispute began over the 'rocking' of tubs. What was happening

was that the miners were filling the tubs at the face but the coals were shaken down as they were moved out-by. At the surface many tubs appeared not quite full and were consequently confiscated. Such arrangements suited Love well, since it was common knowledge that with the connivance of the weighman, strict adherence to his own rules supplemented his annual income some thousands of pounds.¹⁰ The discontents of individual pitmen losing between eight and ten tubs a fortnight are obvious but Love stood firm against their suggestions and instead refused employment to ringleaders in four of his collieries. Of these, twelve were arrested and charged with breaking their contracts. Over 1,200 miners stopped work in protest against the arbitrary regulations at Love's pits and as a gesture of solidarity with their victimized spokesmen. Love carried on regardless. At the end of October he assigned police and constables to supervise evictions at Sunnybrow, Oakenshaw and Brancepeth, turning out penniless families in atrocious weather. Despite criticism from some newspapers, Love pressed on and succeeded in mobilizing sufficient blacklegs to get his pits working.¹² Once again the unionists were left despairing of any future consolidation. Love's employees drifted back to work before the Christmas. An excessively severe winter coupled with widespread victimization of union activists hastened the downfall of the organizations as colliers became increasingly anxious to reobtain work.

Though they had been badly mauled, the Durham pitmen seemed this time to be aware of the necessity for unified defence

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against the coalowners. A district meeting of some 32
collieries in December 1863 resolved that there was never
greater need for a union than at the present day and depre-
cated any tendency towards disaffection among themselves.

1864 opened with an intensification of conflict within the
coalfield. Strikes were rife and feelings running high in
the villages against any resumption of the yearly bond. In
spite of disorganization the Durham miners were displaying a
fearful militancy.

However there existed no vehicle to collate this intensity
of feeling and as such the pitmen were helpless in face of the
owners' might. Indeed, there was a national Association
which had been founded at Leeds in 1853 but this movement was
led by the Ultra-conservative Alexander MacDonald and could
not countenance incorporating a milita^{nt}-trade ^unionism into
its policy of laboriously slow progressions.¹³ At a meeting
of the Association in February 1864, the Durham pitmen were
opposed in their application for membership by the group's
leading figures. The executive council considered the
Durham colliers desired amalgamation solely to receive sup-
port for their strikes. Pickard, one of the most prominent
National Association members, summarized the position when
he declared that Durham wished to send sixpence to get five
pounds back. Northumberland passed a similar judgment in
1865 when it decided to secede from union with Durham since
it felt certain that the union would crumble if Durham con-
tinued with its ubiquitous industrial disputes. With such
admonitions from its allies it is scarcely surprising that

unionism rapidly lapsed in Durham. The Durham miners found themselves caught between two stools. It was clear by the mid-1860s that unity was needed to combat the rapacity of the coal magnates but the Durham pitmen had also experienced time after time the defeat of their organizations just as soon as they started voicing specific demands. On the other hand, while the Durham colliers were being pounded, the National Association made it very obvious that the militancy of the Durham coalfield could not be reconciled with its doctrine of industrial relations. The Durham coalminers could not have been oblivious of the fact, however, that in rejecting them as allies, the National Association at least continued to exist without too much interference from the coal magnates. The Association was toothless, but at least it was extant. The message that if Durham wanted a durable union it would have to lay aside an offensive policy began to receive credence in the North-East. This is not to say that Durham fore-sware fighting - that was too much to ask in face of conditions in the pits - but it did mean that the Durham miners became excessively wary of initiating a struggle with the owners. For a union to be founded for the sole purpose of defense may appear paradoxical but this principle was to give birth to the Durham Miners' Association in 1869. Such criteria would appease the despondent militants who had experienced the failure of all previous attempts at unionization and at the same time satisfy the Primitive Methodist spokesmen from the colliery villages whose vision of a union was organization for the amelioration of conflict between master and men. The

Primitives wanted a union that would reflect society, while the rank-and-file pitmen wanted a union to stop them being crushed by the owners. In the short term the views co-incided, since the establishment of the union was paramount in the 1860s but with the inherent volatility of the Durham miners there was destined to be conflict within the structure before too long. The most significant factor, however, was that in ushering in an organization to resist the owners, the Durham colliers introduced a union that was distinctly a product of the owners' values in that it was gestated by a religious sect whose political philosophy was an offshoot of the Established Church and which was constantly being enveloped in the Glastonian-Liberal creed. Contradictions such as these did not bode well for unionism in Durham but it appears they were essential if there was to be a future.

NOTES:

1. Adopting here a variant of MacIver's (R.M. MacIver: "The Ramparts We Guard", New York, Mac.1950, p.77) notion of anomy, which differs somewhat from Durkheim's anomie. Here I intend to describe the miners as having partly undergone "...the retreat of the individual into his own ego, the sceptical rejection of all social bonds... the state of mind of one who has been pulled up from his moral roots, who has no longer any standards but only disconnected urges, who has no longer any sense of continuity.." as regards their union. The Durham miners experienced not so much a loss of societal normative regulation but a loss of faith in their struggle against the employers.
2. "The reins of government were taken out of the hands of the leaders, since the strike was now at an end and the men, feeling in no way responsible to any authority, in many instances gave way to their revengeful passions to an inordinate extent." Fynes, op-cit., p.1091.
3. "The Blackleg Miners" (1844):

Oh, early in the evening, just after dark,
 The blackleg miners creep out and go to work,
 With their moleskin trousers and dirty old shirt
 Go the dirty blackleg miners.

They take their picks and down they go,
 To dig out the coal that's lying down below,
 And there isn't a woman in this town now
 Will look at a blackleg miner.

Oh, Delaval is a terrible place,
 They rub wet clay in the blackleg's face,
 And round the pit-heaps they run a foot-race,
 With the dirty blackleg miners.

Oh, don't go down the Segnill mine,
 For across the mainway they hang a line,

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To catch the throat and break the spine
Of the dirty blackleg miners.

They'll take your tools and your duds as well,
And throw them in the pit of hell,
It's down you go and fare you well,
You dirty blackleg miners.

4. Fynes, op.cit., p.112-113
5. 1855-1860. There was an increase of more than 26,000 Primitive Methodists (in 1850 there were 10,330 at Sunderland alone), but 1861-1870 was the outstanding decade when numbers nationally rose to 162,157. See R.F.Wearmouth, "Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes", Leicester, Backus 1954, p.101-102.
6. Between 1840-1842 and 1857-1859 coal exports rose from less than £ $\frac{3}{4}$ m. to over £3m. E.Hobsbawm, "Industry and Empire", Weid. & Nic. 1968, p.88
7. There is a striking portrayal of the correlation between Methodism and a calculating coal owner in A.J.Cronin's splendid "The Stars Look Down". 1935, reprinted 1970, New England Library. The character Barras and his relations towards his hewers closely resembles those of Love.
8. cf. Metcalfe, op.cit. p.12;
"When another lodge meeting was held on October 17th at Tantobie, near Tanfield, Durham was nearly one hundred per cent behind Crawford and the Miners' Union."
9. And, of course, Mr. Love's rags-to-riches career legitimized the worthy practices of Methodism.
10. Welbourne, op.cit., p.117; "It was openly said that Mr. Love made £5,000 a year from coal for the hewing of which he paid not a farthing and the estimate was never questioned."

"Our History", No.48, 1967-68, for an analysis of the ultra-respectability of MacDonald in his approach to trade unionism, and its clashes with the demands of the grassroots pitmen who had to face the infringements of the owners.

1869 - 1889

Though temporarily suppressed in 1863, trade unionism was never again dormant in the North-East coalfield. The ephemeral structure of the decade's early years did indeed collapse when Northumberland instigated a cleavage and Joseph Seldon's¹ efforts to rekindle the fading organization came to nothing. Nevertheless, there remained ingrained within the miners' consciousness a conviction that unionism was the only way forward. Whatever the depths to which the morale of the pitmen sunk there could not be removed a large minority in favour of union to better their lot. The period 1865-1869 merely served to strengthen that resolution. While Durham suffered annual wage cuts, accompanied by increasingly subjugating bonds, their neighbours across the Tyne were seen to have wages which by 1869 were 30% more than the Durham miners' - a result it was assumed was due to the abandonment of the bond in 1865. The difference was obvious to all, as was the cause: Northumberland was unionized while Durham was in disarray.

The Durham pitmen gave vent to their deep-seated enmity in face of localized wage cuts in 1866-1868, but the action was always limited to each colliery as it rejected the particular owner's new demands. The owners themselves acted individually in introducing cuts in the living standards of their workmen, but this in itself was to their advantage as the lodges reacted alone. There was no rush to help out their fellow workers at nearby pits and as such the owners enjoyed relative ease in winning the disputes. The county was ridden with isolated

stoppages throughout the period, running sores continuing on and off for three years at Castle Eden and Shotton.

The crucial factor in leading the men back to union was the continued existence of the bond. As 1870 neared agitation against annual binding escalated, the bond being regarded as the embodiment of pitmen's grievances. In these years of stagnation the owners aggravated the issue by tightening up further clauses to their benefit. The ambiguity of the agreements led to a rapid increase in the number of prosecutions under the Masters and Servants Act where pits struck upon realizing the true implications of contracts. Not only was the bond the mediator of the owners' avaricious dictates, but it was also clear that until it was abolished united action by the pitmen was impossible since disputes at any time of the year other than immediately before signing were illegal. When in 1869 there came a general call for wage reductions under a new bond the Durham miners discovered an issue upon which they could converge.

These discontents were enshrined in the May to July 1869 strike at Monkwearmouth which marked in reality the commencement of the permanent union of Durham miners. Wearmouth had undergone cuts of 17% in wages since 1867, but 1869 blew the top off the smouldering resentment of the pitmen. Under that year's contract the men acceded to a further reduction of 15%. Under nebulous terms they initially signed, but within a fortnight there was a strike. The manager responded by prosecuting four of the leaders for breaking their contracts. The sentence and consequent goaling of the men boomeranged on

the masters when 450 of the Wearmouth colliers informed the manager that they would leave their houses within nine days. The families lived in makeshift sheds and two marquees for the duration of the struggle, while their plight fanned once again the flame of unionism in the county. County delegate meetings were started during the dispute,² one of the leading lights of which was John Richardson of the troubled colliery. Much due to his tenacity, a meeting resolved to oppose to its utmost the yearly bond.

Meanwhile, the Wearmouth affair was concluded towards the end of July. The owners agreed to a system of fortnightly hiring and abandoned the bond, though in the process Richardson found himself victimized. Ironically, this had repercussions favourable for the county. Richardson was appointed district agent at a meeting in Hetton on September 11th 1869³ with a mandate to agitate in unconstituted areas. A fortnight later an angry gathering at Thornley attracted a thousand vehemently anti-bond colliers. The ball was rolling under the auspices of an attack on the iniquitous contract. Nearly 5,000 members were represented when the D.M.A. was formally constituted in Durham City on November 20th 1869.⁴ The overcoming of the bond at Wearmouth had provided the trigger for a rising of the general discontent in the county.

It had been a wave of militancy that established the union and the miners' aggression was unlikely to abate so long as yearly agreements continued. However some of the sting was removed from the situation by a sudden upswing in trade which enabled the owners to compromise many of their employees.

The imminent threat of county-wide strikes was eased by the coincidence of the Franco-Prussian War which vaulted coal prices some two hundred per cent, leaving the owners an opportunity to appease the militants. They discovered this was no time to fight when immense profits were to be grabbed, so in spite of the anathema of unionism, the D.M.A. gained the grace of time to build foundations. So great was the development of demand that labour had to be imported from the Forest of Dean and Lancashire. An industrial showdown was the last thing the owners wanted when high-priced orders were pouring in. Pacification was the answer: but it was a distinctly temporary measure.

In spite of the unanticipated prosperity the pitmen were not duped. They continued with their strident call for an end to the bond, and there were eager preparations for a struggle in February 1872 when the time of signing was due. Completely without precedent the owners invited along the D.M.A. agents to Newcastle for a conference (February 17th). With scarcely a murmur they submitted to the adoption of fortnightly agreements ^{and} ~~but~~ also offered the hewers an immediate rise of 20%. The miners appeared to have gained concessions solely by the force of argument. The union agents, forever advocates of conciliation were ecstatic with this justification of their policy.⁵ A substantial rise had been negotiated without weakening union funds or even members suffering. What had actually occurred, of course, was not a softening of the hard-hearted coalowners but they had made an astute tactical manoeuvre. The Coal Owners Association had succeeded in forestalling a dispute by handing over an extra twenty percent

to the pitmen while reserving for themselves the fruits of coal selling at double its earlier price. The agents had not been oblivious to the owners' assiduity,⁶ but they preferred talking. Strikes had failed time and time again in the past and they did not believe militancy could be rewarded even when the owners were delighting in a boom. The union was not only contented with the improved working conditions, they also went out of their way to assist the owners in satiating the coal markets. They agreed with the managers to strive to their utmost to "prevent idleness" and reduce the number of "petty local strikes". From its very inception the D.M.A. laboured to satisfy the owners by condemning a strike at Haswell, refusing the Littleburn malcontents strike pay, and fawning on restriction wherever it was exercised by Durham pitmen. Scarcely surprising is it to read Welbourne's comment that by 1872 "the miners' agents had well redeemed their promise to the owners that they would exert themselves to the utmost to increase output and help make hay as long as the sun of prosperity continued to shine."⁷

It was not only the economic climate which persuaded the owners to allay resistance against the union. As early as 1870 the more discerning realized the potential of a propitiatory representation of the men, while hesitant managers were given evidence enough in the opening years of the organization to accept it by 1875. The point is that the D.M.A. from the start determined and overtly demonstrated its resolution, not to follow in the path of the earlier unions. Flying headlong into clashes with the coal magnates had always failed. If

resistance was futile, then the men would just have to compromise. In Willian Crawford the union gained a delegate of this mould par excellence. Crawford's belief was four-square against initiating any confrontation and with the existing sparkle in the coal industry his philosophy was confirmed. Crawford was by no means a traitor to his class and he unleashed many a diatribe against Victorian laissez-faire but he saw no role for himself as attacker. The union if he had anything to do with it would be moral if nothing else and this morality was that of the respectable artisan. It was the personification of his Primitive Methodism. Nor was it simply the leadership which urged an appeasing unionism. Too many of the rank-and-file had become so thoroughly dispirited with the failure of organization that any union satisfied - at least in the short term. Furthermore, even those who harboured doubts must have thought twice before they contested against the staunch Primitive Methodists. Were not these leaders the spokesmen who had suffered appalling victimization for the sake of earlier union? How could anyone other than the most ungrateful collier carp when the same unselfish group again took up their standard?

Whatever were the chief contributing factors there was no doubt that a new type of unionism was emerging in Durham. It was a structure which appealed to the owners for consideration in terms of the dominant hegemony. The Durham Miners' Association forwarded a plea for recognition

along with a promise to play by the rules of the owners. Even the "Durham County Advertiser" was quick to discern the utility of such an organ. It summed up the attitude of previously recalcitrant managers who were starting to re-think the influences of trades unionism when pits required working.

"Strikes have almost ruined England; strikes have been the means of bringing competitors into the English market and breaking up the grand position which the old country held for so many years as the chief producer of particular goods. Strikes are a fatal mistake and in the end the greater sufferers are the men themselves. If the Trades Unions would combine in agitating for a recognized Court of Arbitration they would be doing a service to themselves and to the nation ... the (D.M.A) will do good if it keeps fairly in view the great principles of justice between man and man, has full regard for the rights of capital as well as labour and honestly endeavours to inculcate a reliance upon moral in preference to physical force. On the whole we think the district may be congratulated upon the educational advance in the great body of the Durham miners as evinced at the meeting of delegates last week. From a long experience of pitmen we feel assured that if the masters respond generously to the evident growing desire for more peaceful settlements of trade disputes, some arrangements in the way of arbitration may be brought about which will eventually make strikes impossible. This would be a millenium indeed for the coal trade: it is quite possible, and the great object of the leaders in the interest of Labour as well as the representatives of Capital should be to aim at the accomplishment of this great desideratum. Let all the societies of men and masters set up this standard of security and peace and work upon it. Here is an object of noble ambition. If the Durham Society wishes to earn lasting renown, let them inaugurate an earnest agitation for the establishment of a Court of Arbitration."⁸

The "Advertiser" can scarcely have been happier with the manner in which the D.M.A. fulfilled its promise. By 1872 Joint Boards had been set up and commissioned to settle disputes between master and men. Each side had equal representation, with an 'independent' adjudicator (usually a

judge or prominent magistrate) to have the casting vote if needed. Not surprisingly there developed much animosity from the pitmen towards this institution when it consistently approved the owners' requests. The problem was that complaint was difficult since there was an undeniable democracy in the structure of the committee which in some cases even benefitted the colliers. What was overlooked for many years was the restrictive nature the terms of reference placed upon the board. They were fundamentally aligned with capitalist economics. Whenever conflict arose, come the crunch, the pitmen had to lose since the function of the Joint Boards was to uphold the status quo. Disgruntled pitmen were left to vote with their feet,⁹ but they lost the support not only of their agents but also of fellow miners, who at least had an ambivalent confidence in the impartiality of such arbitration.¹⁰

From an early date the officials ushered in a rule barring "unconstitutional strikes" from their members, the penalty for which was non-payment of benefits. The order meant that any action from a lodge had to be channelled through the union structure. With agents determined to cut out petty issues and encouraged to do so by the approval of the owners, it developed that the executive commenced a running battle with the rank-and-file to prevent unofficial stoppages. In such a trade as coal mining, where disputes were exacerbated at the face the problem of control was intensified, so a gulf sprung up which became a continuous contention between the agents and their members. Unofficial

strikes became the norm on the Durham coalfield.¹¹ The union took it on itself to censor its own members. While the February 1872 negotiations were under way, Haswell and Castle Eden struck to demand a 20% increase plus the advances they had already achieved. Crawford was appalled at their audacity and quickly responded to the owners' claim that the union ought to control its own members. The D.M.A. secretary never considered that the function of an official was to carry out the wishes of those he represented,¹² instead he sent out a telegram; "We regret to hear that Haswell and Castle Eden collieries are idle, you must know that you are wrong, and we strongly advise you to commence work tomorrow, otherwise steps will be taken to repudiate such reprehensible conduct, and if necessary the strongest action will be taken in the matter."¹³ Already the union was acting out a role as guardian of the owners' interests. In the same year Crawford grasped another opportunity to display his zeal for tranquility at the pits. Dissension arose at Seaham when the manager attempted to change from a two to three shift system for the hewers, whereby a night shift would be inserted into the established agreement. There was much opposition from the pitmen to the suggestion that their only guaranteed chance to meet together should be eroded. Without notifying the agents, the Seaham men struck.¹⁴ Crawford rushed off a note of condemnation, but the 1,500 colliers in turn intimidated cessation from the union. The challenge to the officials was obvious, but the men at the D.M.A. stood firm. With a mixture of threat

and appeal to trade union loyalty Crawford succeeded in persuading the Seaham miners to accept arbitration, with the promise that their case would be forcibly argued when the time arose. The result was that the three-shift system was introduced by way of the machinery of the D.M.A.. The agents fulfilled their declaration of intent to avoid transgressing the capitalists. Predictably, by the middle of 1873 the Durham Miners' Association was a thriving concern with close on 40,000 members and £34,000 in the bank.

Naturally enough, many pitmen resented the agents' actions which often verged on complicity with the owners. The D.M.A. was never without opposition within its ranks and scarcely a year passed throughout the century without a sizeable table of unofficial strikes against the rules of the union. Moreover, every Council meeting carried with it a large number of appeals from lodges critical of decisions emanating from the executive.¹⁵ What prorogued these complaints, however, was the elaborate web of structural and psychological traits surrounding the D.M.A.. In June 1870 three full time-agents had been appointed and invested with considerable power. From the start they displayed a formidable obstacle to change within the bureaucracy, utilizing to the utmost a constitution enabling them to exercise an untoward degree of authority in deciding when to meetings, what was to appear, defining legal and illegal action, controlling union funds, having exclusive use of the union publishing machinery, expertise in oratory and negotiation and enjoying nearly all the traditional

concomitants of structural oligarchy.¹⁶ Strangely enough, however, it was not so much such technicalities but more the consciousness of the pitmen which inhibited any critical precipitation within the association.

To understand how the pitmen were constrained from voicing their disapprobation it is essential to grasp the complexity of the meanings of Durham miners in the 1870's. It is necessary to come to grips with both the structure and consciousness, and the inter-relationships, between these phenomena, so as to appreciate the contradictions which were part-and-parcel of the North-East colliers. The reality of the miners' social situation was that of wage-labour, pursuing an extremely arduous occupation for small - and unreliable - rewards. The pitmen were no more nor less than accountable commodities in the capitalism of the coal trade. The owners took the position of laissez-faire entrepreneur par excellence. Economically (and hence socially) there was an unbridgeable gulf between the pitmen and the employers, hence the union, in suing for compromise, was in fact following a policy which was to the detriment of its members in that it assumed the permanence of the status quo. This may not have been the intention but it was always the result. The grassroots pitman rarely appreciated this, but that he felt it, and acted upon it, is undoubted from the considerable quantity of stoppages which echoed the frustrations of the colliers. Whenever an owner, pursuing perhaps increased profit or reacting to contractions in the market, levelled a reduction at his employees, the union

was failing its members in setting out to negotiate. They were dealing with symptoms of the capitalist forces rather than the root cause. As such, so long as the competitive basis remained, there existed glaring contradictions between wage-labour and capital. Industrial conflict was inevitable under such an order, and the union, in attempting amelioration, was merely clouding the fundamental issue. The whole history of the Durham miners is one of capitalist accountancy which, so long as it remained, impelled the pitmen towards industrial subversion.

If there were intrinsic elements within the structure of British society thrusting the pitmen into clashes with the owners, there were other factors (which have proved the more resilient) which countermanded this inherent conflict. Economic rationality is only one constituent of an intricate blend of men's consciousness. Men act upon their interpretation of events, not what any objectivity may delineate, and it was in this regard that the Durham pitmen turned away from ultimate confrontation. Past encounters had effected a profound disillusionment over the North-East as to the viability of strenuous conflict. Many of the pitmen had despondently relinquished the struggle for unionization in the years 1844-1863. More importantly, they had allowed responsibility to be invested in the Primitive Methodists, the group which primarily continued the movement in its darkest days of adversity. The Primitives' tireless and unselfish endeavours were crucial in retaining the standard of unionism, and their sacrifices did not go unrewarded.

The Durham pitmen repaid the Ranters by electing them into the upper echelons of the embryonic organizations. The sect was enabled to play a disproportionate role in shaping their direction. This route, however, was to be of a particular type given the roots of Primitive Methodism and the increasing respectability of the Methodists since the setbacks of the 1840s. Furthermore, as the religious increasingly dominated the region, so too the reverence for them developed from the pitmen. The grassroots may indeed have fought at the pit-head but in voting for officials they were enveloped within the standards of bourgeois credibility. On the other hand, let it not be too easily accepted that the Primitive Methodists, in being progressively incorporated into Gladstonian-Liberal philosophy, did not react to the gull of the structural constraints of their daily lives. William Crawford, by 1871 secretary of the D.M.A. and a prominent Primitive Methodist, was a Liberal in politics and a confirmed believer in conciliatory unionism but he was also a pitman. It is significant that such a man took to the Primitives because they were dissenters. To a similar extent he despised the capitalist ethos, albeit in a confused manner.¹⁷ The point was that there existed a complicated dialectic between the social and economic contradictions of capitalism in which the pitmen were ensnared and between the ideology which, by definition, supported that system. The miners and their Gladstonian-Liberal spokesmen were not simplistic receptors of the managers' propaganda but they were men of Victorian England

encapsulated by the contemporary structure of being.¹⁸

As a result of this inter-relation of ideas and the realities of pit life the Durham men could present at one and the same time a political conservatism alongside an unparalleled industrial militancy. Their leaders, that much more embroiled in doctrinal affairs away from the mines were those extra degrees ahead in their incorporation. These characteristics, it is suggested, were imperative in enabling the union to take root without opposition. The beliefs cannot be separated from the actions, and through both the D.M.A. gained further recognition from the owners. The fortunate occurrence of an unanticipated boom in the period 1870-1873 had the twin purposes of sanctioning the leadership of the D.M.A. in their advocacy of negotiation since they found the managers amenable, while it satiated the pitmen at grassroots when it stopped the series of reductions, removed the bond and actually took wages to 58% above their 1870 level. Not surprisingly in 1873 the D.M.A. emerged with the Primitive Methodists enhanced in their obsession with reputable trade unionism accompanied by a greater confidence from the rank-and-file who, looking back but five years, could see unprecedented improvements. Those they had to thank were easy to discern. The creed of the agents had been more than validated. It would have been a shock to see anything other than banners bearing protestations of friendship between master and man at the Gala in 1872. Victorian England was an age to look ahead:

an age of advancement. The miners snared the illusion when they declared: "In the past we have been enemies; in the future let us be friends."¹⁹

Towards the end of 1873 the Durham miners submitted yet another claim for a rise, this time of 20%. Little did they suspect that a sudden slump would result in the owners greeting them with a request for a similar reduction. Early in 1874 the owners rejected the demand of their employees and presented a firm application for drastic cuts. It was to initiate the first real conflict within the new union. From riding a boom Britain was plunged into a depression in the space of six months. The slump hit hardest at the coal industry.²⁰ The crisis threw the D.M.A. into a quandry. A few weeks previous they had been anticipating further gains, as had the men, but now imminent hardship appeared. Even the agents were to have difficulty in accepting the legitimacy of the capitalists' requests imbued as they were in the free trade orthodoxy, but the men were always at their most militant when, in the midst of increasing wages, they were faced with reductions. The rank-and-file paid tribute to the capitalist creed when they received satisfactory dividends, but just as soon as the same doctrine gnawed at their standards, whatever its legitimacy, the pitmen reacted against it. Their agents were unhappy but above all they were men of justice and they accepted their accountability to the rationality of the order. The members, on the other hand, set up a howl of protest against the imposition of cuts.

When their pockets were hit it meant to hell with obligation to the owners. The pitmen would struggle against any such penalty. That they did not consider the fight for a new order was their Achilles heel.²¹

The 1873 arbitrations for wage reductions commenced a long winter of discontent for the Durham miners. Crawford was pessimistic for their chances if a clash ensued in a falling market and evoked his long-held paranoia over the safety of union funds.²² The secretary managed to persuade a Special Council Meeting on April 28th²³ to offer the owners an immediate 10% cut and refer the dispute to open arbitration. The conduct of the agents was met by spontaneous stoppages throughout the villages. Meetings were arranged at which they were abused by the membership²⁴. Random strikes littered the country but Crawford blustered through to achieve ratification of the 10% reduction at a later Council.²⁵ The finality of the decision gave rise to mass walk-outs which came to be called the 'Week's Strike'²⁶ in defiance of the executive's negotiations. The rebellion was short-lived. With the coal trade in the doldrums a cessation could only be of real benefit to the owners and within a few days there was a general return. Three pits stayed out (Wheatley Hill, Thornley + Ludworth) against the reimposition of longer hours, defying the executive by refusing to work while arbitration proceeded. Their protest was to no avail and the owners succeeded in gaining an eleven hour day. The agents had weathered their first storm.

Another crisis followed almost immediately. In July and August 1874 the owners demanded a further 20% cut. At first even the D.M.A. was hesitant about non-resistance but the ball was in the owners' court and both sides knew it. The magnates prepared to lock out the miners in September and the agents panicked. They rushed off a request for arbitration and issued a stern appeal to their disconted members. They had no stomach for a fight. "If we persistently refuse to submit the entire matter to arbitration, we must prepare to cope with the following difficulties in conducting a struggle.

1. The strongest condemnation of employers the North of England ever saw.
2. Stacks of coal and coke laid up in every direction of the county.
3. Coal and coke brought from other districts to supply what we may be short of supplying from our own-heaps.
4. The press and public opinion would be against us."²⁷

The arbitration proceedings illustrate remarkably the political philosophy of the agents. William Crawford and George Foreman went to Newcastle to put the miners' case, though in reality the former did most of the participation. Throughout Crawford urged the owners to consider the problem within the bounds of capitalist economics. His whole case rested on questioning the extremes of the owners' brief, never their fundamental tenets. The spokesman of the colliers began; "...we wish to state that we have no desire to detract from their (owners' statistics) value, nor to do

anything that may interfere with the owners' legitimate profits. We acknowledge that capital must be made remunerative. But ~~cap~~^{cap}-owners are like other men...and may, in seeking to promote their own interests, sometimes, though perhaps unconsciously, overlook what is due to others; and it is because we think this is so in the present case, that we are anxious in defence of our wages...that we desire the most honest and thorough inquiry that can be obtained, in order that our present dispute may be arranged equitably in the interest of the coalowners as well as in the interest of the working men, being convinced that permanent peace between coal-owners and miners,...will be best secured by such decisions in arbitration."²⁸ Even when pushed to extremes Crawford upheld the wage-price index; "Our labour is sold in the coal, and so long as the price of coal keeps rising in the market, in justice to ourselves we ought to seek participation in the enhanced profit accruing therefrom. On the other hand when prices fall, if that fall has been rendered necessary by the condition of the trade, we are willing in the interest of the coal-owners to consider the case, and to make such concessions as may under the circumstances be reasonable and just."²⁹ Not without reason did William Armstrong, the owners' advocate, rely heavily on the postulates of Crawford to justify his case. There was no denial that the principles of political economy argued for substantial reductions. Russell Gurney, the M.P., acted as umpire to the parties and when agreement failed, awarded a 9% reduction to become operative from November.

1875 and 1876 were equally despondent years for the pitmen. In April of 1875 the owners requested another 20% cut and at arbitration were granted five.³⁰ There had been some resistant colliers, but the union informed its dissidents that they must immediately withdraw their notices.³¹ Later in the same year the owners forwarded what was now the usual demand for a 20% reduction, to be granted seven at open arbitration.³² A third arbitration went on to cut wages by another 6% in September.³³ In face of this series of setbacks the pitmen were surprisingly lethargic. They seemed to have resigned themselves, at least temporarily, to the inevitability of diminutions in their pay. This is not so difficult to comprehend in view of the fact that the colliers were aware of only two alternatives to mild acceptance. One was resistance, but this must have appeared little more than futile obstinacy since the whole situation was so heavily favourable towards the owners, and besides, no horizon could be seen to target the struggle against the masters. The second was vigorous argument within the arbitration courts. It was the only feasible route that appeared for many years. That the miners acceded to the rules of negotiation is vindicated by the passivity with which they received the early decisions. With outward sign of impartiality, it was to take the pitmen a long while to learn by experience the inequalities of the arbitration boards. If the men were perhaps not so ready to share the complicity of the agents, they were not so far in disagreement with the executive circular of 1876 which

stated; "If ever a body of men ought to be satisfied with a means of adjusting differences we ought with arbitration. It has in every instance so far immensely reduced the application of the owners. There is no other means by which we could have fared better. On every occasion the owners complained about the insufficient amount awarded them. A problem for the agents was that some pitmen were already beginning to suspect that the owners merely claimed an extravagant amount, secure in the knowledge that arbitration would give them half, while the rest were to be stirred to industrial rebellion when the reductions finally got beyond endurance.

It would be wrong to suspect there was a complete lull in the county throughout these years. In 1875 there were strikes at Thornley and Wearmouth, the latter being settled after the union chastised its members for dragging the owners into a fight which involved only the men. The Wearmouth pit had struck over the employment of non-union labour, but the agents declared that this was no excuse to hurt the owners. They protested that their negotiations were jeopardized by such action and discredit was heaped upon the union. Wearmouth, previously continuing the affair with the help of other lodges, was abandoned. The union compelled it to work alongside scabs. The following year the putters created trouble. Agitation was rampant, particularly at Ryhope. Crawford was quick to criticize his members and obviously terrified that the owners would jump at an excuse for a lock-out. "At a time when the

Owners seek a cause of trouble, if we have to be plunged into difficulties by the acts of a few irresponsible lads, then the sooner we abandon the Association the better, returning back to a condition of things, which even in anticipation, causes a person to shudder."³⁵ Crawford successfully disciplined his ranks.

However, he had more trouble when the owners entered their next claim for a reduction. In June, 1876 a lodge vote had given a majority of 79 for a strike of resistance. Crawford decided to ignore the resolution and on June 13th managed to refer the issue to the Joint Committee. A ballot followed which gave a 3,755 majority,³⁶ for arbitration, though there were over 16,000 colliers urging a strike.³⁷ The crisis was being deferred but so long as the reductions kept recurring Crawford would meet mounting opposition. The pitmen's voting had shown a marked ambivalence as to the direction they should take, but as 1877 approached there were sure signs that encroaching demands from the owners were pushing their employees beyond the brink.

Whatever the tensions, in 1877 the agents accomplished the logical extrapolation of their conciliation policy when the Sliding Scale was established, scheduled to last two years. The Executive Committee had been granted power to settle³⁸ when the owners had suggested an institutionalization of the wage-price index. It was a convenient way of euphemizing reductions.³⁹ The scale carried with it a 7½% lowering of hewers' wages. Unfortunately for the agents

the reality was not obscured from some lodges. With a stridency rarely seen in Durham, the men of Bearpark struck in August 1877 and turned the full force of their wrath on the D.M.A.. "In September, at a mass meeting, the Bearpark men attacked the whole policy of the union. They said that arbitration had become a farce, that in every case the owners asked for twice as much they expected to get, sure that the umpire would halve their demands. They complained that local lodges were too much under the domination of the central executive of the union."⁴⁰ Bearpark was out for forty weeks, but its deviance had little effect on the union officials. There was certainly opposition in the coalfield, but it was alongside unremitting loyalty from the majority of the members. Durham exhibited a confused hotch-potch of attitudes at this time but it was an understandable confusion.

There was naturally variance in the opinions of the colliers which led to considerable inconsistency from pit to pit, but all had in common the limitation of being circumscribed by the prevailing culture. Such was this power that the pitmen were doused in the important respect that, when driven to protest against their conditions, they discovered no way of channelling their discontent. After all, had they not been given a fair hearing at the arbitrations? Even the more militant lodges restricted their opposition to criticizing the owners for not abiding by the rules of the game. It was the containment of the bulk of the colliers within the societal hegemony that enabled Crawford to

continue unchallenged in his tactics as head of the D.M.A.. Dissatisfaction with the results of this strategy was standard; with the policy itself there was little. Where even this was questioned, as at Bearpark, there was never any coherent alternative expounded. This consciousness doomed the Durham miners to enter every struggle with at least one hand tied behind their backs.

Throughout 1878 there was no diminution in the depression. On the contrary, the pitmen's conditions were worsened in March when the owners increased the working hours from ten to eleven under the arbitration of E.J.Meynell.⁴¹ The following year events got out of hand when another demand for reductions was entered.⁴² The owners ended the first Sliding Scale in December 1878 and claimed a further 20% wage reduction as a precedent to its re-establishment. They even went so far as to refuse arbitration outright. The pitmen faced a lock-out. The agents bent over backwards to avoid confrontation which the owners were thrusting on their men. In circular after circular they appealed to their members to grant a ten per cent reduction and plead for open arbitration. Both the rapacious owners and the frustrated pitmen would have nothing to do with them. The former upped their demands to 13½% while the latter issued successive votes rejecting the insinuating conciliation of their officials.⁴³ The agents had done as much as possible to betray the weakness of their organization and undoubtedly their dilatoriness egged the owners on to accelerate their claims, but when it became clear that the pitmen this time

were determined to resist, the capitalists rapidly steadied themselves and returned to the tried method of arbitration via the agents to achieve their ends. Judge Bradshaw was umpire, awarding a pro tem settlement of 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ % reduction. The defence of the colliers, whatever the fears of the officials, had been justified.⁴⁴ It was only in the subsequent negotiations - when the agents regained the centre court - that Lord Derby's arbitration upped the requirement to ten per cent.

The niggardly fashion with which the officials handled the lock-out and their overt display of half-heartedness in face of the capitalist offensive, led to immense discontent within the D.M.A.. Wherever they went the agents were received with harrassment and abuse.⁴⁵ Despite the criticisms there was not a murmur of apology from the executive.⁴⁶ Crawford began a campaign to regain his lapsed popularity. He revised his opinion of the stoppage to paint a roseate picture of the conclusion.⁴⁷ At the Annual Council all the agents found themselves opposed, though they were re-elected comfortably.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the contest itself, in a union where alternatives were offered but four times in over fifty years, was a sharp indication of disapproval. 1879 marked the first rebellion against the union hierarchy from the rank-and-file. The agents were never again to regain the ease of direction they had previously enjoyed. Henceforth changes were to come from the adroit adaptation - usually grudging - of the bureaucracy to the demands of the vociferous grassroots. The Durham pitmen in 1879 had evi-

denced their frustration with a lethargic trade unionism. With no alternative available the leadership was able to survive the crisis, but its supremacy was coming under surveillance.

The year following the '79 struggle Durham still retained the scars of animosity. A new Sliding Scale had been forced on the men which took the months of low wages after the dispute as its basis. The union itself was wracked with dissension going to such lengths as to merit a complaint from Crawford on 'malcontents'.⁴⁹ Fortuitously, the situation was eased when prosperity returned in the early months of 1880. Pits reopened and the widespread unemployment was checked. Despite the amelioration of trade there remained a lot of tension amongst the colliers. Ways of improving their condition - so conspicuously inadequate - were searched for. The solutions discerned by the pitmen were pointers to the limitations of their world-view.

Straight away the miners tried interfering with the market forces. A 'ca' canny' policy was instigated.⁵⁰ At a council meeting in March the agents were overruled when restriction was ratified⁵¹ Crawford reacted quickly to what he regarded as the folly of such decisions. It was a mistake, he argued, in that it clashed with the agreement of the Sliding Scale which had not yet expired. Limitation of output was wrong because it was unjust to break an existing contract. The reasoning was fully in the style of the respectable unionism which undertook the intellectual position of the owners.⁵² The circular issued by the executive was sufficient to reverse the earlier decision.⁵³

The pitmen retained enough confidence in their officials to be swayed. In point of fact, it was just as well that restriction was abandoned since in 1880 local action was useless. The policy would have needed national backing to succeed, a key issue which Crawford quickly grasped.

Nevertheless, Crawford's domination left many pitmen smarting. After all, he had done nothing to better their conditions. He had merely persuaded them to drop one tactic. The resentment was expressed at a council meeting in July when a lodge vote decided to boycott arbitration meetings with the owners.⁵⁴ The delegates were displaying a frustration which could find no other outlet than non-cooperation. The agents, naturally, were horrified at the affront to their hallowed procedural system. Of course, they refused to accept the temporary verdict. An impassioned circular was promptly dispatched⁵⁵ calling for another ballot and this time for a rational course. That meant confirmation of D.M.A. policy. Crawford again got his way, though the result was close.⁵⁶ This sort of ambivalence came to typify the Durham miners in the 1880s. Rapid oscillations of feeling from anger at their subservience, which led to periodic outbursts of rebellion, to pacific loyalty to their leaders characterized the pitmen for more than a decade. They seemed unable to effect either a change of policy or to break away from the hold of the agents.

The mood was somewhat ameliorated by an 8½% concession from the owners early in 1881.⁵⁷ This became reflected in an upswing of confidence for the officials. When the voting for two arbitrators was counted Crawford was way ahead.

at the top of the list.⁵⁸ Yet in the midst of this resurgence came the inevitable contradiction. The big pits at Seaham refused to work the shafts where some of their dead mates had been sealed off following the disastrous explosion in which 164 colliers were lost. Eight men were sacked as trouble-makers. The remainder rose in fury and struck. With nearly two thousand workmen out the D.M.A. was clearly embarrassed. It adopted its usual hatred of industrial militancy and began agitating for a return. The agents grossly miscalculated the feeling of their members. A lodge ballot resolved heavily to back the stoppage of all four of the company's mines.⁵⁹ A count at the pits involved showed a two to one majority in favour of a strike.⁶⁰ Crawford, however, observed a high proportion of abstentions. He used this as a pretext to have another vote. All members were accounted for when the officials had a door-to-door count. The result meant a return to work.⁶¹ Crawford again had quashed an embryonic uprising. Opinion swung further into his hands. In September he managed to get council to pass a vote of confidence in the Sliding Scale.⁶²

Just when the agents appeared to be consolidating the rank-and-file's suspicion was again exhibited. Early in 1882 there were plans afoot to renegotiate the Sliding Scale. It had been terminated by the men in December 1881 and they were showing signs of exasperation with the movement to reinter the wage-price nexus. Against the backlog of a vicious clash at Ushaw Moor⁶³ the owners' terms were rejected. Motions to council called for an immediate end to the scale

to be accompanied by substantial rises.⁶⁴ Towards the end of February the lodges placed an ultimatum before the owners. Either they concede the terms of the miners or face a strike⁶⁵. Typically, Crawford shunned a confrontation. A ballot of the members, though showing a majority for a strike, was able to be rejected since it fell below the requisite two-thirds majority⁶⁶. The usual palliative of arbitration (already offered by the owners with a strike imminent) was resorted to and 3½% awarded to the colliers. It was a far cry from the original 20% but it satisfied the leadership if it by-passed a dispute. There was no rebellion of the membership. In trade matters they had usurped the pace but overall their attitude towards the agents progressed no further than suspicion, a sentiment echoed in August 1882 when a lodge attempted to curtail all contact between the D.M.A. and the owners.⁶⁷

Throughout the period the Durham miners were in quest of a political articulation of their grievances but they were unable to introduce any coherence other than the radicalism of Gladstonian-Liberalism, an ideology four-square within the bounds of Victorian capitalism. From the start of the depression the idea of emigration had been mooted as a palliative to the crises of the coal trade. As a result of this belief redundant men were urged to quit their homes and sail across oceans. The policy had been established early in the 1870s but the suspicion of the grass-roots had led to its temporary abandonment after suggestions that some officials were profiting from the commission granted by the shippers.⁶⁸ Whatever, by 1881 the lodge delegates

were mandating a return to labour restriction.⁶⁹ A little later the "ca'canny" philosophy was re-introduced,⁷⁰ this time with the approval of Crawford who, in spite of his Liberalism, had been converted by the constrictions of trade. The difference lay in that now the necessity of national action was credited, though Crawford perhaps doubted its feasibility.⁷¹ In practice, the proposals failed to get off the ground. Restriction of output was detrimental to the region so long as other areas continued to supply the shortage, while even within the county there were pitmen who evaded the union instructions. Again, emigration proved no solution since the owners had a pool of unemployment always available in depression and if colliers were in short supply it was easy to import a number from the devastated parts of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Durham miners were turning up answers to their predicament which merely tinkered with the manifestations of the problem.

There is no more spectacular indictment of the shortcomings of the vision of the colliers than in their directly political activity. The North-East miners, far from the myth of being apathetic, had shown a keen interest in national affairs from the commencement of the 19th century, but since the 1840s there had been a remarkable acquiescence in the attitude of the villagers. During the years 1860-1888 the Durham miners were loyal supporters of the Liberals. They took to the only banner which they regarded as an alternative to the Tory magnates. In so

doing they were entrusting their hopes to a party pledged to the doctrine of Manchester economics; determined to entrench the free trade creed of John Bright. The followers of Gladstone, sincere democrats though some may have been, had little to offer the miners by way of amelioration of conditions. On the contrary, a heavy proportion of the coal-owners and managers were members of the Liberal Party. The assumptions of the coal trade and Liberals coincided neatly. That the miners echoed similar fundamentals was to accede to the status quo.

When examining the politics of Durham miners the most significant point is the consistent forerunning role played by William Crawford, even though he was himself an ardent Gladstonian-Liberal. Crawford was the guiding light of the colliers from at least 1872-1888. It was he who brought a bite to the proverbial Liberalism. The D.M.A. was a bastion of that party but what Crawford contributed was a tenacious radicalism which the members failed to articulate. They may well have felt the impetus of their existence thrusting them into conflict with the economic order, but only in Crawford was there a consciousness of a Liberal variant. The members, embittered as they were on the industrial front, had no grasp of anything beyond the two-party system.

It is not difficult to find examples of Crawford's faith in Liberal leaders. In May 1880 we read his praises for; "the pioneers in all great and beneficial changes, in the laws as effecting workmen,"⁷² and four years later credit

was still due for "the reliefs we have got (which) have been the work of Liberal Governments."⁷³ His advocacy of conciliation, compromise and negotiation - all liberal traits - ~~was~~^{was} legion, so it is easy to imagine Crawford as well within the flock of Gladstone's party. Certainly, the pitmen as a whole were. Their faith in Gladstone at times rivalled that placed in their own leaders. On the political front the Durham miners were no threat to the established party. Their politics were epitomized by the motion passed in March 1880; "That we, the miners of Durham, unite with the miners of Northumberland, and other organized bodies of workmen in the North, to hold a mass meeting on the Town Moor of Newcastle, on Whit Monday, in order to advocate a policy of peace, retrenchment and reform. And that Mr. Gladstone be invited to attend, so that we may thank him for the life-long and transcendent services which he has rendered to the liberal cause."⁷⁴ Crawford himself, in recommending his members to patronize a newspaper, advised that it "will represent the political views of the great number of our members" in being Liberal.⁷⁵ Such opinion is confirmed when a few months later Council ratified; "This meeting, composed of two hundred representatives and directly representing forty thousand working miners, desires to express to the Rt. Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, its sincere thanks for the very complete and comprehensive measure of reform, which, by indefatigable perseverance, he has been able to pass into law, and by which two millions of capable and trustworthy citizens have been enfranchised."⁷⁶

The support for Gladstone was so great that in early 1883 Crawford himself had to rebuff a call of censure after criticising Gladstone. Even when the pitmen went to an extreme it was only to call for legislation on the franchise. They were contented to have two agents elected under the auspices of the Liberal Party in 1885. 78

Despite the above, it would be an injustice to place Crawford in precisely the same political bracket as the rank-and-file. He was a much more sceptical follower who could find an articulation of his dissatisfaction (when conditions reached an unbearable state the pitmen reacted by walk-outs). Writing of a local Tory in August 1884, Crawford spelled out his political stance. It reflected a philosophy considerably shaped by both knowledge of the major parties and the cathartic realities of pit life in Durham. Crawford was a pragmatist who questioned the contemporary orthodoxy when it disfavoured his class, though he could never reach another world-view. Rather he described himself as a "Liberal (Radical if you like) and in favour of any change which I regard as progressive and which will confer increased comforts on the general community. He (Tory) belongs to a class with whom things in this world have gone well and who are satisfied in consequence. I belong to a class with whom things have gone badly and not well, and who cannot be satisfied."⁷⁹

Crawford never relented his wariness of Liberals. He noted that even within the Gladstonians there was dilatoriness when it came to forwarding working class measures. 80

Crawford could launch virulent diatribes against the socio-economic structure of Britain, never forgetting the ideas which had been prevalent in his youth.⁸¹ His whole being reacted against crude acceptance of the laissez-faire creed when it implied suffering for his people. "The doctrine which teaches the entire subservience of labour to capital and that the laws of supply and demand, shall determine, whether the workmen shall be fairly fed and clothed, or literally starved and ill-clothed, shall have at all times, my most strenuous opposition. Such doctrines are both pernicious and destructive" he wrote in 1860,⁸² and a year later declared that "we are passing through an epoch in our history, but as men increase in intelligence, they will lessen the chasm which now divides the rich from the poor. As working men get wiser, they will not go on for ever working for somebody else, but will claim a much greater share of the wealth which they themselves produce."⁸³ He was at his most vitriolic when his members were under shameless attack. During the South Moor lock-out he verged close to a Marxist model, exclaiming "one of these men (owners) could boast, that he had a cart load of sovereigns. Who has produced them? Not himself. If he possesses all this wealth, it is only what should have been distributed amongst the workmen in years gone by. All wealth or capital is surplus labour, produced by the workmen."⁸⁴ Nearly ten years later Crawford was still clinging to this division.⁸⁵ These were the views which allowed Crawford to shape the political tradition in Durham and drag the

miners out of the doldrums of the 1860s at least into their radicalism of the seventies and eighties.

There were grave drawbacks to the pungency of Crawford. Much of his writings are merely verbal displays because he possessed a major trait which countermanded all his defiance of the economic order. This was his abiding belief in justice and faith in mankind. It was the strong link passed down through his Primitive Methodism. It was the chain which prevented him from countenancing other ideologies and held him firm within the bounds of Gladstonian-Liberalism. Crawford shied away from all but verbal conflict because all else was illegal to the reputable unionists of his ilk. To have carried his protestations into action he would have had to shed his cloak of respectability. It separated him from his own rank-and-file. They found it harder to find expression at the wrongs of society round the conference table but they experienced few of the qualms about striking that wracked William Crawford. The secretary could argue that he was "no advocate of strikes. I believe in an appeal to reason, and not to brute force. Strikes ought to be a thing of the past and the person or persons who force a strike are responsible for both the social and commercial disasters, which are sure to follow to the district in which such strike takes place. I believe in a mutuality of action but a mutuality based on the principles of justice and fair-play. There can be no mutuality where one party dictates and the other must obey" The membership certainly agreed

in principle with such procedures, but they had to face the owners' "brute force" and unlike Crawford they frequently were driven beyond endurance by its bludgeons.

However, as the 1880's drew to a close factors arose which were to challenge the union spokesmen of the Liberal epoch. "The homogeneous England of the mid-Victorian decades broke up...In spite of its sharp divisions into classes, parties, and creeds, it had for over forty years been strongly united by fundamental identities of outlook.. The dissolution cannot be exactly dated, for it was gradual. Queen Victoria's 1887 Jubilee was perhaps the last occasion on which enough semblance of the old unity survived to present an imposing facade."⁸⁷ Nationally there arose the movement since known as 'new unionism'. Irrelevant for our concern are its origins, but its effects are crucial as they ushered in a new brand of union activity. It was not a novel articulation, more a vibrant mood. It took the militancy of the Durham miners to an unprecedented level with its success in uniting localized grievances and initiating county-wide agitation. Tom Mann's call for a fresh approach to the aims of unionism⁸⁸ created a thunder which reverberated through working class organizations the length and breadth of the country.

Durham was relatively impervious to overt criticisms of its agents, but the consequent rise in industrial militancy shook the D.M.A. to its very foundations. By 1890 never were there such tensions between official policy and the actual movements of the rank-and-file. Fuel was added to

the strain when in 1888 the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (M.F.G.B.) was formed out of the energy created from the aggressive call for an Eight Hours' Day and the Minimum Wage. "The National Union gradually shrank up to Northumberland and Durham, whilst the Miners' Federation, with its aggressive policy and semi-socialist principles... grew apace. From 36,000 members in 1888, it rose to 96,000 in 1889, 147,000 in 1891, and over 200,000 in 1893, overshadowing in its growth all existing Trade Union organizations."⁸⁹ The repercussions instigated a division in the D.M.A. which remained until the second decade of the twentieth century.

As early as March 1887 the Council had been calling for a single national union,⁹⁰ though the agents carped that such a body existed and refused to admit the inefficiency of the National Union. That same year Mann, Henry Hyndman, and William Morris appeared as nominees for the Gala. By September the D.M.A. felt sufficiently threatened to issue a lengthy circular answering the encroaching dangers.⁹¹ Their protest, however, was of little avail. The spark of an undermining rank-and-file movement had been kindled that year with the Northumberland miners' strike. S.D.F. agitators entered the region causing a flurry of discontent with traditional structures. Inevitably they permeated the Tyne.⁹² * Haswell proposed a break with the National Union that October⁹³ and appeals against the executive committee soared to such a level as to necessitate some defence.⁹⁴

* This was considerably agitated by the formation of the North of England Socialist Society following the Northumberland miners' strike of 1887. See Welbourne (1923), Douglas (1972), Torr, *op. cit.*, p. 240-244.

These were portentous. It was in 1888-1892 that the split between the members and the agents reached flash-point. Towards the end of 1888 two resolutions went into Council which shook the bottom of the union.⁹⁵ A motion to give material support to the Yorkshire miners (then on strike) was hurriedly presented. It was tacit approval of the tactics of the M.F.G.B. and anathema to the D.M.A. agents. At the same time Haswell lodge forwarded the fighting motion that as "The coalowners of Great Britain are thinking of forming a syndicate to buy up all the coal mines in this country, this Council deems that it is time steps were taken to counteract any undue action on their part, in so far as the workmen are concerned, such as the forming of a general Association, embracing all miners in the United Kingdom." Crawford fought the resolutions tooth and nail. A circular was issued with the programme hitting at the unprecedented steps which would surely bring disaster to the association. By the skin of his teeth he survived when on December 8th the latter was ruled out of order and the former moved off the board.⁹⁶

Still, Crawford's worries were only just beginning. It was but the start of a heated campaign the strain of which contributed considerably to his premature death the following year. Silksworth opened up the general discontent with an open circular demanding militant action to get more money. The D.M.A. issued another wordy appeal for peace,⁹⁷ arguing in answer to Silksworth's charge that wages had increased. In fact, Silksworth were correct to point out the relative

decline in standards⁹⁸ and the M.F.C.B. were quick to inform the men. A long dispute had earlier commenced over the Sliding Scale. Murton that September moved for an end to the wage-price index.⁹⁹ Again, the inevitable circular appeared decrying such breaks with traditional policy. Crawford managed to win the round.

Marsden returned the motion at the start of 1889. The answer from the agents was far from satisfying, merely an attempt at justification for a system which the mood of the miners could not countenance.¹⁰⁰ Against the wishes of the executive the following month Council decided on a county ballot to examine the feeling on the Sliding Scale.¹⁰¹ The delegates restricted the ballot to a straight issue: abolition or amendment of the Scale.¹⁰² The agents had their backs against the wall. That May there were a number of resolutions for a 20% increase in wages.¹⁰³ It marked the start of a battle which was to prove that if any action was to be taken it would have to come in spite of the leadership. Some pits had already lost confidence in the officials and as early as March Ryhope had called for their resignation,¹⁰⁴ but for the majority it was the trade union issue of wages where they could express their discontent.

On June 24th the owners offered a 5% increase to satiate the mens' claim for ~~tw~~^{ty}ty. The agents predictably sued for acceptance, introducing the standard tack of union fragility, fear of public condemnation and pragmatism. They frankly declared "we advise you to accept the offer now made by the Owners."¹⁰⁵ The membership felt somewhat stronger.

The ballot at the end of July went completely against D.M. policy. The Sliding Scale was abandoned. 25,880 urged strike against 5,667 to accept the offer, with 2,652 for arbitration and 9,984 neutrals.¹⁰⁶ As soon as the owners got word of the voting the inducement was upped to 10%.¹⁰⁷ The pitmen's militancy had already paid dividends. The agents made no mistake in the next vote. The ballot was put aside and the conservative Federation Association allowed the decision. Within it, the miners favoured acceptance - by a majority of one.¹⁰⁸ The officials stalled action by the skin of their teeth. From the tone of their circular they were mightily relieved.¹⁰⁹

The members remained unsettled. In August Council contained nine resolutions demanding wage increases ranging from five to thirty percent.¹¹⁰ The agents evoked the *montas* rule to postpone a second crisis,¹¹¹ but the lodge delegates overlooked the constitution to pass a request for another fifteen percent.¹¹² Where they made a mistake was to entrust negotiations to their officials.¹¹³ In so doing they had to settle for ten percent.

Looking back from December 1889 the tensions within the union were easy to discern. New social forces had given coherence to the discontents at grassroots. The upsurge in militancy on a county level was bound to clash with the conciliatory doctrine of the Crawfordians. The end of the decade was marked by the recurrence of ever-increasing crisis. 1889 itself was merely a preliminary to the greater struggle of the 1890's. But one qualification. The split within

the D.M.A. was restricted. The men felt frustrated at the slow development of wages and consequently voted heavily for action, but this was the result of exasperation in one area only. On the political level there was still immense support for the Gladstonian-Liberalism of Crawford, particularly when the variant was the secretary's steely humanitarianism. The D.M.A. was still characterized by the contradictions of its actions and consciousness. The socialist agitation seeping into the area was only just beginning to point out this absurdity.

NOTES:

1. After the breakaway of Northumberland in 1865, Joseph Selders remained as secretary for the remnants of the union in Durham. He rapidly disappeared from the scene with the decline of organization.
2. Metcalfe, op.cit., p.19-21
3. Ibid, p.21
4. At the Market Hotel. A full report was carried by the "Durham Chronicle" Nov.26th 1869
5. At the Gala of 1872 the resolution was passed;

"That this meeting regards arbitration as the logical way of settling those differences which in trade necessarily arise between employers and employed. Arbitration recognized the right of both parties to put forth views, and leads to examination or investigation, which tends to avoid strikes and lock-outs, with all their commercial ruin and misery. It has now for a short time been in operation amongst the miners of Durham, and we are able to speak of beneficial results; and we most heartily wish to have a continuance and extension of the principle." Quoted in Metcalfe, op.cit., p.68
6. "During the years 1872 and 1873 we knew the profits made by the owners to be enormous, still we never demanded more than a moderate wage. Had we acted in keeping with the true principles of political economy, we should almost, if not altogether, have made our wages double that which they were, even at the highest point. Had this been done we could have afforded to submit to a reduction of even more than the full 20% now sought by the owners. This, however, was not done,

and we think it manifestly unfair to call for a second reduction in little more than three months from the first one being made... it is our strong conviction that having on our part acted in the most moderate way during unparalleled high prices in the coal trade, we think that had trade been worse ... still the owners would not have been justified in seeking a reduction of wages." "Durham Coal Trade Association", Oct. & Nov. 1874, Newcastle, A. Reid.

7. Wellbourne, op.cit. p.154
8. "D.C.A." Oct. 7th 1870.
9. cf. List of unofficial stoppages, note 93, Chapter 1.
10. This is not an unusual quality, e.g. see Jack Jones' article in "The Incompatibles", R. Blackburn & A. Cockburn (ed.) Penguin 1965.

One need only check the records of the D.M.A. to see a host of examples of the pitmen censoring other collieries for actions they themselves had taken quite recently, e.g. Council, July 28th 1883, Hebburn motion.

11. cf. note 9 above.
12. Except on trivial issues, e.g. with reference to a motion for ending monthly circulars Crawford wrote (Monthly Circular, January/February 1883) "With this I have not the slightest complaint to make. The county, through the Council, brought it into existence and the same power at all times possesses the power to abolish it..."
13. Quoted in Metcalfe, op.cit., p.68. also see D.M.A. Records, Sept. 23rd 1880 for New Herrington affair: and account of "Durham Chronicle", March 21st 1872.

14. cf. "Durham Chronicle", May 17th 1872.

and Welbourne, *op.cit.* p.153-154.

15. See list of Appeals, Ch.1, note *fn.* 76.

16. See Ch.1, critique of Douglass' work.

17. William Crawford, born 1833, died 1890. From 1871 full-time secretary of D.M.A. until his death. The son of a pitman and a pitman himself. He was converted to Primitive Methodism at the age of 24. Possessed of a very strong personality which made him both respected and feared the length of the coalfield.

Politically, he was a Gladstonian-Liberal, a pursuer of conciliation and an advocate of negotiation. He commonly ordered dissident pits back to work. Yet despite his stand his views reflect the contradictory pulls of his political doctrine and the situation of the pitmen. Welbourne captured this oscillation when he wrote "He was not so far blinded by the philosophy of the Manchester radicals as to lose the root idea which he shared with the Owenite socialists that there was some fundamental fallacy in the laws of political economy which denied to the poor man to right to a decent life." (*op.cit.*, p.145).

Dona Torr in "Tom Mann and his Times", Vol.1, 1856-1890, London, Law & Wish 1956, caught the same tendency "... dim old Radical notions of the worker's standard of life, his right to the wealth he produces, lingered on. Crawford, the Durham leader, though, like Burt, he opposed restriction of output, could not forget ideas older than the creed of the Freetraders." (p.241)

The conflict of respectability versus militant trade unionism rings through the life of Crawford (though the former took precedence), from his severe attacks on the Liberal Party (Jan. 1833) though still a Liberal (May 1860) through to his advocacy of vigorous unionism (March-April 1881) while still pertaining to the wage-price index (June 1861), to his 'socialist' hopes (Dec. 1880), while constantly fighting against the militant lodges (Council Minutes June 12th 1886 criticizing Chopwell).

18. To be ensnared with the hegemony of bourgeois society was the prerogative of the pitmen. One looks in vain for example, through the great literature of the day to find anyone who escaped the web. Even social reformers like Charles Kingsley and Mrs. Gaskell were no propounders of fundamental change. Even the famous defender of the working-classes, Charles Dickens, envisaged reform by miraculous intervention and his working-class heroes are remarkably acquiescent. Stephen Blackpool of "Hard Times" is the arch-type portrayal. He would never have been found on the picket line, let alone Kennington Common.

19. Typical Gala banner, July 1872

20. "The expansion of trade, under the influence of which Trade Unionism...reached in 1873-4 one of its high-water marks, came suddenly to an end. The contraction became visible first in the coal and iron industries, those in which the inflation had perhaps been greatest. The first break occurred in February...During the rest of the year prices and wages came tumbling down in both these staple industries."

Sidney + Beatrice Webb, "History of Trade Unionism", Longmans, Green&Co. 1896, p.327-328

21. Obviously, this view is coming close to that of Lenin's articulated in "What is to be Done?" (1902), though the dichotomy must be assumed to be fluid. The crucial split was the absence of a revolutionary intention even in a logical revolutionary situation.

22. The fragility of the D.M.A. funds had been a cause of grave concern for Crawford since its inception. For example, see May 27th 1878 circular calling for an end to the Relief Fund and later, Aug. 1878, his appeal to cut benefits; "An Association wanting money, is like a ship wanting a rudder in a boisterous sea. We would soon find ourselves driven on to the rocks of discontent, disaffection, and disunion, and in all probability, shivered to pieces in the struggle. To pursue longer the course we are now pursuing, must shortly leave us in that pitiable and helpless condition." and in Dec. 6th 1878 Council adopted a new rule which stopped the General Funds sinking below £10,000 at any time.

23. Metcalfe, op.cit., p.89

24. cf. Welbourne, op.cit., p.160-161;

"No sooner was it known (10% agreement) in the county than a general protest was made, not only by the miners, but by the mechanics and the enginemen. They objected to being included in the reduction. These bodies held meetings in Durham on the racecourse on May 2nd, and passed resolutions not to accept any reduction. The spirit of revolt was rampant in the county amongst the members of the Miners' Association."

Association. Meetings to protest against it were held throughout the county. Circulars were sent out by District Councils, in which the Executive Committee was held up to ridicule.." from J.Wilson, op.cit., p.93-94

25.D.M.A. Council, May 7th 1874

26.D.M.A. estimated it from May 8th to May 14th.

"D.C.A." 8th May 1874; "The peculiar feature of this gigantic strike is, that it is undertaken by the men, against the decision and counsel of the union, who, perceiving the necessity of making some concessions from the enormous rate which the men have been receiving for their labour, had agreed to an abatement of 10%. This appears to have aroused the indignation of the ignorant colliers, whose earnings have, for the last couple of years, been enormous, and without any knowledge or calculation of the terrible consequences of their course, they have resolved to engage in this most disastrous social war. The council of the Miners' Union have addressed a very sensible appeal to the men, in which it is forcibly represented that reductions from 10 to 25 percent are being made in all directions - throughout England, Scotland, and Wales - in the wages of the coalminers, and that a persistence in the present unreasonable struggle can only entail destitution and wretchedness for months to come..."

27.Quoted in Wilson, op.cit., p.102

28."Durham Coal Board Arbitration", Newcastle, Oct.+Nov.1874,

A.Reid, p.54

29.Ibid, p.55

Compare this attitude to that of the owners, and then ask who were the militants?

Webbs, "History of Trade Unionism", op.cit.;

"'All over the United Kingdom', states the Monthly Report the Amalgamated Carpenters for January 1879, 'notices of reductions in wages and extended hours of labour come pouring in from employers with an eagerness and audacity which contrast strangely with the lessons of forbearance and moderation so incessantly dinned into the ears of the British workman in happier times.'" p.331

30. Umpire Rt. Hon. W.E. Forster, M.P., decision April 23rd 1875 at Newcastle

31. Wilson, op.cit., p.108

32. Umpire Chas. H. Hopwood, Q.C., M.P. Decision Feb. 16th 1876

33. Mr. G. T. Shaw-Lefevre, Esq. M.P. Decision Sept. 25th 1876

34. Wilson, op.cit., quoted p.116

35. Metcalfe, op.cit., quoted p.96-97

36. Vote 20,190 to 16,435, Wilson op.cit., p.117

37. cf. Metcalfe, op.cit., p.98-99

38. D.M.A. Council March 8th 1877

39. First Sliding Scale formed March 14th 1877

40. Welbourne, op.cit., p.185

41. Special Council, April 2nd 1878. Decision of E.J. Meynell arrived at April 15th 1878

42. cf. Ch.1 footnotes for account of the strike.

43. Ibid

44. Ibid.

45. e.g. see Wilson's harrassment by a crowd at Durham, Wilson op.cit., p.275.

46. e.g. see Wilson's comment thirty years later;

"...the feeling manifested towards the Committee there was only on a par with that found everywhere throughout the country. If one of those at the head of affairs appeared in the street and passed a group of men insult was rampant... Still the Committee was not to be driven from their task. They regretted the action of the employers in refusing open arbitration, and who, knowing the condition of the Union, were determined to force their full demand; and they were sorry for the opposition of their members, but they knew they were moved by sheer desperation, and played upon by designing men who cared more for popularity, even if it were fleeting, than the welfare of the Union, and who would not hesitate to bring ruin if perchance small gain would come to them from it." Wilson, op.cit., p.146-7

47. In a letter to the Miners' Association he wrote;

"The strike which took place in the months of April and May last will ever remain an epoch in the history of the Association. A more complete success never took place. At its beginnings, strong doubts were expressed and great fears entertained as to what would be the ultimate consequences of the stop. I was among those who doubted, but did not despair, and the end more than justified the expectations of the most sanguine. There never was a more complete stoppage of work, or one which the workmen, at least, ended more satisfactorily." Metcalfe, op.cit., p.112-113

And on Oct. 20th 1883, Crawford could begin a circular;

"Now, I am among the last to say that men should never str

I believe there are times when, as in 1879, to strike, becomes a clear and imperative duty."

48. Annual Council, 1879

(a) Financial Secretary	Mr. Patterson:-	212	maj. 168
	Mr. Simpson:-	44	
(b) President	Mr. Forman:-	238	maj. 190
	Mr. Jackson:-	42	
(c) Corresponding Secretary	Mr. Crawford:-	209	maj. 137
	Mr. Wilson:-	72	

49. Monthly Report, January 1880;

"At one or two collieries, these enemies of all that is good, are trying to do their brutal work, by sowing dissension and dissatisfaction broadcast. No specific charge is made against any one. They rather choose to deal in generalities and innuendoes, as being the most successful way of disseminating their groundless complaints. We try to do our work in the best possible manner, being at all times anxious to protect the interests of our members. In doing this, however, it is impossible to please everyone. We have at all times, and under all circumstances, advocated that which seemed to us, to be right. This course, we shall still pursue, feeling assured that it is the only one which will give to our Association, stability, permanency, and general usefulness."

50. January 17th 1880, Council;

"That no man or men be allowed to make more than 4s/5d per day for 11 hours collieries, and 4s/2d for 10 hours collieries: but in case of two marrows that are putting their work together, the one shift to make up for the other."

51. March 15th 1880, Council, 3 resolutions;

"(18) That there be a restriction throughout the county, and

that it take place on the first date after this Council Meeting.

(19) That all collieries acting contrary to Council motion be considered unfinancial, and that they be treated accordingly.

(20) That no man make more than the county average in any one day."

52. Executive Committee circular March 25th 1880. Crawford also pointed out that many pits were ignoring the council recommendations, while their expulsion would result in the crippling of the D.M.A..

53. Ballot of lodges 130 against, 117 for restriction, April 3rd Special Council Meeting April 17th 1880, ballot of 9,482 to 5,618 seconded the decision of the executive committee.

54. July 15th 1880, voting 131 to 84

55. July 22nd 1880

56. July 29th 1880, voting 89 to 76

57. From the Sliding Scale agreement.

58. February 1881, voting;

Bradlaugh	14	Morgan	-
Carling	4	Patterson	8
Crawford	240	Reynolds	2
Dover	6	Roper	1
Forman	31	Wilkinson	29
Jones	104	Wilson	97

59. April 26th 1881, voting;

Support Seaham	51
Seaham out	27
Firm out	152
County out	31

60. April 26th 1881, voting; 493 to 243.

61. May 7th 1881, votes 542 to 843 against a strike

62. 24th September 1881 Council;

"We believe that Sliding Scales are the best arrangement which can be got for regulating wages of workmen, under the present circumstances."

63. cf. Welbourne, op.cit., p.214-217 for an account.

64. For example, motion from Auckland Park, Feb. 18th 1882 Council

"We move that the Sliding Scale be abolished altogether, and that we demand a 20% advance, or give 14 days notice to cease work if refused."

65. February 25th 1882 Council;

(1) "That in our opinion, the basis of the Sliding Scale drawn up by the Federation Board is just and equitable, and we cannot, therefore, offer any other terms to the Owners as a means of settlement.

(2) Should the foregoing resolution be not complied with, we request from the Owners an advance of twenty percent. in the wages of all men and boys, believing that trade warrants such an application."

66. March 18th 1882, Vote was 11,322 to 9,449 for a strike.

67. August 4th 1882 Programme of Council Meeting;

"Seeing that so much dissatisfaction prevails in the county through so many private meetings taking place between our Agents and the masters, we move that, in future, they be forbidden to enter the Miners' Hall, at Durham, under any pretence whatever."

68. D.M.A. records June 26th 1877

69. November 3rd 1881 Council;

"Seeing for the monthly report now read, the output of coal is by far too large, we think there are too many miners in

the county, and therefore, move, as an inducement to our members to meet the requirements of the case, that we pay over to every one wishing to emigrate, who has been a financial member in the Association for the last twelve consecutive months, the sum of two pounds." Newton Cap

70. June 24th 1882 Council;

(30) We move that the time has now arrived for the National Association to seriously consider a general restriction of out-put, with a view of having it adopted throughout the whole of the Associations, comprising the National Union.

(31) That unless any coal gets stacked to the amount of three days' work, the colliery be put on three days per week until the stacked coal be filled away. The men to offer their services to get the coal filled;

(32) That no colliery work more than 5 days per week, and 10 hours per day, as, in our opinion, nothing but restricting the out-put of coal will improve the miners' wages: this to be submitted to the National Conference."

71. June 26th 1882 D.M.A. circular;

"National action in social, or, wages matters, is a departure from all past lines. It is a huge undertaking, and will be heavy uphill work. But it is absolutely necessary, if workmen are to sustain even an approximate decent existence."

November 1882 Monthly Circular;

"This (regulation) is required, and, I am convinced, is the only panacea for the evil, altho' it is difficult to say how it can be carried out. Striking for a week or two is of no avail whatever, if, at the end of it, men have to return as

is now done, almost everywhere, to hew coals 8,9,10,11, and even 12 hours per day. Markets are glutted with coal, and we are still going on producing more, in order that markets may be still more glutted, or if that is not the object, that, at least, is the effect, resulting in low prices, and ruinously low wages. We are told that, to attempt this regulation, is a gross violation of the principles of political economy, and that as a consequence it must end in lamentable failure. No principles, however widely accepted, can be right, which dooms to be ill fed and worse clothed, tens of thousands of men, women, and children. The difficulty with me, is not the violation of the principles of political economy, but in a want of cohesion amongst ourselves. To do the work there, needs a national undertaking and national action, a general organization, whereby entire ramifications of our mining industry could be set in motion at one time. District action is worse than useless, it is pernicious, and must end in social and commercial disaster, for those who try it..."

72. Monthly Report May 1880;

"In Mr. Gladstone we have a man, who never uses stratagem, for the purpose of blinding those he professes to serve. His actions, like his words, are marked by clearness and perspicuity, and can be understood by one and all; and those who trust him, are never deceived. The working man, who professes to be a Conservative, does not know much about the legal disabilities, which, in past years, his class has had to labour under. Neither does he know from which party

relief from these legal disabilities have come. Taking ourselves, we find that the first Mines Bill, passed in 1850, was the work of a Liberal Government. The Bill, successfully ammended in 1855 - 1860, and again in 1872, was, in every instance, the work of the Liberals when in office. As a class therefore, we have little to thank the Conservatives for. The Liberals have always been the pioneers, in all great and beneficial changes, in the laws as affecting workmen. The Conservatives at best are only trimmers and white-washers."

73. April 1884 Monthly Circular; Crawford commenting on the opening of a Conservative Working-Mens' Club in Newcastle, launched his usual diatribe against working-class Tories; "In speaking, this young tory puppet screeched out, and asked whether they wanted the Liberalism of Lord Hartington, or that of Mr. Henry George. Mr. Henry George is their great bane. The doctrine he advocates is not that of king's possessing rights divine, but that the land is the people's, and it ought to be unconditionally restored to them. No reason can be assigned why working men should be conservatives. All, or nearly all, the reliefs we have got has been the work of Liberal Governments."

74. Council, March 15th 1880

75. March 1884 Monthly Circular, on the 'Northern Leader'; "This is a new penny paper, recently issued for South Shields. It is essentially a Liberal paper, and as such, will represent the political views of the great number of our members. It is both instructive and entertaining, and contains something.

to interest every class of readers..."

76. Council Meeting December 15th 1884

77. January/February 1885 Monthly Circular;

"AT the annual meeting, a motion appeared on the programme, to discontinue the monthly circular. With this I have not the slightest complaint to make. The county, through the Council, brought it into existence, and the same power at all times possess the power to abolish it. I was not at the annual meeting when the question was discussed, but I am informed that the chief reason assigned for seeking its abolition was, that I had not kept strictly to trade matters, but that I had once or twice adversely criticized the coercive policy of the present Government. The representative told the Council, that the circular was intended to deal with trade matters only, and that the Lodges believed in Mr. Gladstone, and, therefore, did not like to see anything to which he was a party criticized..."

78. Council September 24th 1881, (Passed);

"We deem it necessary to state that there exists in the county, a political association, and that between that association and ours, there ought to exist a very close connexion. Moreover, the question of a labour candidate is specially one belonging to this political association. The means to carry out this resolution ought to be placed in the hands of this political association..."

79. August 1884 Monthly Circular

80. April 1881 Monthly Circular;

"Until very recent years, the interests of workmen in the

House of Commons were watched by Capitalists alone. Men whose direct and personal interests were diametrically opposed to those of the workmen. That being so, but scant justice was done them, or rather we ought to say, that such manifest injustice comprised in bad law was continued...Other laws require changing, but the work is most difficult in consequence of the influence arising from self-interest, which so largely prevails in the House of Commons. A cruel Coercion Bill for Ireland can be pushed through with indecent haste, and every national precedent and practise grossly violated, by making, it retrospective. But when a measure directly affects working men for good, even our Liberal statesmen can keep it waiting for years. The present Government went into office, pledged to assimilate the County to the present Borough Franchise. So far, however, the matter has not been named in the House..." (my emphasis)

81. cf. Dona Torr, op.cit., p.241

82. Monthly Circular October 1880

83. Monthly Circular May 1881

84. Monthly Circular December 1880;

"After wealth has been produced by the workmen, until Hedley Bros. might well be satiated with it, then when they refuse compliance with the most arbitrary and despotic demands, they (owners) turn round, and throw the aged, the weak, the ailing, and the helpless, into the open streets. This, too, with all our advanced civilization, and in the midst of a Christian community. If you will not learn to take care of yourselves, the rude and savage handling received

from men like these will most effectually tell you what you have to expect. One of these men could boast, that he had a cart load of sovereigns. Cont. Ch. 1, note 119, p.86

85. February 1887 Monthly Circular;

"So far, not the lords of creation, but of non-creation, have taken to themselves the creation of wealth by other hands, while the wealth creators have remained steeped in the direst destitution, and very often positive want."

86. February-April 1885 Monthly Circular

87. R.C.K. Ensor, "England 1870-1914", Oxford 1936, p.304

88. T. Mann, "What a Compulsory Eight Hour Working Day Means to the Workers", Pluto Press 1972, 1st. publ. 1886;

"To trade unionists I desire to make a special appeal. How long, how long will you be content with the present half-hearted policy of your unions? I readily grant that good work has been done in the past by the unions, but, in heaven's name, what good purpose are they serving now? All of them have large numbers out of employment even when their particular trade is busy. None of the important societies have any policy other than that of endeavouring to keep wages from falling. The true unionist policy of aggression seems entirely lost sight of; in fact the unionist of today should be of all men last to be hopelessly apathetic, of supporting a policy that plays directly into the hands of the capitalist exploiter. Do not think I am a non-unionist myself, and therefore denounce unionists. I, take my share of the work in the trade union to which I belong, but I candidly confess that unless it shows more vigor in the future...I shall be compelled to take the view - against my will - that

to continue to spend time over the ordinary squabble - investigating, do-nothing policy will be an unjustifiable waste of one's energies. I am sure that there are thousands of others in my state of mind..." p.22-23

89. Webbs, 1896 op.cit., p.580

90. March 18th 1887 Council Programme;

"We the Haswell Lodge, think that the time has arrived when steps ought to be taken to bring about the establishment of such a union as would embrace the whole of the miners of Great Britain with one central fund." Passed April 2nd 1887

91. September 15th 1887

92. cf. Dona Torr, op.cit., p.240-244

93. Council Programme October 28th 1887

94. Appeals' Circular May 12th 1887;

"We cannot understand how it is, but no matter who is elected to serve you by your own votes, it takes over three parts of every Council meeting...It appears that every decision which is against a lodge...it is to be carried to appeal...We hope this time you will stand by your committee also see Appeals' Circular Feb. 16th 1888

and Appeals' Circular July 14th 1887

95. Nov. 24th 1888 Council Programme

96. Dec. 8th 1888 Council

97. Nov. 26th 1888

98. See table issued June 1889 comparing district wage-rates

99. Sept. 28th 1888 Council Programme

100. Jan. 19th 1889 Appeals' Circular;

"The Sliding Scale has not been in use since 1887, or more

than eleven years. During that time many opportunities have been afforded us of judging as to its merits and worth. After the most impartial and searching investigation, we unhesitatingly pronounce it the best of all possible ways yet discovered, and under existing circumstances, of settling wages' questions...the Sliding Scale brings the highest possible good to all parties. It steadies trade, and makes work and wages more regular and certain, and higher than they could, or would be, by any other means...we are more than ever satisfied that the Sliding Scale is the best, the surest, and the most just and equitable way of fixing and settling rates of wages; and you ought, therefore, in your highest interest, and the interests of your wives and families, let the Scale continue and go on..."

101. Feb. 2nd 1889 Council

102. April 1st 1889 Adjourned Council Meeting

103. May 25th 1889 Council and May 10th 1889 Programme

104. March 16th 1889 Council Programme;

"That having lost confidence in our officials, we call upon them to resign their offices." Ryhope

March 30th 1889, Council - moved off the board.

105. July 9th 1889 Durham Federation Association and Metcalfe, op.cit., p.138-9.

"The Federation Board were somewhat prematurely jubilant, and of course urged the men to accept the offer (5%), the alternatives being arbitration or a county ballot. When the County replied by demanding a 25% increase the Federation Board decided to take a county ballot, which resulted in a

majority pressing for the demand, and failing it being granted, the Miners' Executive were instructed to arrange to hand in the notices on August 1st 1889. The result of urging the matter to the extreme action was successful because the Owners now offered 'a full and immediate 10% increase in wages'...Crawford tried hard to effect a settlement and made an appeal to the miners for unity, sobriety and trust in the leaders."

106.D.M.A. July 1889

107.July 31st 1889

108. For accepting 10%		Against
Miners	169	168
Mechanics	38	8
Cokemen	28	2
Enginemen	<u>115</u>	<u>3</u>
	<u>350</u>	<u>181</u>

109.July 31st 1889 Durham Fed. Ass.;

"This offer ought to be accepted. Everyone (unless it be the unobservant and inexperienced), must be fully alive to all the dangers to our social, and it may be our permanent condition, which always follows a strike, such as we should have in this county. It does not mean a few hands, but the entire county (comprising 500,000 folks) laid commercially prostrate, and who can conceive the social and moral disaster, arising from such a state of things?"

110.August 30th 1889 Council Programme

111.Appeals' Circular August 30th 1889

112.September 14th 1889 Council;

"That the Executive Committee be empowered to meet the Owners asking for a further advance of 15% on our wages, to commence

on November 1st 1889. If refused, the county to be balloted.
113.By lodge vote of 202 to 90.

1890 - 1907

The 1880's closed with the stridency of the rank-and-file throwing traditional union policy to the wind. Whatever the agents retained and continued to profess was negated by the persistent demands for militant action. Crawford fought a running battle against his members to prevent being undermined, but as 1890 approached all the signs pointed towards further defeat. At the same time, however, the critical issue was that for all the membership voted so unreservedly for confrontation they did not simultaneously lose all confidence in their leaders. Rather they were sceptical of that particular aspect of unionism which they connected with depressions and reductions - the Sliding Scale. There were no signs yet that the pitmen stopped paying lip service to the laissez-faire creed, but in their daily lives the constraints of the pit impelled them into rejection of the wage-price index. Significant indeed was the fact that tension within the union was restricted to an institution. The mediators of the Sliding Scale were but incidentally criticized. In 1890 John Wilson became the most prominent spokesman for the Durham miners. His reign was to display an ever-widening split between the leaders and the led. By the 20th century it was a gaping gulf. Wilson had taken his stand in the opposing camp to which his members were leaning. That he could survive as General Secretary until his death in 1915 speaks legions for the hangovers of Liberalism dormant in the county.

Crawford's health deteriorated in the early months of

1890 and his hold on the miners proportionately weakened. In January Council called for a 15% rise and the aggression of 1889 was reasserted.¹ The appeal was rejected, the owners actually claiming the pitmen were overpaid.² The ballot which appeared was resoundingly in favour of a strike but the agents tried to deter the militancy.³ Counting the abstentions as negative votes there was left a majority of only 3,000 for handing in the notices and using this excuse the agents summoned a clarificatory council meeting. The lodge vote of 338 to 30 in favour of striking forced the D.M.A. into a struggle even though its panic was evident.⁴ The overwhelming call to action was symptomatic of the times. The officials were left in their tracks. Immediately the news of the ballot was conveyed to the owners an offer of 5% increase was presented (though this had been declared impossible in January).⁵ For the moment it sufficed to appease the vociferous pitmen.

April approached with Council passing a further motion for another 15%.⁶ The owners' retaliation was to charge the imminence of trade reaction⁷ to which the men replied by demanding improved working conditions.⁸ During the negotiations Crawford died in office.⁹ The agents reacted immediately to position Patterson as Secretary and Wilson as Financial Secretary - though the rules of the Association stipulated an open election. The claim was the convenience of time, but sure enough when the elections took place in August the recommendations were backed by Council. It helped to enter the contest holding the positions for which

they were standing.¹⁰ Furthermore, though Wilson technically did not hold the premier seat in the union it is clear from the style of the records, general policy and other histories, that it was he who took the reins.¹¹

Patterson was in the mould of Crawford but he lacked the tenacity to lead the members in his own direction. He was too amenable to control from the rank-and-file for the satisfaction of D.M.A. headquarters.

Despite the personnel changes the pitmen pursued their militant demands. A ballot was prepared¹² and an affirmation to strike cast 30,484 to 8,728.¹³ Simultaneously, the Wearmouth men were out taking official action over the self-same issue. The agents urged mediation, but their efforts made little headway, only allowing a breathing space for further talks with the owners,¹⁴ the men having conceded the seven-hour demand since many hewers were already working less. Faced with overt threats the owners backed down. The miners won their claim.¹⁵ That October a further 5% was wrung from the capitalists following an extreme resolution at Council.¹⁶ The Durham miners were on the march. This was a new militancy: that of county-wide demands plus localized struggles. For all there was no firmly voiced political creed other than Liberalism, aggressive calls to action pervaded.

1891 was a continuation of this militancy. Silkworth was backed to the hilt in its struggle for complete unionization in spite of the agents' pleading.¹⁷ There were successful moves to cast off the more conservative members

of the Federation Board.¹⁸ Unofficial stoppages escalated to the chagrin of the agents.¹⁹ The hand of Wilson was plain in the Executive Committee's recommendation for the next Council meeting. Localized action was branded in even more stringent terms than ever.²⁰ There was a remarkable incongruity between the resolution and the motion passed a few weeks later calling for a national union of workers to defend themselves against the unifying capitalists.²¹ Militant though the members were, the year ended inauspiciously. A dispute at Murton had been disallowed support since it sparked off illegally. Council overrode the rule but the agents were not to be usurped.²² They enlisted the services of an eminent barrister to state that since the lodge acted unconstitutionally no money could be granted whatever the delegates desired.²³ A cowed meeting ordered Murton to return.²⁴ The officials had managed to overcome the wishes of the membership by vaulting the 'rules' to a hallowed level. It was to become a favourite device of John Wilson. Furthermore, that November a sudden depression gave the owners an opportunity to claim a substantial reduction.²⁵ With the former agents being re-elected unopposed²⁶ 1892 was to be a year of hesitation and inertia when the D.M.A. was confronted with the bellicosity of the owners.

The monthly circular of January 1892 contained a lengthy appeal to peacefully negotiate the crisis and above all to avoid a confrontation. But a ballot issued on February 10th showed that the miners were adamant, the Federation

Association refusing the cut by 41,337 to 605 with 2,050 cast for arbitration and 7,102 for the Federation Board to settle. The officials horrified at the thought of a class rushed back for further talks, returning to ballot again a 7½% reduction or two 5% cuts (both of which they personally approved). The result was indisputable; 40,468 for resistance, 926 for acceptance of the 7½% cut, 1,153 for the two 5%'s and 12,956 for the Board to settle.²⁷ To the shame of the agents they exercised nothing short of duplicity, arguing that despite the huge vote for action so many members had abstained that another vote would be necessary. It was clearly an attempt to stall. A special Council of March 12th 1892 resolved "that we accept no reduction", but still the agents did nothing. A little later the second ballot²⁸ made the wishes of the members crystal clear - 43,056 for a defensive strike against 11,856 for the Board to negotiate. In spite of the mandate the Federation Board was appealing three days later for the Federation to be given power to settle.²⁹ On the very day that the final ballot came out,³⁰ the Federation Board issued a circular reproducing their January 20th 1892 statement; "To this (power of settlement to the Board) we still adhere, as the wisest, surest, and best course to be pursued, and have no doubt, that were it adopted, a speedy settlement might be arrived at, and all the misery and hardship that is necessarily attached to a strike or lock-out, whether it be of short or long duration, would be obviated." Such dalliance could only be exceeded by a further meeting on March 26th

which decided to ballot again whether the men wished to fight or give the Board settlement rights. This in spite of a four to one mandate given a week previously.

Further time was wasted, though April 16th saw the inevitable - 28,151 to 17,598 in favour of action. The agents could argue that in frequently balloting the men they were merely following rule, but this could not cover up the attempt to forestall clashes. Yet this was not the limit of the D.M.A.'s culpability. Even the 'Durham Chronicle' of April 1st seemed to suspect a practical joke when it reported "The Federation Board had, at the time of writing, wired to the secretary of the Coalowners' Association, asking that body to withdraw the notices, and allow the men to return to work. We are, of course, unable to say what may have influenced the Federation Board to adopt this course. To many, in the face of the result of the recent ballot, it will probably appear somewhat inexplicable, and we confess we share to some extent in the mystery. It is an unquestioned fact that the ballot showed more than a two-thirds majority in favour of continuing the strike, consequently it is somewhat difficult to see upon what ground the Federation Board has taken action with a view of the return of the whole of the men to work." The agents, having been informed of the determination of the men to resist the lock-out were going over the heads of their members to effect a settlement. In April 1892 that had to mean acceding to a wage cut. This the unionists rejected, but not so the officials. They were men of their time heavily embroiled

in the Victorian business ethic. They were all staunch Primitive Methodists and their methodism was that of the 1890's. It was the epitome of respectability. Consequently "they reminded their constituents that when the markets were advancing (and on sufficient reason being shown) the employers gave advances by mutual agreement, and therefore mutuality should be reciprocated. They hoped the members would not be rash or doubtful, for these were dangerous and destructive to their interests. 'We meet these situations like business men. The greatest safeguard is confidence in each other, and, as in the past, we have done all we could to merit that confidence from you, so in this most critical period, if you entrust us with the care of this matter, we shall do all we can to bring about the greatest benefit...'³¹ The men were not foolish to refuse the solicitudes of such representatives.

The dilatory attitude of the agents served to give sign of weakness within the union.³² This hesitancy gave the owners enough encouragement to increase the demand to a 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ % reduction. The pitmen balloted 33,451 to 4,425 to fight this encroachment as well,³³ so it was a long three months later when they returned to work after the Bishop of Durham negotiated a 10% cut.³⁴ The lock-out of 1892 had been a victory for the owners, while the agents, in seeking so hysterically for appeasement, lost considerable support from their members. The following year motions appeared calling for their resignation and the Miners' National was persistently abused.³⁵ On the other hand, the M.F.G.B. came in

for much praise after its support during the stoppage,³⁶ culminating that June in a successful resolution favouring Durham's entering the national organization.³⁷ Maybe not a conscious move, at least it was a practical step away from the conformism of the Durham leadership. Certainly John Wilson regarded it as tantamount to insanity and he quickly moved to regroup his deviants. When Council asked for a ballot on the 8-hours issue Wilson was aware that a majority vote would constitute a motion of confidence in the new union. He put a four-page protest against any novelty in shift-working, playing especially on the fears of a possible three-shift system replacing the traditional two. The ballot was 12,684 for 8-hours to 28,217 against. Wilson had succeeded in driving a contradiction between the Durham men and the M.F.G.B.. Encouraged, he followed this with another circular outlining the dire consequences of the M.F.G.B.'s militancy. Particularly in its policy of united national action Wilson saw disaster. His parochialism asserted itself in pointing to the weaknesses of other districts and the folly that a defence of these would ensure.³⁸

The aftermath of the 1892 defeat was a lull in the militancy of the Durham miners. Wilson used the time well to re-establish his ascendancy. In early 1893 the Joint Committee was resurrected and further reductions were channelled into the smooth workings of the Federation Board.³⁹ Nevertheless, Wilson's security was tenuous and he confronted a grave crisis in July when the M.F.G.B. called for national action to recoup lost benefits. The Durham agents

circulated an outline of the difficulties, illustrating pointedly their horror of a strike in such disastrous conditions. Moreover, they saw no reason to fight their employers at this juncture.⁴⁰ Their irresolution was to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Without the North-East Coalfield backing it, the M.F.G.B.'s strike was foredoomed to failure. Wilson was upset when the Council let through a request for a 15% increase,⁴¹ but he averted an immediate strike by 336 to 105.⁴² A county ballot followed which actually favoured a strike by 20,782 to 19,704, but Wilson, using the two-thirds majority rule, could report that voting was against. Durham was expelled from the M.F.G.B. while the latter instigated national action. Wilson was content, though half of his membership was in sympathy with the Midland organization. He was fortunate indeed that with the rest of the country's pitmen striking his own members could benefit from the hardships of fellow trade unionists. Durham basked in an isolated boom fulfilling the coal shortage caused by the M.F.G.B. regions. That October Wilson could present a 5% increase to the colliers (though it was to extend for only three months). That a small majority accepted it is indicative of the limits of their understanding of capitalist accountancy, though significantly Wilson did not introduce the two-third's rule here - for all it was applicable.⁴³ Both Patterson and Wilson were opposed at election time that year, but they secured their seats comfortably enough.⁴⁴ There was criticism throughout the county at an unprecedented level,

but as yet the Durham miners could see no alternative to domination by the Gladstonian-Liberals. On the contrary, most were proud to be supporters of this strain. The rift between grassroots and leadership was without doubt widening but no force arose to encapsulate the discontent. The I.L.P. had contacts in the area since its inception in January 1893,⁴⁵ but their early attempts to gain a foothold fell through,⁴⁶ and even as late as 1896 Northumberland and Durham were regarded as backward areas.⁴⁷

As Wilson began to lose his psychological grip over the men he increasingly moved to consolidate his formal power. Lengthy circulars regularly came from the D.M.A.. Wilson ranged in topics from parliamentary affairs to American disunion but he never overstepped the bounds of his Liberalism. He wrote nothing which did not enhance his work. As time went on his control of the union press was to prove useful in quelling "the young men" and malcontents from the Labour Party. In 1893 Wilson had been presumptuous enough to forward a proposal for a new rule making agents permanent officials.⁴⁸ Suspicion was rife enough to have the idea thrown out,⁴⁹ but Wilson was to occasionally revive the resolution in the hope of avoiding the risk entailed in annual elections. He stood apart from his colleagues by virtue of his intellect, persuasiveness and coherence but all these assets could not prevent persistent calls for re-ballots on the 8-hour issue, joining the M.F.G.B.,⁵⁰ scrapping the National Union,⁵¹ nor the Gala nomination of such militants as Tom Mann, Ben Tillet and Keir Hardie from

1893.⁵² District meetings began to undermine the authority of the D.M.A., giving the local agitators a chance to reach a considerably wider audience.⁵³

Nevertheless, Wilson blustered through 1894 and into 1895 with the firm intention of introducing a Conciliation Board - a synonym for the Sliding Scale. In March 1894 Council narrowly approved a motion advocating a Conciliatic Board.⁵⁴ Wilson grasped at the advantage. That October a meeting passed a demand for a 15% increase in wages, against the explicit wishes of the agents.⁵⁵ Wilson had the affrontery to issue a circular urging the men to reverse the Council decision since it would upset the founding of the new boards.⁵⁶ That the next lodge gathering obeyed his instructions bears witness to the confidence he and his political philosophy retained. The Durham miners were oscillating in their loyalties with an ambivalence which at times verged on schizophrenia.

Having dropped the claim for an advance to the pitmen in 1895 had to confront the first product of the Conciliation Board - a reduction.⁵⁷ The agents were apologetic but were resigned to its inevitability in view of trade conditions. Certainly there was no disillusionment with the principle involved.⁵⁸ That October a second cut was negotiated. The agents remained convinced of its efficacy,⁵⁹ many of the colliers did not agree with their leaders. From July demands for the abandonment of the Board appeared.⁶⁰ In November a ballot was established to gauge the feelings on the issue.⁶¹ From the Federation came a lengthy circular

appealing for retention,⁶² but the miners made quite clear their opinions in the new year when the returns showed 30,586 to 14,894 votes for abolition, with 20,000 neutrals.⁶³ There was forwarded no alternative but the result was an indication that the members would reject the crude props of capitalism. Predictably enough, Wilson refused to accept such judgement. Using the abstentions as a precedent he called for a second ballot. Of course, it was not that he wished to reverse the vote, it was simply the profoundly undemocratic situation of 20,000 men choosing not to cast their votes which disturbed him. A circular was published attacking those who denounced the Board.⁶⁴ The carping continued even when the new ballot reiterated the earlier demand.⁶⁵ The Conciliation Board was scrapped.

Alongside this undermining of officials ran a constant stream of propositions to re-enter onere-ballot into the M.F.G.B..⁶⁶ The agents could never be free of harrassment. Wilson in particular led a rearguard action against the union critics, inveighing against; "the suspicion dogging his heels at every step."⁶⁷ Council narrowly approved a ballot on joining the M.F.G.B. in late 1896.⁶⁸ An eight-page document appeared rebuking any hint of amalgamation,⁶⁹ but in spite of it the pitmen gave a resounding vote for entry.⁷⁰ Wilson had been defeated - at least temporarily - on another crucial issue. Moreover he had more than just these pressures to bear. That year some 20% of the Gala nominees were either new unionists or socialists.⁷¹

Also clear from February's Monthly Report was the emergence

of the young militant⁷² - a new generation so many degrees removed from the halycon days of Liberalism.⁷³ Worse still, Victoria Garesfield asked for support to "Independent Labour Candidates"⁷⁴ at the annual council. This was with Wilson sitting as an advanced Liberal M.P.. Similar resolutions appeared every year following as I.L.P. activists sought to discredit the old leaders. Their success pressured Wilson into an increasingly anomalous situation, but more significant still it never removed him from office.

Wilson did not lie down in the face of the setbacks of his members' decisions. On the contrary he tenaciously fought to reassert his policy. He centred on the M.F.G.B. commitment to 8-hours to inject doubt into the miners' minds. The probability of a three shift system was vaulted to the position of certain disaster on the social life of the villages.⁷⁵ Council ratified the 1893 ballot rejecting the introduction of a new system⁷⁶ and when the Federation responded by expelling Durham for a second time Wilson was again paramount.⁷⁷ What made it a Pyrrhic victory for the Durham leader however, was the essential point that the pitmen rejected the Federation because of Eight Hours; the agents were opposed in spite of it. Once the one area of dispute was removed the Durham pitmen would be again forging national links.

Nevertheless, the militants in the county were starting to encroach on Wilson's Liberalism by 1898. The political articulation of new unionism - the I.L.P. - was getting much publicity as well as credibility in the region. By

July 1899 there was an I.L.P. federation in the North-East energetically distributing its propaganda.⁷⁸ Popular writers like Blatchford and Shaw began to receive nominations for the Gala. Tom Mann made his celebrated appearance at the 1897 Big Meeting to the overt displeasure of the officials and he returned to every one until 1901 to issue diatribes against the isolated parochialism of the county. After every meeting attended by Mann there appeared a palliative from the secretary.⁷⁹ For the first time since Chartism Durham county was infused with a radical political creed. The conservatives of the Gladstonian-Liberal school began to rock.⁸⁰ A "Progressive Federation" aiming for political education along I.L.P. lines, was founded amongst the colliers. It came in for Wilson's fiercest invective.⁸¹

The politicization of the miners progressed in the late 1890's, but the advancement was blended with throw-backs to the still dominant Gladstonian-Liberalism. The agitators were certainly being heard, but so too were the traditional spokesmen. The out-and-out militants centred in particular lodges - usually the large north-east pits⁸² - while the mass of pitmen were surrounded by an amalgam of doubts and conflicts. Novel ideologies did not prevent the colliers mourning the death of Gladstone in 1894,⁸³ nor muting their criticisms and hence enabling the agents to uphold orthodox policies, nor rushing into the arms of Wilson when trade took a turn for the better in 1899 with the commencement of the Boer War. Indeed, Council agreed to a ballot on the

re-imposition of the Conciliation Board that May.⁸⁴ The agents went into raptures of adoration for the peaceful method⁸⁵ and the result showed they had just enough credence left among the members. By a narrow majority; 20,149 to 19,569 the Board was re-established (of course by the two-thirds rule this was unconstitutional, but Wilson was never particularly scrupulous in enforcing standing orders when they did not suit his purposes). Still, whatever his guile, the fact remained that some fifty percent of the pitmen who voted favoured the continuation of the status-quo. For an age of socialist advance it is a grave indictment. Worse, the temporary boom of 1899-1900 enabled the owners to dole out small increases.⁸⁶ They succeeded in keeping the miners appeased while the Conciliation Board and the previously wavering control of Wilson was consolidated. As the 20th century commenced Wilson was once again firmly leading the Durham miners in spite of the currents of factionalism swelling at grassroots. These reactionary traits, added to the limitations of the I.L.P. itself,⁸⁷ gave little promise for the success of a coup against Wilson and his cohorts.

The radical changes came in Durham with the 1901 slump. An 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ % reduction⁸⁸ led to immediate calls for a minimum wage.⁸⁹ Illegal stops rocketed,⁹⁰ and Trindon took a long and bitter struggle against its own agents when it refused to accept a Joint Committee settlement.⁹¹ Tom Mann at the Gala was particularly scornful of the politics of the older leaders. In August a lodge submitted support for the

Labour Representation Committee. It went off the board after Wilson's criticisms but it was a portent of coming agitation.⁹² Early in the new year there came a call for the abolition of conciliation.⁹³ Accompanying further cuts in 1902 the annual council passed extremely progressive measures. The rules were changed to allow support for 'Labour Candidates'. Wilson had decried this resolution arguing his usual line that; "we cannot afford to ignore the great body of Liberal opinion, which is highly favourable to the working classes,"⁹⁴ but in spite of him the delegates turned with the new political trend.⁹⁵ That Wilson chose to ignore the mandate and contentedly remain a Gladstonian until his death illuminates not only his obstinacy and power, but also the amazing patience of the grassroots miner. But the same meeting went further. A cry went up for national federation, a 'living wage' and an eight-hour day.⁹⁶ It was explicitly a vote of no confidence in the D.M.A. and a turning towards the M.F.G.B.

Wilson was visibly shaken by the affair. He and his political creed had been sharply rebuked.⁹⁷ 1903 saw repeated appeals for balloting on affiliation with the M.F.G.B. and the L.R.C..⁹⁸ Wilson's retaliation was to attack the Labour Party's sectionalism,⁹⁹ the impetuosity of the young bloods and nip in the bud as many dangerous propositions as he could. Early the next year another crisis loomed when Johnson stood as Liberal candidate for Gateshead. That many lodges had interpreted the 1902 rule changes as meaning the D.M.A. would support only Labour Party candidates.

was seen in Hobson's censure.¹⁰⁰ Wilson had decided to believe that all the innovation required was an increase in labour representation - of which the Liberals themselves expressed approval.

Perhaps the most severe body-blow to Wilson's ascendancy came in the agitation of young Joseph Batey from St. Hilda Lodge. Batey was a sympathizer of the I.L.P. and the leading firebrand of the Minimum Wage movement in Durham.¹⁰¹ What made Batey doubly dangerous was his occupancy of key positions in the D.M.A. hierarchy. It was from his instigation that St. Hilda piloted through Council a demand for a basic wage or an end to the Conciliation Board.¹⁰² Batey from 1902 onwards was invariably a member of the Executive Committee and Federation Board. He was always high on the electoral list. Furthermore, he boosted his undoubted credence with his prominence at a series of district meetings organized to undermine the traditional agents in 1907.¹⁰³ Batey's popularity was a reflection of the credibility the militant I.L.P. representatives were achieving. Inside and outside headquarters Wilson was fighting a losing battle. At the 1904 Gala the official platform's resolution that wages were "beyond the control of man" was ridiculed at a concurrent meeting held by the I.L.P..¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Batey was not the only I.L.P. member at the centre of power. House, the D.M.A. president, was an I.L.P. supporter, even though of a mild variant whom Wilson found little difficulty in controlling. J.W.Taylor was a long-serving I.L.P. member and as secretary of the Colliery

Mechanics in a position to wield considerable influence, while the recognized leader of the I.L.P. dissidents in Durham was Thomas Richardson, a miner and councillor from Washington who had regular contact with MacDonald.¹⁰⁵ It was by this process of permeation that the agitators developed confidence from the grassroots' pitmen. Their diatribes at the conservatism of the Gladstonian-Liberals were increasingly effective as the century progressed and the Liberals were shown to be little better than the Tories. Motions to re-ballot on M.F.G.B. affiliation and support the I.R.C. continued to flow.¹⁰⁶

Yet in spite of this unprecedented politicization there were aspects of the miners' actions which were glaringly inconsistent. Alongside the embryonic I.L.P. notions lay ideas invested in the customary Liberalism. It was significant that the issues to which the pitmen gave their attention were purely trade union questions involving hours of work and pay receipts. The ideology of socialism had by 1906 only taken a limited root. Council was still moving off the board progressive recommendations, indicating the continuation of confidence in Wilson. The consciousness of the Durham miners was still ambivalent. The 1905 Gala nominations included L.R.C. spokesmen (Hardie, Crooks, Snowdon, Curran, MacDonald etc.) and even Hyndman and Blatchford, but juxtaposed alongside were the names of Churchill, the Earl of Durham and Lloyd George. Wilson's remarks against the Miners' Day speakers, accusing them of sowing discontent without rationalism had an element of validity.¹⁰⁷

The situation in Durham was in a state of flux. The political outlook was marked by that mixture of conflict and contradiction symptomatic of changing values.

Whatever the difficulties, however, the direction was certain. In 1906 Wilson had so far lost a grip on his members that he resorted to downright juggling with the rules. The secretary considerably eased his authoritative position by subtly guiding through the 1905 Council a promise to examine the rules. The following year he was granted the recommendation to have no rule changes unless a desire was expressed by a slip vote the preceeding June. Effectively it stifled much disquiet.¹⁰⁸ What it could not avert however, was a clash over the Conciliation Board. In December 1906 Washington Glebe successfully moved its abolition.¹⁰⁹ Wilson typically refused to stomach such a decision. An eight page defence of the Board was published and distributed in the union. As late as May 8th 1907 the Board was still functioning. Wilson then excused himself on the grounds of the uncertain mandate. Another ballot was formed and Wilson used his political acumen to split the vote by asking three questions - for continuation, amendment or abolition. The result was 15,350, and 154 respectively. Predictably Wilson ignored the demands for revision. He had achieved the breathing-space he required. But if he stalled rebellion here the moves for re-affiliation with the M.F.G.B. could not be halted. In October a ballot was commissioned.¹¹⁰ The result was a 29,000 majority for amalgamation.¹¹¹ The pitmen voted positively in spite of

their leadership. It meant they acceded to the Eight Hours and the Minimum Wage proposals. Direct support of the L.R.C. was imminent. Wilson was soon to be defeated on three major counts.

As 1907 concluded the tensions within the D.M.A. appeared climactic. So they were over the issues of national organization, Labour Party politics, the Minimum Wage and legislation to curtail working hours. However, where the contradictions were alleviated somewhat was in the peculiar integratory role of the agitation which had encapsulated the militant new unionism and also the intricate ties in Durham of trade union loyalty which had evolved over the past half century. The trouble-makers in Durham had been men of the I.L.P. and the I.L.P. for all its initiatory force, was a party aiming at uniting divergent trade unions to bolster working class representation in the Commons with the intention thereby of relieving distress. It consciously rejected socialism as a rallying-call since it pandered to the traditional unionists. The I.L.P. centred on substantive problems to gain acclaim. In so doing it found an enthusiastic response for an answer to the destitution, but it was a solution framed in the standards - albeit injected with labourism - of Gladstonian-Liberalism. The followers of the I.L.P., especially in Durham, had shortly before been staunch Liberals. No definite break could be anticipated, nor was there one. The pitmen were radical liberals grasping hesitantly towards an extension of working-class action. Moreover, the I.L.P. spokesmen themselves could

not distance themselves from their peculiarly British antecedents. Such remnants ushered the I.L.P. along the parliamentary path of reformism. Direct industrial action was a force in its early days but the strike as a weapon was to progressively die out. The I.L.P. soon undertook the role of conscience of the L.R.C.. Had it done so from the start (or rather had the leadership not imbued the I.L.P. as a whole with some socialist letters of credit) Wilson would probably ^{still} have been repelled but his less reactionary colleagues would have proved to have been even more amenable than they turned out. The I.L.P. lost much of its sting when it chose to back the L.R.C.'s activities in Parliament (though where was the man to deprecate in 1900 parliamentary advancement?). The decision commenced a whole series of *détentes*¹¹² with the Liberals and stimulated the rise of the professional parliamentarian. More significantly, the seeds of gradualism had been dormant long before then. Constitutional and pragmatic change had always been the ABC of the British Labour Movement. Also these were not simply tactical issues. The British socialist was sincere in his convictions. The result of the structural and meaningful shortcomings of the I.L.P. were added to the severe limitations imposed on the pitmen by their legendary union loyalty. In situations where I.L.P. propaganda could lead them to take a critical attitude towards the D.M.A. agents there was always the stumbling block of considerable repression through inordinate fidelity towards the union officials.

The Durham miners' actions were now at variance with the wishes not only of the D.M.A. hierarchy but also with the progressive Labour leaders (soon the latter groups were to fuse with marked success). Labour's parliamentarianism was no answer to the problems of the miners, since it did not encounter the fundamental issues of pit life. Once again a divergence arose between industrial militancy and political coherence. Labour was no solution nor was it in tune with the action of the lodges. The D.M.A. officials were quick to discover accommodation with the L.R.C. convenient. Indeed, they even took on sincerely the Labour ethos which meant not just some utopian end of Fabian economics and New Testament ethics, but more importantly the day-to-day qualities of democratic socialism - particularly in those methodistic hangovers of conciliation, negotiation, brotherhood and rejection of conflict. While the lodges acted out the class war the politics of the Labour Party eased over the whole North-East Coalfield.

NOTES:

1. Council Meeting January 4th 1890, passed;

"That the four sections of the Federation Board meet the Owners at once, after the rising of Council, and ask for a further advance of 15 per cent on our wages, to commence on February 1st 1890, and if refused, the county be balloted at once."

2. The owners claimed that wages were 25% above the 1879 basis whereas the price of coal only merited 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ %

3. February 10th 1890, voting;

	<u>D.M.A.</u>	<u>Federation</u>
For strike	25,807	29,048
No strike	8,874	11,222
Abstentions	13,834	15,474

4. Special Council Meeting February 13th 1890

5. Durham Federation Association January 23rd 1890

6. April 26th 1890 Council Meeting

7. D.M.A. minutes May 12th 1890

8. Special Council Meeting May 31st 1890;

"That the Owners be asked to grant the 7 hours for bank to bank, and 10 hours' coal drawing per day."

9. July 1890 (exact date ?)

10. cf. D.M.A. records July 21st 1890 for interim appointments, and Aug. 16th 1890 for the elections.

11. Welbourne, op.cit., p.273 (1923)

S. Webb, op.cit. 1921, does not even mention Patterson as a leader, though he was secretary from 1890-1896.

12. July 28th 1890 Special Council Meeting

13. August 23rd 1890

14. Special Council Meeting August 23rd 1890;

(1) That we adjourn the question until the Owners meet again,

and if a settlement is not come to, on the principle of 10 hours, notices to go in at once, without further appeal to the county.

(2) That we withdraw the seven hours as a separate question

(3) That the Wearmouth men remain idle for the present."

15. Offered September 3rd 1890, Accepted September 11th 1890

16. October 11th 1890 Council Meeting;

"That the four sections of the Federation Board meet the Owners, and ask for a further advance of 20 per cent in our wages, to commence on October 31st; and, if refused, the county be balloted at once, with a view of giving notices to force it."

17. Jan. 31st 1891, Passed; "That we seek through Council meeting to bring the whole firm of Londonderry out on strike, in order to win the Silksworth struggle; and that the county be levied at 6d per full member and 3d per half member, and to give notice after Council rises."

Special Council Meeting Feb. 14th 1891, there had been attempts to settle, but council resolved;

"That the Silksworth men continue idle."

March 31st 1891 Council, Houghton-le-Spring called for a county-wide strike to back Silksworth, but moved off board after an appeal by the agents.

18. January 31st 1891 Council Meeting, passed;

"That we sever our connection with the Enginemen's Section of the Federation Board."

19. March 6th 1891 Appeals' Circular

20. March 21st 1891 Council, passed;

"In future, when a colliery is laid idle without consent of Council or Committee, and contrary to rule, no Agent or member of the Committee attend until they return to work. When they resume work, an Agent attend at once to try and settle all differences."

21. May 7th 1891 Programme of Council Meeting;

"seeing that capitalists in every industry are unifying for the purpose of breaking down trade unions, we believe that as the miners are the producers, and the sailors are the carriers, and the national amalgamated coal-porters are the of the coals, we ought to be more closely united with each other, as working together we believe any serious strike would be almost impossible, as a Board composed of representatives of those unions would be too strong even for the united capitalists; whereas, in sections, we are too weak to successfully resist their power. We move that we at once seek to federate with the above unions." Horton

Council Meeting May 23rd 1891, passed; "That we seek to federate with the Sailors and Coal-Porters' Associations."

22. July 25th 1891 Council (Special)

23. 1st September 1891 "The Opinion of Counsel"

24. Special Council Meeting August 15th 1891

25. November 28th 1891 - 10%, Mining Federation Association

26. December 19th 1891 Annual Council Meeting

27. March 4th 1892

28. March 16th 1892

29. March 19th 1892 D.M.A. records

30. March 16th 1892

31. Wilson op.cit., p.229-230

32. Metcalfe, op.cit., p.156;

"The agents or members of the Federation Board were opposed to the strike, and this tended to weaken the men's cause."

Wilson (1907) op.cit. bemoaned the "slander and vile names" received by himself and his associates; "all because they, realizing the dangers of the situation, dared to advise the county and take an unpalatable but manly stand." p.234

33. May 28th 1892

34. For an account of the bishop's (hardly unbiased) intervention see G. Best, "Bishop Westcott and the Miners" C.U.P. 166

35. September 13th Programme Council Meeting;

(12) "We move that the whole of the members of the Executive Committee and Agents, after the rising of this Council, receive one month's notice to terminate their present position as leaders of the county." Oakenshaw.

(13) "That our Agents and Executive Committee be given 14 days' notice to dispenche with their services." Rynope
(Motions 9+17 called for removal from Miners' Nat. Union)
30th Sept 1893 Council, ruled 12 + 13 out of order.

36. April 9th 1892;

(18) "That a hearty vote of thanks be given to the Midland Federation, Northumberland Miners, and others, for their handsome donations handed over towards supporting the 64,000 workmen now locked-out in this county."

37. June 18th 1892

38. December 7th 1892, 8 page circular replete with attacks on M.F.G.B.

39. Special Council Meeting March 6th 1893

40. July 22nd 1893 D.M.A. circular

41. July 25th 1893

42. Ibid.

43. October 13th 1893 Federation Association Ballot:-

	For	Against	Majority
Miners:	23,143	18,469	4,679
Mechanics:	1,220	284	936
Cokemen:	1,730	350	1,380
Enginemen:	1,063	242	820
<u>Totals:</u>	<u>27,161</u>	<u>19,345</u>	<u>7,816</u>

44. December 16th 1893

45. At the inauguration ceremony of 13th and 14th January 1893 at Bradford, two North-Easterns were present, Charles Reynolds of S. Shields and J. Mahoney of Middlesboro' I.L.P. records 1893

46. "The counties of Durham and Northumberland should also attempt a Federation, and no doubt, it will be attended with better results than on the previous occasion."
May 28th 1894 I.L.P. Records

47. I.L.P. records January 2nd 1896

48. December 2nd 1893 Annual Council Meeting Programme;
"Rule 8...The President, Treasurer, and Secretaries having been once elected, shall hold their offices permanently, subject to the control of the Executive Committee and Council meeting.."

49. December 16th 1893 Annual Council Meeting

50. June 15th 1894 Programme of Council Meeting

51. October 5th 1894 Programme of Council Meeting

52. April 17th 1894 Nomination of Gala Speakers

53. cf. circular from Executive Committee June 20th 1894

54. March 10th 1894 Council

55. October 20th 1894 Council

56. November 7th 1894 D.M.A. Circular

57. November 24th 1894 Special Council Meeting

58. May 14th 1895 Conciliation Board Circular;

"We cannot but regret that the first meeting of the Board should have been concerned to consider a reduction of wages; yet feel confident that, however distasteful and unpleasant it may be to submit to a fall in percentages, all who have observed the condition of trade, taken note of the prices prevailing generally, and the serious lessening of the number of hands during the past six months, could not be otherwise than prepared for a reduction in the rates of wages that obtained and which were got when the condition of trade was different and prices higher."

59. October 9th 1895 Conciliation Board Circular;

"Wise men recognize the ever recurring changes (in trade), and employ the means which is the most expeditious, easy, and equitable, in its responses. Friction between employer and employed is a foe to any trade. Uncertainty is a sure and hurtful detriment, very often narrowing the period of prosperity, and hastening and enlarging the times of adversity."

60. July 26th Programme of Council Meeting, Motions 18+19;

(19) "Believing that the present Conciliation Board does not command the confidence of the miners in the county, we move that an individual ballot of the miners be taken, to decide whether we shall give notice to the Owners for its termination." Houghton-le-Spring

Council Aug. 10th 1895 - both motions went off the board.

61. Council November 16th 1895

62. December 19th 1895

63. January 15th 1896 Federation Association Records

64. February 25th 1896 Federation Association Records;

"We fear that many are being led away by false ideas and delusions. Reductions have come since the Conciliation Board was adopted. They were not an effect, the cause of which was in the Board. Some people reason as if they were. There cannot be a greater fallacy. The causes of the reductions lie outside the purview of any system yet arranged, and the control of them is not within the possibility of any arrangement yet thought of..."

65. May 15th 1895 Conciliation Board Voting;

	For	Against	Neutrals
Miners:	14,289	31,669	12,000
Mechanics:	972	335	700
Enginemen:	1,012	360	259
Cokemen:	<u>1,283</u>	<u>750</u>	<u>672</u>
<u>Totals:</u>	<u>17,556</u>	<u>33,114</u>	<u>13,631</u>

66. e.g. March 22nd 1895 Programme of Council, 2 motions, one for ballot on M.F.G.B. and the other on eight hours.

July 26th 1895 Programme Council Meeting, motion to join M.F.G.B.

January 24th 1896 Programme Council Meeting, repeated motion of March 22nd 1895

September 4th 1896 Programme Council Meeting, similar proposals.

67. January 1897 Monthly Circular

68. September 19th 1896 Council passed;

"An individual ballot to be taken by the members to ascertain whether or not they are in favour of joining the

Miners' Federation of Great Britain."

(Got through by 227 to 226 votes).

69. October 22nd 1896 D.M.A. records

70. Voting;	For joining	- 29,842
	Against	- 16,647
	Majority	- 13,195

71. May 7th 1896 Nominations for Gala Speakers, e.g.;

B. Pickard, T. Ashton, J. Burns, T. Mann, K. Hardie, B. Tillet, R. Blatchford.

72. February 1896 Monthly Report;

"It will be a good thing if our people and especially the young men, will avail themselves of the opportunity, to procure and read them (Conciliation Reports) By doing so, they will see not only what steps were taken, and what arguments were used in the discussions, but they will receive a knowledge of the real worth of Conciliation to the county, and of the present position of wages to the price of the material we produce."

73. H. Pelling, "The Origins of the Labour Party" Macmillan 1954

I.L.P. initiation 1893; "But the most interesting feature of the gathering was the presence of a new type of political delegate - the intelligent, respectable, working trade unionist of the new labour clubs. Men of this type, young and friendly, their countenances gleaming with good humour above their loosened ties, dominated the scene. They were not politicians for politics' sake; they were the working class in earnest, the product of the new education and the widening franchise. Their enthusiasm and discipline impressed the observers in the gallery and the reporters who

crowded at the press table. They were the tangible evidence of a new factor in British politics." p.122

74. November 28th 1896 Programme Annual Council Meeting

75. January 25th 1897

76. February 6th 1897 Council

77. July 10th 1897, D.M.A. informed they could not be accepted into the M.F.G.B.

78. I.L.P. Records July 1899

79. cf. July Monthly Circulars 1897-1901, e.g. July 1899;

"He could be a sluggish-blooded speaker who did not receive inspiration from the reception he received. This was extended to all alike, although there were bound to be some portions of the speeches to which all could not assent. The idealistic and the practical together are blended. The idealistic affords the more fertile field for the rhetoric of the speaker, who may leave when the meeting is ended, but the practical remains with us, and for those of us who are on the spot, you have a right to ask that what we teach should claim the devotion of our energies. Caution, therefore, not only becomes us, but is the wisest course..."

80. e.g. Monthly Circular December 1897;

"If we try our position by one test and measure it by one standard (which is prominent with many of us), we shall, no doubt, complain. With too many of us, the desired and the ideal alone can satisfy; and anything less than it is censurable; and he who finds room for congratulation at any point short of it, is said to be inspired by thoughts unworthy of a political, social, or economic reformer; and

the motives of the basest kind are imputed to him. I have not a word to say against any ideal, however high it may be placed. It will be better for us if we all aim high; but my warning is in the direction of checking the spirit of murmuring, if the point be not attained at one bound. Under those circumstances, hope deferred makes the heart really sick, and because all is not reached at once, we weaken in our allegiance to the principles of unionism, and become slack in our endeavours, and start new schemes, under new and taking names, which are in the end more distractive and destructive than helpful and promotive of the general good.

81. Monthly Circular February 1898

82. e.g. Marsden, Hetton, Seaham and in the N.W. Chopwell, Wardley and Follonsby in particular.

83. May 24th 1898 Executive Committee Minutes

84. May 27th 1899 Council

85. Appeals' Circular May 12th 1899

86. Increases:-

1899 April	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ %	1900 February	5%
June	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ %	May	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ %
October	3 $\frac{1}{4}$ %	August	8 $\frac{1}{2}$ %
		November	10%

87. This will be elaborated below but at this stage a succinct summary of the stance can be seen in the following quotation from H. Pelling and F. Bealey's "Labour and Politics 1900-1908" Macmillan 1958;

"I.L.P. speakers would sometimes describe the Liberal Party as their principal political enemy: yet as events were to show, they shared with the Liberal rank and file, from which they had themselves emerged, a multitude of common sentiments

and prejudices that occasioned a remarkable similarity in their practical application of different principles to actual issues of public policy..." p.8-9

88. May 13th 1901

89. June 8th Council passed;

"That we seek to have the county basis of 4/2 made up to 5/-, the difference to be made up from the present percentage, and the basis of 5/- to be the minimum." Hamsteels
September 28th 1901 Council passed;

"That we seek to have the basic wage increased for other classes, in the same proportion as the Council has decided to seek an increase in the basis wage of hewers. The new basis to be the minimum wage."

90. November 27th 1901 D.M.A. Circular on "Illegal Stoppages

and Men Lying Idle", percentage of lost time:-

1895	7.46	1900	11.09	
1896	7.04	1901	11.63	(pay 15 - 11.60
1897	7.77			pay 16 - 12.54
1898	8.4			pay 17 - 13.49)
1899	9.4			

91. May 17th 1901, the Executive Committee issued an 11-page circular on the Trimdon dispute concluding;

"Gentlemen, it will be clear to you that these men are fighting against an award of Joint Committee, and also against the repeated advice from these offices. They know they are wrong, and yet they continue to strike."

92. July 19th 1901 Programme Council Meeting;

"That a vote of the lodges be taken on the question of joining the Labour Representation Committee of the Trades Union Congress." Washington

Went off the Board August 3rd 1901 Council.

93. Council February 15th 1902
94. Appeals' Circular December 5th 1902
95. Annual Council Meeting December 20th 1902
96. Ibid, Rule 3, object 10; "To become federated with the Miners of other counties and countries, but before any action is taken, it must be submitted to the approval of Council or County."
- Rule 3, object 11; "To seek for a living wage for all workers in and about the mines, and for no man or lad to be more than 8 hours from Bank to Bank in one day."
97. January 1903 Monthly Circular;
- "If there be danger anywhere; it is in seeking to reform the world in a day. Nations may be born in a day, but not by Act of Parliament, Trades Unions, or any other earthly agency. The cardinal doctrines formulated thirty-three years ago, and acted on with as much consistency as possible, were self-reliance, conciliation, and the play of reason. An avoidance of trade conflicts if practicable. A complete demand for justice, but at the same time a thorough realization that justice is one-sided if it be not objective, as well as subjective, and that no man or institution can be truly just, who as the result of physical, numerical, or monetary strength, is unjust to another person or class."
98. March 27th 1903 Programme of Council Meeting, Hebburn motion
June 4th 1903 Programme of Council Meeting, Washington " "
99. Monthly Circular September 1903
and Monthly Circular February 1906;

"Those who wear the magic letters, L.R.C. (like a railway or tramway employee) called a meeting of the select, assuming themselves to be the only friends of labour, although there are at least twenty men in the House, all of them taking leading part, holding prominent positions, and some of whom have been fifty years in trades unions, and all of whom have proved their faith by their works, and have not in any case made those Associations stepping-stones to self-elevation or benefit; nor sought to spread their name while they allowed the worst conditions to exist in their own district. Yet these men were deliberately passed over, and were not thought worthy to receive an invitation to a meeting called for the purpose of electing officers for, and shaping the policy of Labour in Parliament."

100. January 29th 1904 Programme of Council Meeting;

"Seeing that Mr. J. Johnson is running as a Liberal candidate, on the invitation of the Liberal Association, and that he has not been invited by the organized workers of Gateshead to run as their candidate; also that by running as a Liberal instead of Labour candidate, Mr. Johnson is thereby acting contrary to Rule 3, object 8, of our Association, therefore this Council meeting declares he has not any right to be paid out of the funds of our Association for his candidature, nor for his maintenance if he returned to Parliament as a Liberal; and if he persists in running as the Liberal candidate, we shall call upon him to resign his position as one of our Agents..." Hobson

February 13th 1904 Council, went off the Board.

101. See J. Batey, "Durham Miners' Wages - The Present System
Condemned - The Need For A Minimum Wage" E. Sword, S. Shields
1904.
102. "That notice be given to terminate the present Conciliation
Board, unless the Owners agree to a minimum wage of not less
than 30% upon the 1879 basis; and the Owners also agree to
an investigation by a small committee of representatives of
Miners and Owners into the scale which regulates wages with
prices, viz, 1¼% for each 2d rise or fall in the average
selling price of coal, for the purpose of ascertaining
whether the present relationship is fair and proper!"
St. Hilda. September 24th 1904 Council.
103. See Federation Association Circular March 19th 1907. Batey
was elected to the Federation Board on August 10th 1907 at
the top of the list with 318 votes.
104. Bealey and Pelling op.cit., p.222. See also, their
account of a similar alternative I.L.P. meeting at the
1905 Gala.
105. Ibid, p.219
106. December 8th 1905 Programme Annual Council Meeting
Usworth resolution to support party; "Independent of Liberal
or Tory Party."
Spen; "That we desire to consolidate our forces as a class
by united action, by becoming federated with the Miners'
Federation of Great Britain."
107. July 1906 Monthly Circular;
"...yet there are speakers who make our platform the oppor-
tunity for teaching doctrines peculiar to themselves, and
divergent from the policy approved by the majority of the

members. To say the least that line of conduct is inconsistent. The invitation emanates from us. Our policy is known. Surely a situation like that demands consideration. It is easy for a speaker to come and make rhetorical speeches, when he has no responsibility for the carrying out. That is the difference between those who have to lead in a district, and those who at our annual gatherings address us and leave. Those of us who remain have to carry the burden, and face the difficulty during the year, and while it may be easy for others who have no responsibility, it is unwise on our part, because we know the great difference between declaration and realization..."

108. cf. December 23rd 1905 Annual Council Meeting;

"That the rules remain unaltered for the year, and the Executive Committee be empowered to revise them between now and the next Annual Council Meeting. Lodges to send in suggested amendments between now and the 1st of June 1906." and Dec. 15th and 22nd 1906 Annual Council Meeting, the Executive Committee recommendation to have an annual slip-vote before June 1st to see if any rules wanted changing was carried.

109. December 1st 1906 Council, voting 235 for abolition, 220 against and 134 abstentions.

110. September 27th 1907 Programme of Council Meeting;

"That the county be balloted to see if we are in favour of joining the M.F.G.B." Chopwell, Blaydon Burn, Clara Vale and Houghton. Oct. 12th 1907, Council, motion passed.

111. Result of ballot on joining the M.F.G.B.;

For:- 47,986
Against:- 18,963
Majority:- 29,023

112. See Bealey and Pelling, op.cit., p.125-159

B.Purdue, "Arthur Henderson and the Barnard Castle Election of 1903", unpublished paper, Newcastle Polytechnic 1973.

R.Miliband, "Parliamentary Socialism", 1960, Merlin ed. 1973, p.19.

1908 - 1918

In spite of the defeats of 1907 Wilson was to retain the General Secretaryship until 1915. The battle to stem the Labour Party intrusion was continued even when his own colleagues turned to the L.R.C.. The difference was that now Wilson was outnumbered. Only clever manoeuvres allowed him to choke the L.R.C. influence. His astute juggling of the Association's constitution enabled him in 1908 to withhold a M.F.C.B. instruction for a ballot over affiliation to the L.R.C.. He would "have taken the ballot at the date named, but for the construction of our rules" which stipulated that labour candidates were to be supported independent of political parties.¹ It was an issue of semantics and the intention of the amendment had been to encourage the new Labour Party, but who was there to dispute with Wilson's knowledge?

Dissatisfaction from the membership grew apace. Union loyalty could still exercise considerable force, but there were nevertheless lodges prepared to enunciate their sentiments and call for salary reductions to their officials.² Local strikes grew apace, carrying, as the agents recognized, an "implied censure".³ They knew the criticism was not articulated, but it was an indication of the growing frustrations of the pitmen that unconstitutional action roared ahead in anticipation of syndicalism. The rank-and-file were also looking increasingly to the Labour Party to give coherence to their aspirations. In 1909 nearly half the Gala nominees were from the recognized left.⁴ Motions

to end the Conciliation Board re-appeared⁵ and Wilson was compelled to revert to his structural powers to keep awkward issues from Council.⁶ As many as forty resolutions disallowed became commonplace.⁷ That July the first sign of strain showed when Wilson was temporarily forced out of office with an illness induced by overwork.

Worse was to follow in 1910. The previous June Lord Collins' award had upheld the appeal of the union to prevent a $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ wage reduction, but in January 1910 the MacDonnell arbitration granted a $6\frac{1}{4}\%$ cut. From being able to boast the fruits of conciliation Wilson's methods now displayed abject failure.⁸ At the same time, the union hierarchy was being gradually filled with Labour Party men,⁹ while the 1909 Annual Council officially committed the union to "run in conformity with the rules and constitution of the Labour Party."¹⁰ The backlash against the reduction was an immediate demand for a minimum wage¹¹ and the agents and executive committee to resign.¹² That 253 delegates favoured such a measure was a sharp reminder to Wilson of the risks his policy underwent. Further complications came with the concurrent dispute over the agents signing the Eight Hours' Agreement without first consulting the membership.¹³ Wilson squabbled over the charges,¹⁴ but there was no escaping the strife to come. In December all agents were opposed for re-election.¹⁵

From 1908 the local struggles had been escalating in Durham, but from 1910 onwards there arose a further impetus, in the form of syndicalism, to urge direct action.

There were few pitmen who held the vision of revolutionaries like Tom Mann, but all responded to the militant cry of the movement.¹⁶ It was a call the Durham agents came to dread: a cry ^{they} pulled against all the way. There was a general rise in advocacy of class war, to be perpetrated by the mass strike. It was with this background that in 1912 the Durham miners entered their first strike in seventy years. The Minimum Wage dispute reached crisis point in 1912. Terms were put to the owners by the M.F.G.B. while a ballot was taken. The national result was 445,801 to 115,921 for a strike when the owners dallied. In Durham there was a similar 57,490 to 28,504.

Wilson took his traditional dilatory stance. He began by answering his critics with a denunciation of agitators attempting to ruin the union¹⁷ and after the ballot expressing his sorrow at the 'ultimatum' attitude of the men which had overridden the compromising Durham owners.¹⁸ With the whole mining population out the Liberal Government was forced to intervene. A Minimum Wage Bill was rushed through the Commons in an attempt to ease the difficulties. Asquith lamentably failed to placate either side, but a ballot call was passed to provide an opportunity to gauge the feelings of the colliers. Wilson was almost hysterical for a settlement, arguing that "it is not merely a vote for the commencement or the ending of a strike in the ordinary sense. It is the question of a strike or acceptance of an Act of Parliament and the law of the land."¹⁹ District meetings undermined Wilson's influence and despite

20
a special circular²⁰ they continued throughout and beyond the duration of the strike. In early March twenty-six collieries, representing 25,000 miners, met at South Shields to stress the necessity of aggressive action against the owners, if need be over the heads of the agents,²¹ while a special 'educational campaign' led by Andrew Temple, John Lawson, Henry Bainbridge and W.P. Richardson reported "We still find...that whilst the bulk of the lodges have enthusiastically supported us, there are a few, including some of our leaders, who don't yet believe in the minimum wage principle...In their attack upon us, our leaders are fittingly backed up by the editors of capitalist newspapers. We don't envy them their company. All the same, though, Trades Union leaders and the paid professional servants of coal-kings forms a curious combination against the demands of the miners."²² Not surprisingly, the right-wing press vaulted the prophecies of Wilson, the "one responsible leader who has not been afraid, even in the face of the recent ballot, to maintain his stand and repeat his consistent warning against the folly of a strike upon this question."²³

The ballot rescued the leaders of the pitmen. Nationally the vote went 201,013 for work, with 244,011 against, while in Durham it was 48,828 against with 24,511 for. Wilson could use the two-thirds ruling on the national result to order the men to return. By the narrowest of majorities the executive committee was permitted to represent the Durham miners on the newly-commissioned district

boards.²⁴ The heavy lodge vote against the committee, plus the individual ballot, were motions of censure on Wilson's leadership. They were pointed rebuttals of a spokesman who on the eve of voting had encouraged acceptance of terms.²⁵ Moreover the bitterness continued after work started. The committee was blamed for the meagre victory,²⁶ while the agents made no move to heal the rift. As late as August 1912 rank-and-file and officials were still sharply at odds.²⁷ Wilson was acutely embarrassed when the miners exhibited their antipathy towards his creed by adding to the rules an additional object; "To promote and financially support Parliamentary Candidates. Each candidate must be a member of the Durham Miners' Association, and run solely under the auspices of the National Labour Party, and be subject to its decisions if elected."²⁸ Wilson's Liberalism was formally abandoned in the heyday of syndicalism. The secretary was allowed to retain his office until his death two years later, but by now he was a thoroughly anachronistic member.

However, in 1913 John Wilson was not the only hangover the Durham miners had to endure. The county was by now pretty well solid Labour but its socialism was of a peculiarly undogmatic kind. Thomas Cann who succeeded Wilson accepted the Labour whip and yet in practice differed only slightly. His circulars were always moderate and conciliatory. He was also a Primitive Methodist. More significantly, he had previously been a Liberal supporter. The same description fitted the majority of the new

executive - if not quite so simply - in the years of the first major turnover of personnel in the union. The crucial issue is what induced such people to undertake the Labour banner? In view of their subsequent trade unionism it is hard to avoid the conclusion that they gave their support because Labour accommodated itself to their particular philosophy. From the start the Labour Party bent over backwards to capture the working men and in so doing it compromised any earlier militancy - even when its fundamental basis was so delimitating.²⁹ By 1909 the Labour Party had moved away from its initial antagonism to be taken over by the professional politicians like MacDonald and Snowden. In their hands the constitutional road was further qualified to result in a party offering not a threat to capitalist Parliament but rather a safety-valve. The D.M.A. leadership, ever cautious, must have been attracted by the traditional formula, more votes, more parliamentarians, more justice. They jumped to the bait not only with avidity but also with sincerity. Certainly the Labour Party was not the Liberal in disguise, but it was working within similar assumptions. Trade unionism was to have no part to play in the gestation of socialism; that was to remain the parlance of the Commons. The agitators at grassroots may well have had a more acid notion of the promised social order but the route was unquestioned. Even when their spokesmen became increasingly incorporated they could only criticize the manifestations - the essential world-view they also shared. That the Durham pitmen's

industrial militancy was equally out of tune with Labour's political articulation as with their Liberal leaders of the 19th century cannot be surprising considering the envelopment of all groups in bourgeois hegemony. The Labour Party in the Commons was destined always to take the sting out of the unionism's industrial threats; never to add coherence to the economic attack.

The Labour Party supporters made considerable inroads into the D.M.A. in 1914. Seven of the Gala nominees out of the top eight were either I.L.P. or L.R.C. members, while in April when the union elected five new parliamentary candidates all were Labour men. It was a sure sign of the changing attitude of the rank-and-file that they so definitely turned their backs on the Liberals. On the other hand, there remained the phenomenon that though the new representatives were infused with the Labour doctrine they were also imbued with the traditional union ethos. All five candidates (J. Batey, J. Gilliland, W.P. Richardson, J. Robson, J. Lawson) had been in the Durham union for many years. They were upholders of the necessity of negotiation, compromise and conciliation. This doctrine was sure to spill over into their political activities whatever their aspirations.³⁰ It meant that in a society which encouraged direct action capitalism their emphasis on political debate would result in impotence. These were the new working class politicians. Unlike the Liberals they often recognized an inherent class struggle within capitalism, but their solution, and more crucially, their

whole being, reacted against a fight to remove conflict. Rather they would persuade, argue and plead to win parliamentary majorities to gradually gain the fair society. Verbal, not industrial battles would, they believed, overcome.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 gave trade union bureaucrats an opportunity to display their recent advances. Unions were brought into the Government to increase the war effort. The union spokesmen became disciplinarians of their own men to further the patriotic zeal. Wilson in Durham, all his life a confirmed pacifist, like the majority of British workers plugged straight away for war to defeat the autocratic Kaiser.³¹ The mighty Triple Alliance of rail, mining and transport unions, seen as such a threat at its inception, proved to be a great stabilizer for the country's war machine when the leadership got into government structures. They boasted that the working-class had made solid gains with their representatives walking the corridors of power. In Durham the union agents redoubled efforts to cut out unofficial stoppages, increase productivity and support King and Country.³² By May 1915 there were 40,000 Durham men under arms. In line with the rest of the country xenophobia swept through the region. However, the jingoism did not extend for the pitmen to a reversal of the militant trade union trend. Nor did it herald innovation from the leadership. They were already committed to peaceful negotiation with the owners: the war merely provided an excuse to adopt such a policy more

wholeheartedly. In this situation the conflicts between grassroots and union bureaucracy were exacerbated. Local stoppages continued into the war, the Conciliation Board was scrapped,³³ a demand to end all local reductions was forwarded to the owners;³⁴ and in 1916 a motion urging nationalization was carried.³⁵ When the Forward Movement commenced sowing discontent against the agents Carr took over Wilson's habit of invoking the rule debarring unconstitutional criticism.³⁶ The Labour Party had been laid low by the European militarism, so the pitmen's only outlet for their grievances was to act independently. Their union leaders retreated under the cloak of patriotism, fighting a constant rearguard action against their militant members, though occasionally compelled to adopt trenchant Council resolutions.

Predictably, a strong movement developed to echo lodge feeling in spite of the union. Though the shop stewards' movement was strongest on the Clyde³⁷ parts of Durham, underlined the profound gulf between rank-and-file and leadership. The culmination of the lodge revolt was in April 1915 when the Washington Glebe affair exploded and there arose a call for revolutionary action from fourteen of the county's biggest pits.³⁸ The circular issued by the dissidents deserves extensive quotation since it illuminated a yawning chasm which was never to be bridged;

"We are faced with a situation without parallel in our history. Never were we stronger in point of numbers (counting our soldier and sailor comrades), never did we produce more wealth, and never did we receive in wages so small a percentage of that wealth than we do today. The mineowners have grown into millionaires; they flaunt about

and enjoy the good things of the earth, and know not how to reasonably spend their riches in order to get rid of even a fraction of their dividends; while we, the producers of wealth, are grovelling in the gutter and vegetating in poverty. There must be some reason for this, men of Durham, and upon this vital subject we here address you.

We submit to you that there is something rotten in our organization and machinery. Our union basis is that there is a common interest between master and man, and, believing in this mutual interest, we have been led (by our leaders largely) to erect machinery for conciliation, arbitration, and joint committees. There has been conciliation on our side, but little on the side of the masters. That was because the masters knew they had a different interest to us, an interest apart from and opposed to ours, and when they came to 'conciliate' with us, they came animated by selfish class interests, thirsty for dividends, and underneath their conciliation sheepskin they had their mailed fist ready ever to strike and grab; and they have struck us so often and grabbed so much that we have become utter slaves, looked upon as part of a profit producing machinery...

Now, since the war commenced we have suffered a reduction through our conciliation board, of $3\frac{1}{4}\%$ in our wages, not to mention the reduction we have suffered through the high cost of living. Today 6/10d per shift for a man who works extraordinary hard is very small...

Men of Durham, we have sent our sons to the war, they are being slaughtered whilst fighting the fight wherein our masters have the greatest stake. We have sacrificed, and our reward is reductions and reductions. We held a meeting on that memorable Joint Committee day (13th April 1915, 19 cases of reduction): we asked our side of the Committee to see the coalowners and ask them to forego these 19 cases of reductions for a time, until we could bring the matter before the county, and our side refused to do so, saying that such a request would be childish on their part. We had the collieries who were due for an advance in wages on our side, and although their workmen were earning workhouse rates they were prepared to suspend Joint Committee and stop the reductions from taking effect, likewise their own advances. In face of this sacrifice, our Agents speak of childishness. These men who sacrificed knew that their sacrifice and our united protest alone would prevent all the pits above 6s 10d in the other Wards of the County being called upon to suffer persecution in the near future.

Fellow workmen, this is no one colliery grievance. The county is sick and tired of this Joint Committee farce..... with the non-producing class. We can tolerate it no longer. A more humane system we shall have, and this is the time to strike out for it. If we cannot win now we never shall do so. We are demanding a special Council meeting on Saturday May 1st 1915. May 1st is labour Day, a fine day on which to assert our right to a greater measure of justice." 39

This was the militant voice (indeed a new language) of

the pitmen attacking the cause of their destitution. It was a recognition from a substantial number of lodges that the real enemy was the capitalist system itself and that in attempting to ameliorate its mediations the union was merely bolstering the status quo. That there remained a majority of delegates loyal to the D.M.A. was reflected in the motion of censure passed on Washington⁴⁰ (though a lodge vote exaggerated the size of the majority since representation was proportional only up to 1,000 members, hence big pits were underestimated). At the same time, the continuity of policy from Wilson through to Cann's secretaryship was not simplistic. The agents by 1915 were solid Labour Party supporters. As such, in April Galbraith resigned his position on the executive committee to stand as Liberal candidate for Mid-Durham because; "I am the last of the Durham agents...to hold the doctrine of the late Dr. Wilson, and if elected I will follow in every respect in the footsteps of the late member, whose principles I admired as much as his personality."⁴¹ The situation in Durham was enormously complex with oscillations between the gradualism of the Labour Party and the industrial militancy of local lodges, with a number of pits advocating a revolutionary creed, or at least a very forceful I.L.P. stance. Weighing the currents is difficult, but undoubtedly the formal Labour Party, with its roseate promises to the pitmen and the backing of the union hierarchy commanded the most widespread following.

However safe was the Labour Party, this did little to diminish the dangers of industrial activism while at war with Germany. The Asquith government rushed through a special War

Bonus in 1915 when they served the grassroots' unrest. Two years later the coalition under Lloyd George took a momentous decision which was to have effects lasting over thirty years; it took over the mines for the nation. All sides recognized the inordinate profits and inefficiency with which the collieries had been managed by the owners.⁴² That the intervention did little to hinder the profit-mongering of the masters⁴³ could not invalidate the demonstration of state interference in capitalist accountancy.⁴⁴

Moreover, as the war drew to a close the stridency in Durham escalated. More and more Cann was forced to plead for unanimity, caution and confidence.⁴⁵ Lodges persisted in upsetting the executive committee by invoking unofficial strikes against conditions.⁴⁶ By late 1918 there was added the immense problem of demobilization. Over 50,000 Durham men began to return from the trenches. A "land fit for heroes" was a promise they anticipated being fulfilled.⁴⁷ The soldiers had been infected with new ideas whilst abroad and news from Russia was stirring up their hopes. More ominously, these were trained killers many of whom retained their arms in the rush to disband. Even the Labour Party took a turn to the left in "Labour and the New Social Order". It was little more than verbal gymnastics since there was no practical change in policy. Still, pretty lies were to exercise an inordinate influence in stalling the miners until the government was ready to take them on.

NOTES:

1. Monthly Circular April 1908

2. November 27th 1908 Programme Annual Council Meeting;

"We move that our Agents' salaries be reduced £10 per annum from the expiration of their present term of office" E.Stanla

3. 2 circulars in 1908, one Monthly Circular February 1908.

December 30th 1908; "Pits being Laid Idle Against Rule";

"We ask these lodges a question, which bears upon our position. Is there an implied censure upon us? We know it is not meant, but there is the implication, and we are compelled to justify our work..."

Also Feb. 12th 1909 and Jan. 1909 Monthly Circular

August 23rd 1909; "Pits Lying Idle Illegally". June 4th 1910.

4. May 7th 1909, e.g. Ramsay MacDonald, Keir Hardie, Will Crooks, Pete Curran, J.R.Clynes, William Abraham, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Glasier, Mrs. and Miss Pankhurst, Chiozza Money, Robert Smillie, H.Hyndman, Will Thorne, G.N.Barnes ~~Robertson~~ Victor Grayson, Arthur Henderson, D.Shackleton.

5. April 16th 1909 Programme Council Meeting

6. e.g. Minutes Committee Meeting, June 14th 1909 - 55 motions kept off for such nebulous reasons as "against rule/cannot appear/out of order/impracticable/as ~~it~~ ^{it} is impossible/it is annual business".

7. e.g. April 4th 1911 Committee Meeting Minutes - 40 motions kept off the April 7th 1911 Programme.

Likewise August 9th 1911 when 41 motions were kept off by the Executive Committee.

8. Metcalfe op.cit., p.304f;

"The outcome of the MacDonnell arbitration acted like a boomerang on Wilson. The Collins' Award had vindicated Wilson and his "nice, smooth arrangements", especially as the Empire had upheld the relationship of wages and prices established by the Davey Award of 1895..."

9. Metcalfe, op.cit., p.450-451;

"The election of the Executive Committee at the beginning of 1909 was instructive. Those elected were Joseph Batey, James Robson, John Swan, John Storey and John Peacock, in that order, while William Palmer...was bottom of the poll receiving the least number of votes. He had served on the Executive Committee for a long time and his name was highly respected in the Sunderland district. William Palmer was an outstanding personality, possessed of fine powers, especially when handling arbitration cases. Therefore it was surprising to find him rejected by the men. I have it on the very best verbal authority that his rejection was due to his continued devotion to Liberal politics, at a time when there was now a majority socialist vote among the members of the D.M.A.. While this was the local feeling in Durham the Miners' Federation forged the final link with the Labour Party, by affiliating as a body with the Party in 1910. In future, the Miners' Members of Parliament were Labour members..."

10. Annual Council Meeting December 11th, 18th, 20th 1909, Rule 5, Object 8; "Candidates to run in conformity with the rules and constitution of the Labour Party". Bearpark resolution - carried.

11. January 22nd 1910 Council passed;

109
"That we seek through the Miners' Federation that the minimum wage of this country shall not be below six shillings per day; the percentage to come on or off at the same ratio as at present." Thrislington

12. February 12th 1910 Council, voting 426 to 255 against resignation.

13. January 22nd 1910 council

14. Monthly Circular February 1910;

"There is far more real danger from discord amongst ourselves, a want of discipline, and disregard of our rules and constitution, than can be found or formed in any other quarter. Lawlessness is never helpful, no matter whether it be the action of an individual or a community, and the man or men who preach it to others are no friends of progress... I need not enumerate the many instances where our rules have been deliberately set aside by lodges or sections of lodges. They are well known to the whole of the membership, although I am happy to say there are certain lodges where it never happens, and their situation is no worse than those where the breach of rule frequently occurs... Not only are they (agents and executive committee) set aside, but when they attend the lodge meetings they are met with the most bitter opposition and are often insulted in a manner which would only be within the bounds of propriety if they were persons whose actions were grossly criminal and dishonest..."

15. December 3rd 1910 Programme Annual Council Meeting

16. Miliband (1973) op.cit.;

"Revolutionary syndicalism in England entailed the rejection of traditional trade unionism, with its fragmented

organization, its emphasis on collective bargaining and compromise, on conciliation and respectability. It entailed the rejection of the kind of bureaucratic collectivism which was to be found at the core of Fabian thinking and which had also come to permeate much non-Fabian thinking in this period. And, thirdly, it entailed a doctrine of industrial action, based on a rejection of parliamentary action almost as dogmatic as was the Labour leaders' insistence upon its virtues. But what ultimately mattered about the syndicalist message was its emphasis upon 'direct action'. Most of the hundreds of thousands of workers involved in the bitter industrial warfare of the years which preceded the First World War had more limited aims than the syndicalists; few would have subscribed to the revolutionary vision the syndicalists held forward. But they could and did respond to the call for industrial militancy of which the syndicalists were the most vocal exponents." p.34

17. January 1912 Monthly Circular;

"We are in a state of great unrest, and trouble is looming up ahead. Cohesion and not disintegration and uncertainty is the great desideratum, and it behoves us all to cultivate it as much as possible. I have deemed it necessary to draw your attention to this evil manifestation of weakness which has been so rife amongst us of late on the platform and in the press. For doing so I have no apology to make. The course of action I have been pointing out is as injurious to the organization as it is unjust to the Executive Committee. Furthermore the agitators had been active since before the

ballot. of. "Durham Chronicle" January 26th. 1912, reported a meeting of a dozen pits in the Arcadia Hall, Spennymoor, to consider the present minimum wage crisis:-

"Mr. Herriots moved the following resolution:

'That this meeting of the lodges of the D.M.A. congratulate the miners of Great Britain on giving an overwhelming majority for a national strike in order to secure the demand for a minimum wage for all miners. Further, we protest against the continued refusal of our Executive Committee to take the members into their confidence, and consider that a Special Council meeting is immediately necessary so as to avoid a repetition of the regrettable occurrence in connection with the three-shift agreement; also to consider the claim of 7s per day for coal hewers and all other classes in proportion, as well as the many other phases of the minimum wage movement, especially the aged and infirm clause of the Federation resolution.'" (carried by large majority).

18. February 15th 1912 Special Circular and

Monthly Circular February 1912;

"...any form of mediation no matter whether governmental or private, will be welcomed by me. I believe a strike is not the first weapon to use but the last. Like all wars (for it is that and nothing less) it should not be the first..."

19. Monthly Circular March 1912 (Echoes of Jimmy Thomas?)

20. May 15th 1912

21. "Durham Chronicle" March 1st 1912;

"That any proposals for postponing the strike of miners would not be accepted by a number of Durham collieries was

indicated by a meeting of miners' representatives for 26 Durham collieries, with a membership of 26,000...The first resolution, which was carried unanimously, was in the following terms:- 'That this conference regrets that the claim for a 7s per day individual minimum wage for newers and other classes in proportion has not been adopted by our Executive Committee and agents, as this has prevented the Federation of Great Britain from discussing the same; but having regard to the decision of the Federation that our claim must be the present wage, with no adult to have less than 5/- and boys 2/- per day, we will abide by that, but nothing lower shall be entertained.

Further we pledge ourselves to educate and agitate for the 7/- per day minimum, and for the bank hands to be included in the minimum wage'..."

22. "Durham Chronicle" March 1st 1912

23. "Durham County Advertiser" February 16th 1912. The same letter significantly illuminates Wilson's deep-seated parochialism;

"In a recent address to his constituents, Mr. J. Wilson, M.P., ...deals very forcefully with the connexion between the County Association and the Federation...Another feature of this connexion with the Federation which Mr. Wilson indicated was the question of funds, which will bear hardly upon the men of this county as compared with other districts. Durham miners, he said, were pretty well provided for, having funds amounting to over 2400,000, which in the event of a strike would last them for seven or eight weeks,

but, he significantly adds, 'there was a talk of pooling'. There was no talk of pooling funds when the Durham pitmen were asked to join the Federation, and it is hardly to be expected that their 'principle of brotherhood' will extend to emptying their war chest into a common fund which, in the event of a national strike, would not serve a fortnight, merely to help other districts who have wasted their substance, if not in riotous living, at any rate in futile struggles."

See also "D.C.A." February 23rd 1912 for Wilson's snide comments on the 'Socialistic element!'

24. Lodge Ballot (undated)

For committee acting	321
Against	302
Majority	19

25. "Durham County Advertiser" April 5th 1892

Wilson at Annfield Plain;

"At the Federation meeting held last week, it was decided not to give a national instruction as to how they should vote, but that morning a manifesto had appeared in the press from the secretary of the Federation, Mr. Thomas Ashton - ("A good man") - and he instructed them and pressed upon them to vote next week for a resumption of work (cries of 'No' and 'Five and two, or nowt!'). They had now the instructions and advice of Mr. Ashton as straight as it could be given (applause). He was giving them the same advice as he had given the delegate meeting at Durham that morning. He believed that every man should have regard to the real welfare of the community they belonged to, and the larger community outside, the thousands of men,

women and children who today were starving. The Bill was retrospective, or, to put it in their own vernacular, they would be paid 'back-money'. (Voices; 'Tell us what we are going to get', and 'We may be like the railwaymen and get nowt!'). If they did not go to work, they had no answer to the public as to why they were standing out. ('The public cares nowt for the miner!')..."

26. "Durham Chronicle" April 12th 1912;

"A mass meeting of miners called by the Pelton Fell lodge was held at Charles-le-Street on Wednesday, when some strong language was used against the agents and Executive Committee of the Durham Miners' Association..

.. Mr. M. Martin, Pelton Fell, who presided, said the quiet manner in which the miners had conducted their fight had been a lesson to the whole of the workers in the country and they could congratulate themselves upon it. They had had to fight the capitalists, the Press, and their own agents. The latter told them a minimum wage was impracticable, in spite of the fact that it had been worked with very little trouble at Usworth for ten years.

Mr. S. Usher, Pelton Fell, moved the first resolution, indignantly protesting against the action of the Durham agents and executive in having elected themselves on the men's side of the local Wage Board, and called upon them to at once give the county an opportunity of electing their own representatives....

...Mr. John Lawson...said the agents and executive were against them at every stage of the minimum wage agitation

and it was ridiculous to think they would be for them while acting as the men's side of the Wages Board. He warned them all whom it might concern that if the rates fixed did not somewhat nearly approximate to what the men claimed as their due, but contained merely nominal figures, they would light the flame of revolt and in spite of the Act, and the three months' notice which it required them to give, they would 'down tools' at twenty-four hours' notice and take out with them the railway men and transport workers.

The resolution was passed with only one dissentient".

27. "Durham County Advertiser", August 2nd 1912.

Report on Gala Speeches:-

"Alderman S. Galbraith having read the financial statement of the Association, said it was not an encouraging one but they must hope to have it improved in the next year. It was for the Durham miners to calculate whether the vast expenditure of £352,691 upon the recent strike had not been worth what they had got for it (cries of 'yes' and 'why not?'). If there had been less rush and a little more discretion the whole thing might have been avoided. If caution of the right kind and mutual consideration had been shown on both sides the dire calamity would not have afflicted the nation (cries of dissent). The merest child could destroy but it required discretion to erect. He hoped the Durham men would be loyal to their old foundations and the old policy - 'No' - and their old principles.

There was no room for two Associations (cries of "We are loyal").

In consequence of the interjections, the Chairman, at the close of Mr. Galbraith's remarks, appealed for order for order for the speakers. "Either hear us like men, or put somebody else in our places", he said. "If you like, you can turn us off at the end of the year but don't let us insult ourselves."

28. December 1913, Annual Council Meeting.

29. cf. R. Miliband (1961), op.cit. for a detailed analysis: L. Panitch: "Ideology & Integration". "Political Studies", June 1971).

30. e.g. W.P. Richardson "was a leader in the long line of traditionally moderate men thrown up by the Durham miners (p.141).

James Robson.. "A Labourite but not a Socialist, Robson's politics were of the moderate type perhaps best exemplified in his contemporary, Peter Lee.." (p.142).

From Anthony Mason "The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham, with special reference to the General Strike of 1926" (Ph.D. thesis, Hull 1967).

31. August 1914, Monthly Circular.

32. e.g. Monthly Circular, January 1915.

December 7th, 1916 Special Council motion passed imposing fines for absenteeism.

June 1915, Monthly Circular, "Laying Pits Idle and the Need for Economy".

33. February 27th, 1915, Council Meeting.

34. May 22nd 1915, Council Meeting.

35. October 7th, 1916, Council Meeting passed:-

"We move that the time is now opportune for pressing forward for the nationalization of the land, railways and the miner. We also move it be forwarded to the Miners' Federation and Trades Union Congress.." Spen.

36. May, 1916, Monthly Circular.

37. B. Pribicevic: "The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers' Control 1910-1922." London 1959.

38. Washington Glebe, Follonsby, Rynope, Hylton, Trindon Grange, Houghton, Winegate, Hebburn, Helton, South Helton, Wearmouth, Newbottle, North Biddick, East Helton.

39. "Durham Chronicle", April 23rd 1915.

40. May 22nd 1915, Council Meeting.

41. "Durham Chronicle", April 2nd 1915.

42. Even Cann, whose conciliatory attitudes had assisted the owners to reap these profits, wrote (December 1916, Monthly Circular):-

..."It says little for the prescience of those who had charge of our destinies that they should find themselves compelled to take this step after almost two and a half years of warfare and at a period when profiteering has reached a stage which renders it a much more difficult problem to grapple with.

It is immaterial now what steps be taken, the fact will still remain that huge fortunes have been made out of the needs of the Nation, and the attitude of thousands of people towards the War has been prejudiced as a result".

44. cf. R. Page Arnot "The Miners: Years of Struggle"

George Allen & Unwin, 1953, p.170-171.

45. December 1917, Monthly Circular

.. "To my mind, the one way most pregnant with the seed of disintegration of the movement is the many signs of growing distrust of the leaders and an ever increasing disinclination to accept advice offered by them and never was a time more opportune for a spirit of this description. If ever there was a need for a united front it is now and will be more so at the end of the War. Can such a united front be presented if we commence bickering among ourselves?"

46. June 1918, Monthly Circular

"I would be failing in my duty if I did not draw the serious attention of our members to what can almost be described as an epidemic of unconstitutional lying idle of pits. During the last few weeks we have had a good few cases where the workmen have summarily laid the pit idle; and in almost every instance this has been done without any opportunity being afforded the Agents or Executive Committee... of remedying any dispute that may have arisen. I do not intend to go into details.. (out).. under normal conditions the lying idle of pits in an unconstitutional manner is to be deplored, displaying as it does a lack of confidence in those the members have appointed to look after their interests in accordance with rule and procedure, but the present state of affairs, when the freedom of the world's democracy is practically trembling in the balance and with coal playing so vital a

part in bringing about a brighter and happier world for people to live in, these stoppages which tend to minimize the production can only be viewed with the gravest apprehension."

47. For a discussion of the relation of the social 'size' of a war and the process of social reform see Philip Abrams "The Failure of Social Reform, 1918-1920". (Past and Present", 1963, no.24).

1919 - 1926

1919 was an ominous year. It marked an immense awakening of class conflict in Britain. It was a time of bitterly discontented trade unionism forging with volatility onwards against the masters. A time to reap the rewards promised by the war-mongers; a time of hope inspired by the Russian achievement; a time of menace with thousands of ex-conscripts loose in England, the cost of living rocketing, the police force in a fever of industrial unrest, and Ireland wracked by civil war. Unionists everywhere were impressively militant - if unrevolutionary - and their aspirations demanded satiation. In January 1919 the most strident group, the miners, asked for a six hour day, a 30% basic wage increase, full maintenance of demobilized and unemployed miners and nationalization of all mines and minerals. The delegates at Southport added the rider of a five to one vote favouring a strike if the owners refused their requests.¹ The Triple Alliance re-aligned. Working class eyes looked to the future but they could discern no clear goal than the necessity to leave behind the pre-war situation. They were searching for visionaries to give a lead on both political and industrial issues. The Labour Party and more particularly the union bureaucrats were not only repelled by this bellicosity, they rather spent their energy diverting the rank-and-file demands.

Most union spokesmen were in agreement with the I.L.P.'s parliamentary tactics. Change was to come democratically

by the ballot. Industrial strife had no part to play. It was a convenient thesis since it justified the shelving of widespread action. Any major claim could be left to the political delegates, while industrial conflict must at all costs avoid overtones of constitutional threat. Any large scale union clashes were to be avoided like the plague. The union bosses were above all responsible men; they could be relied upon to direct their members' fervour into the proper channels, while simultaneously protecting the grassroots' real interests by keeping the union structure intact. The worker stuck in the branch may be frustrated but the leadership were sure that if he were in their position the militant would soon change. They only became successful officials by digesting the cultural standards. Certainly the parliamentary ethos was dishearteningly slow but it was thoroughly British - and so were the bureaucrats. The Labour Party produced no Bernstein but that it shared its convictions is undoubted. Union conservatism was a logical extrapolation of social democracy. Where the representatives professed socialism it was invariably in their hearts, never in the might of their members.

The miners were most vociferous of all unions during this period and their militancy was reflected in their more passionate spokesmen, but even here, and especially in Durham, the agents were sincere parliamentarians. The Durham agents, Labour through and through, nevertheless denied the necessity of conflict. Gentlemanly invective

would improve the working class standards, not industrial recklessness. The grassroots consistently forwarded aggressive demands at Council but even they separated their union grievances from political life. The Labourism of the leadership was only questioned when it trespassed on substantive union issues.

Confronted with the miners' proposals the government hedged. Conditions were not propitious for a confrontation, so the heavily-Tory coalition² moved to transfer the quarrel into the impotence of a Royal Commission. It was Lloyd George's achievement that he got the unions talking rather than acting. There were a number of miners' officials willing to strike but the majority eagerly plugged for the Sankey investigation. It is important to realize that this was no astute switch in tactics. Robert Smillie and leaders of his ilk passionately believed they were correct to accept the commission. They regarded the government as persuadable beings - as humanitarians like themselves - but they overlooked the structural and ideational factors which not only curtailed their verbal indictments, but also encouraged the other side to take direct action. There were real differences between the government and the coal owners but in a crisis of capitalism they were solidly united. Their only answer was to attack the standards of the pitmen to re-establish competitiveness: no notion of a changed basis for the industry could be conceived. The Durham agents were even more eager than the national spokesman to accept

the commission. They had verification of the success of the democratic method with that year's county council elections. Durham had become the first Labour controlled region.³ There was some dissent, however, from the young militants. Twenty-two year old delegate Will Lawther exclaimed; "We ought to decide to accept the verdict given by the rank and file and not accept at this eleventh hour something which is nothing more or less than a new political dodge by Lloyd George, because we know what our claims are, and have no right to go back on our demands",⁴ but the majority of the representatives feared a passing over of power to the membership. The government was within an ace of victory once the conference was instigated.⁵

The Sankey Commission - the trial of the coal capitalists - has been well documented.⁶ It resulted in an outright condemnation of the industry and a majority⁴ in favour of nationalization.⁷ The pitmen were hopeful when the government promised adoption, "in the spirit as well as in the letter". Lloyd George merely used it to stall conflict. During negotiations he astutely raised the price of coal 6/- per ton to challenge the miners' sympathy from the public. It was not until August that he told the M.F.G.B. that he would not accept the commission's recommendations. Instead, the miners could have pay increases and a shorter day,⁸ but the status quo was to remain. A howl of protest went up from the coal-fields but the government was obdurate. It rode the storm.

Cann, the Durham leader was typically forgiving. He was glad to have immediate increments and did "not think it would

be wise, or to the ultimate advantage of any section, to harass the government unduly at the present juncture."⁹ On the other hand, many of the grassroots were seething with rage. The election of political candidates that October reflected their anger. Top of the poll was the young blood Will Lawther and fourth was the direct actionist George Harvey.¹⁰ If the agents were not willing to challenge the government there were plenty of the rank-and-file ready to rise.

The following year was sparked off by a motion to resist direct action in favour of propaganda to secure nationalization. The agents succeeded in their policy of "Parliamentary effort", but that delegates were raising the question reflected the discontent at lodge level with the pace of negotiation. Moreover that it was carried only by 385 to 347 votes must have frightened the conciliators. Throughout the year the government compromised in face of militant calls from the colliers. They were assisted in Durham by the agents. In April the committee stringly urged the acceptance of the government's 20% offer, even if "it is not all we asked for or what we desired."¹² The government promptly upped the price of coal again to alienate public opinion, but with the cost of living soaring a further wage demand was submitted. It was supported by an overwhelming vote of 606,782 to 238,865. (Durham 76,869 to 32,783) for a strike. That July, with 70% of the Durham miners calling for action, even some of their delegates took a stand (which resulted in a vicious quarrel between Cann and Robson).¹³ However, come the crunch the M.F.G.B. backed away from the fight. A second Durham ballot went 78,750 to 17,185

against accepting a government productivity deal,¹⁴ but then began a series of postponements of a strike which betrayed the union fears. The government, sensing the hesitancy, dug in its heels and that October stood against the strikers. The "Datum Line" strike was brief. Lloyd George rushed off a hasty settlement when it appeared that the railwaymen would join the pitmen. Though they had earlier backed their members the agents were quick to sue for settlement.¹⁵ They urged the men to take the offer and complained when safety men refused to keep pits clear.¹⁶ The Durham miners voted closely to return.¹⁷ It was obvious that there had only been a skirmish. At Annual Council motions appeared calling for the resignation of those delegates who had tried appeasement.¹⁸

At the start of 1921 a crushing depression overcame Britain. The coal trade, being the staple industry, was hardest hit.¹⁹ As the contraction continued the government resolved that the only way to recover was to revert to district settlements. In short, to abandon the national wage control and decrease the wages of the miners. The ruthlessness of Durham coal-owners was proverbial but in 1921 it entered its greatest excess. They declared that with the loss of State support wages would have to depend on local profitability. Calls for wage reductions were promptly forwarded. To go through would mean the reversion of the miners to a pre-war level. In spite of this, the Durham agents were apprehensive. "With no money in the industry, and very little in the various Miners' Associations, coupled with the vast army of unemployed and under-employed, we have got to recognize that the tide is

against us, and that it is very doubtful whether we could successfully carry through a strike."²⁰ They were preparing to accede to the lock-out threat. But the lodge delegates wanted resistance. By 554 to 141 the government offer was rejected.²¹ The men were not prepared to lose the war wage of 5/- per shift, the 2/- Sankey award and the 20% increase without a struggle.

The owners locked the pits at the end of March. An awesome fight was on the cards since the Triple Alliance declared for strike action in support of the miners. They were joined by the Railway Clerks and the Post Office Workers, with the Co-operative Society adding material aid. Tragically an unofficial statement by Frank Hodges allowed the union leaders to abandon the pitmen. The defensive alliance was suddenly cancelled. Black Friday passed into history.²² The allies of the miners - or rather their spokesmen - found it hard to hide their relief at this evasion. Class against class was not their creed. To men like Jimmy Thomas it was a moral affront against his liberal doctrine of individual rights and harmony. Similarly with the Durham agents who had been impelled by the sheer magnitude of the owners' demands to put up some defence.

The government expected a nasty confrontation. Troops were sent into coalfields, reservists called up and a special "Defence Force" created. Even the D.M.A. anticipated their members rising, going to the extent of organizing a deputation "to urge them to refrain from violence and at all costs to keep the peace."²³ In answer the pitmen were remarkably

pacific. Nevertheless, they were determined. By June the government was conciliatory enough to offer a \$10m. subsidy to ease reductions. The Durham men responded by a 69,991 to 20,744 vote of rejection.²⁴ Two weeks later the M.F.G.B. agreed the same terms with the government, justifying the over-ruling of the previous ballot because conditions had markedly deteriorated.²⁵ The lock-out had been a thorough defeat.

However, in Durham the submission had important repercussions. The pitmen were left with bitter resentment. The M.F.G.B. was attacked for its "autocratic attitude" while animosity against the owners smouldered. At the same time the agents totally failed to see the bankruptcy of their compromising tactics. The owners and the government had allied to hit the colliers directly, and yet the agents were not only unwilling to resist the crude economic affront but they even complained because the owners did not stick to the rules of the game; "Nobody in the past has condemned more strenuously the adoption of Direct Action Methods than the Party in question (Labour); but directly we attain sufficient vision to realize that we can obtain by purely Constitutional Methods the goal we aim at, then they immediately realize that the old methods of political propoganda cannot be applied. Their constructive policy has been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and they cannot afford to run the inevitable risk involved in putting their constructive policy against that of the Labour Movement, and trading upon the fact that wages are at low ebb, they appeal to all that is selfish in mankind, in

the hope that by means of a smoke cloud of lies and gross misrepresentation they hope to achieve the end that they know could not be obtained by clean hands."²⁷ The agents could not grasp that it was the owners who made the rules as well as played with them. That the right-wing "Durham County Advertiser" recognized the impotence of a social democratic world-view is attested by its advocacy shortly after the confrontation²⁸ and its later diatribe against the direct actionists within the union.²⁹

For seven months of 1922 Durham pitmen were on the new basic rate. Opposition was exacerbated by cumulative disappointment and sheer want. Moreover, there were some pits demonstrating a socialist vision.³⁰ In 1923 the lodges ordered their agents to terminate the 1921 National Agreement. Instead, the Durham representatives voted for amendment. This was in direct opposition to the county mandate which had explicitly ruled out conciliation. Remonstrations shot through the county; "Demands were made for the delegates to justify their 'traitorous' action, for their exclusion as representatives to any future conferences up to a period of five years, and, in one case, for their immediate resignation!"

The agents survived, however, and the following year the tension was eased when a temporary boom arrived with the French occupation of the Ruhr. The owners were now willing to discuss wage increases and the agents were allowed to revert to the negotiation table. A vote to end the National Agreement was now acceptable.³² When the union rejected the owners' offer, however, they were then confronted by

MacDonald who had just entered with his minority government. His plea was that the Labour Party was too weak to legislate, so could they be satisfied with a Court of Inquiry? Of the Durham agents, Peter Lee and Robson, keen Labour men themselves, understanding the problem, were eager to settle their claims. That they had a Labour Party in office was sufficient, even if it was powerless. Robson and Lee shrank from any usurpation of the government,³³ while urging acceptance of the proposed Court of Inquiry. It came to nought, but it had stalled any clash. In May the owners were able to offer rises to the men - with the proviso that they were to be in force for only twelve months. Within a year the industry was to be plunged into its darkest depression.

During 1925-5 another event of considerable significance was evolving. The National Minority Movement, a communist inspired group particularly active in the M.F.G.B., was making great headway in the unions. Especially important was this organization's backing of A.J. Cook as successor to Frank Hodges for secretary of the M.F.G.B.. Cook was an unashamed militant, a co-author of the syndicalist "Miners' Next Step" in 1912, an ex-C.P. member and proud to be "a disciple of Karl Marx and a humble follower of Lenin." Cook was not one to meekly negotiate.³⁴ He saw the crisis of capitalism as an opportunity to destroy the system - and he looked to the miners to lead the attack. Cook, a determined advocate of industrial activism,³⁵ came in for the media's fiercest vilification,³⁶ but nothing could remove the endearment he possessed from the rank-and-file.³⁷ Cook was the most popular of all the

miners' leaders. He articulated the grassroots' dissatisfaction in a political aggression without precedent in the upper echelons of British trade unionism. With such a figure commanding mass support the dangers inherent in a large-scale clash were magnified many times over. It was Cook who persistently urged preparation for the struggle against the owners which he believed inevitable.³⁸ That his colleagues thought him manic testified to their terror of constitutional attack. Despite Herbert Smith's courage, there was no other leading trade unionist to perceive the divisions which in 1925 were so clearly drawn. With the slump there were two parties, one of private property, the other of labour. The crucial distinction, however, was that one side was capitalist but the other was not socialist. There was to be no fight: only an attack on the working class. For the one side the answer to the problem was straight-forward: cut costs of production and boost the market share. The opposition preferred no solution. This was the essential difference between men like Churchill and the Durham agents. Churchill was a caricature of all the traits of Tory imperialism, a "militant to his fingertips,"³⁹ and an uncompromising enemy of the trade unions.⁴⁰ In Durham the three major spokesmen, Peter Lee, James Robson and William Richardson were all primarily men of peace and goodwill. All were Primitive Methodists, by now a confirmation of their conciliatory attitudes. None could stomach an intensely class conscious ideology. Their political ambition was to remove conflict, and that was to be achieved by ignoring class conflict. Kingsley Martin

captured the situation in 1926 when he wrote: "The forces of Labour, were commanded by Socialist reformists, and the forces of the Government by class-conscious believers in the inevitable conflict"⁴¹ Nowhere was the dichotomy better illustrated than in Durnam where the Londonderrys still survived - and the officials were haunted by the ghost of Joan Wilson.⁴²

The situation blackened throughout 1925. Churchill's decision to return to the Gold Standard exacerbated the slump. That June the coal-owners called for drastic wage cuts to enable the industry to become viably competitive. The miners refused to even discuss reductions or extended hours.⁴³ With the whole trade union movement threatening sympathetic action the government renewed its subsidy. "Red Friday" was born.⁴⁴ Three weeks later the Scarborough Conference of the T.U.C. articulated the stridency of the movement. Militant resolutions urged preparations to be made against the capitalist forces. Unfortunately, events proved that "future general was more militant than present particular."⁴⁵ The government managed to rescue itself with another commission under Lord Samuel (and it made no mistake this time of including workers' representatives),⁴⁶ but whatever its vicissitudes, the miners were aware that they had achieved a victory. Cook rightly insisted that it was but a preliminary but the government would have to take large-scale preparations before it risked confrontation.

The government did prepare. It was aware of the necessity for a clash so steps were taken to strengthen their hands

The C.M.S. (Organization for the Maintenance of Supplies) set out to train blacklegs with government approval.⁴⁷ Leading Communists were quelled. On the other side, the trade unions did nothing. The Durham Miners' Association was as guilty as any. The agents drifted along like a cluster of Micawbers. As men were laid off and funds ran low they came in for vigorous criticism from militant lodges. That October a motion that "we deplore the apathy and wait-to-see attitude of our Agents and Executive Committee in the recent crisis, and demand an explanation of their position in not publicly supporting the policy of a hundred per cent organization and a living wage for the Miners, of A.J.Cook..." went to Council.⁴⁸ It went off the board, but it showed that some pits were not prepared to take the capitalist offensive lying down. The following January, on the eve of the great lock-out, Oakenshaw moved "that the Agents and Executive Committee be asked to resign for the following reasons:

- (1) Inability to lead
- (2) A ballot for a strike at this time and in one district of the Federation is to play into the hands of the Owners
- (3) The attitude of some of our Agents and Executive Committee in this County is an attitude which cripples and insults the grand efforts of the Federation Officers..."⁴⁹

The Durham officials mugged along regardless into and throughout the clash. That April, two weeks before the lock-out commenced, Richardson still hoped "that the corner will be safely negotiated when May 1st comes, and that something will be done that will bring peace to our industry."⁵⁰

Nothing did turn up. The government simply refused further subsidies, and the owners, their demand for longer hours, less wages and district settlements having been refused, locked the pits. The General Strike continued for nine days when the T.U.C. brought out its members, but the famous "betrayal" left the miners on their own.⁵¹ Of course, it was not simply traitorous union bureaucrats who let down the pitmen. As Ralph Miliband so accurately observed; "It was betrayed because betrayal was the inherent and inescapable consequence of their whole philosophy of politics - and it would be quite foolish to think that their philosophy was the less firmly held for being unsystematically articulated."⁵² It was their absorption of the cultural standards that impelled the union leaders - in varying degrees - to shy clear of a constitutional threat even where the crisis demanded that or certain defeat.⁵³ Even those spokesmen in the midst of the struggle - the Durham agents - had similar inhibitions. They did not even bother to form a strike committee. From the very start they pleaded for peace. They wanted their members to go home and sit quietly until a settlement was negotiated. They ignored all the while the offensive actions of the government who ~~armed~~^{billeted} troops ~~near~~^{near} Durham, drafted in the notorious Hull police and blockaded Newcastle. The agents were terrified of any lawlessness from the pitmen and yet appeared oblivious to the legitimized violence perpetrated against the miners and their families over the months of 1926.

The D.M.A. controlled in excess of 150,000 strikers in

the best organized union in the country, yet their conclusion in 1916 was that they were unnecessary in the struggle. The Durham miners were perhaps the most militant group in England but they were left to work off their frustrations in localized incidents. The D.M.A. refused to retaliate even when attacked. That a rift between the officials and the grass-roots belched wide open is not surprising. Many student blacklegs apparently found the General Strike a lot of fun. Had they been in Durham they perhaps would have hesitated to think so. There were no football matches between pipmen and police here. On the contrary, there were widespread clashes and many arrests.⁵⁴ The Flying Scotsman was derailed and attempts made to sabotage other trains. There were fierce battles between police and strikers at Newcastle and Middlesbrough on a large scale, while lesser incidents peppered the region. The militant demands of the colliers elicited no response at D.M.A. headquarters. Any organization of the men had to be done in spite of the union. That it succeeded to a remarkable extent with the plans of Robin Page Arnot and the Lawther Family in and around Chopwell pays tribute to the organizing abilities of the miners⁵⁵ That Arnot's appeal to the D.M.A. was met with the notification that the agents were at a meeting⁵⁶ speaks legions for the union complacency in its gravest crisis. This too when over twenty local unions had joined the Newcastle Strike Committee. That the biggest, best, and most militant members were kept out doomed the resistance to failure. The strikers were not revolutionaries but it was a revolutionary

situation from which the miners either had to win or lose. When the union agents shied clear of a confrontation they handed the government victory on a plate.

From the very start of the crisis the Durham agents fought say of resistance. Peter Lee insisted on seeing the problem within the logic of the owners. Hence early in January 1926 he believed; "there will have to be departures made so far as our ideas are concerned if we are to bring back prosperity to our county and the country...Very shortly we shall have to consider the question of trying to make some arrangement whereby this slump in Durham can be checked. If the miners are prepared to think about the question and to make some working arrangement, I hope we shall be met in the spirit in which we have been met in the past. The men will very likely have to start on new things that are not very palatable. After all, if we are to be comrades in industry, we must be comrades in the right sense of the word."⁵⁷

Since then countless industrial managers have echoed similar valedictions. In short, Lee was euphemistically announcing a drop in standards. He was acknowledging the framework of capitalist economics. The membership showed what they thought of such remarks that June when Lee spoke again. He pleaded for negotiations, "What we want," he added, "is men who have thought out the problem." Anyone can shout this motto - pointing to a banner bearing the words 'No reductions no increased hours, no district settlements'...This observation was met by considerable interruption, one man telling Mr. Lee to 'get back to Durham', and another asking the

...and feeling from the membership towards the agent, added to the
actual militancy of the miners (all the echoes throughout the conference
may point, it could be argued, to a revolutionary time. Unmistakably,
-out was met with vigorous opposition. From the miners and it
be surmised that had the D.M.A. offered a lead by joining the
the Strike Committee in a policy of confrontation. Then the miners
almost certainly have followed. However, from the above that
did not occur is due to the fact that the miners, not only in
ing to be locked-out, but more centrally in erecting the agents
main in office when the traits which were to lead to their
actions were clear long before, were politically still within the
of social-democracy [if only tenuously]. Their strike was
mentally a response to the scale of the employers' offensive and
than in pockets of activism --- not a political answer to the
list onslaught. In sum, their actions in 1926 were in line with
earlier reactions to coal-owners' attacks: they contested but
alternative other than obstinate refusal. The political attitude was
level of increased degree rather than a new level.

Will Hawthorn interview, 'Sec. for Study of Labour History', (c.1969).

1969:
If there'd been any revolutionary spirit among the miners there'd been
a lot of murders committed the way they were treated." [p.143].
...there's been a lot of nonsense talked about the fact that it
an attempt to bring about a revolution in the country... taking
and large there was only a very few who really believed that
could be possible for to bring the country to its knees." [p.143].
It ought to be remembered that Hawthorn was a notorious
political militant in Durham around 1926].

Chairman to call on the next speaker...there were cries of 'Withdraw your last remark'. The interruptions of Mr. Lee, Mr. Lee remarking 'If this is a sample of the new democracy, then God help Britain, and God help the people.'⁵⁸ None of the agents were invited that year to the Burnhope 'alternative' gala. Instead, over 40,000 people marched to hear A.J.Cook tell of the necessity to fight.⁵⁹ The absolute bankruptcy of the Durham agents was best encapsulated shortly before the resumption of work when Robson declared; "If there is any feeling that we are done and if there is to be any going back, for God's sake, let us get into the Miners' Hall at Durham, and let us all go back together," he said. "Whatever may happen in the struggle, I am going to save the D.M.A. first and foremost, whatever else may go. The D.M.A. and its kindred associations are the only heritage we have to hand down."⁶⁰ That union survival came before the men was evidence that the officials had no stomach for a struggle with the owners: they would rather succumb from the outset. The Durham colliers to the end held out against the savage terms of the owners.⁶¹ The final ballot was 43,435 to 35,916 to continue resistance.* The pitmen determined to defend themselves even when they were on their knees. It was the union which decided to return. Their members followed en masse at the end of November. Their abject failure and despondency left them open to accept the agents' interpretation of events. "Militancy" had led to wholesale defeat. It was the irony of the struggle that because of the disillusionment in the county the agents were able to continue

as leaders. Indeed, since 1926 the Durham miners have been characterized not only by political, but also industrial conservatism.

NOTES:

1. R. Page Arnot, "Facts for the Coal Commission" Ch.1, Lab. Res. Dept. 1919
Ballot result 615,164 to 105,082, in Durham 76,024 to 16,248
M.F.G.B. records 26th February 1919.
2. C.L. Mowat, "Britain Between the Wars", Methuen 1955,
"The new House contained more company directors than did later parliaments (179 as compared with an average of 139 in the parliaments between the wars) and more members associated with commerce and finance (86 compared with an average of 69). Most though not all of these were Conservatives. Almost twenty years of undistinguished Tory rule began with this (1918) adventitious victory." p.7
3. Won 46 of 77 seats, Peter Lee became chairman, Cann was delighted. Jan.-Feb. 1919 Monthly Circular;
"To me one of the primary lessons of the recent victories is the evidence it portrays that the working classes are beginning to recognize that if their lot in life has got to be improved, then the surest way of doing it is to do it for themselves."
4. W. Lawther, M.F.G.B. 26th February 1919, quoted in W.R. Garside "The Durham Miners 1919-1960", G. Allen & Unwin 1971, p.102
5. Miliband op.cit.; "The government had a weak hand. But the labour leaders did not dare play their aces. So the government won the game." p.66
6. cf. Garside op.cit., Ch.5, p.97-134
R. Page Arnot, "The Miners: The Years of Struggle" G. Allen & Unwin 1953; p.182-225

R. Page Arnot, "Facts for the Coal Commission" Lab. Res. Dept.

"Further Facts for the Coal Commission" Lab. Res. Dept. 1919

7. The Commission makes interesting reading, showing as it does how; "the present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned" p.viii-ix, "Coal Industry Commission" 1919, the excessive profits made by the owners during the war, royalty abuses etc. Membership was Robert Smillie, Herbert Smith, Frank Hodges, Sir Leo Chiozza Money, R.H.Tawney, Sidney Webb, Evan Williams, R.W.Cooper, J.T. Forgie, Arthur Balfour, Sir Arthur Duckham and Sir Thomas Royden.

8. Extra 2/- per shift and seven hour day

9. "Durham Chronicle" 22nd August 1919

10. October 31st 1919 D.M.A. Records

11. Special Council Meeting March 6th 1920;

"Carried by 385 to 347 votes to oppose the direct action and support propaganda to secure Nationalization of the Mines by Parliamentary effort."

12. D.M.A. Circular 3rd April 1920

13. cf. "Durham Chronicle" 15th October 1920

Garside, op.cit., p.129-130

14. Called 'Datum Line' agreement

15. cf. Garside op.cit.;

Robson previously in favour of a strike, said on October 31st "By continuing the strike we shall be drifting further towards chaos, and there will be great uncertainty as to where the money is coming from to pay the advance...We shall not be as favourably circumstanced at the end of another fort-night

as we are now." (quoted p.132)

16. Federation Board Circular October 21st 1920

17. 51,589 for, 39,819 against

18. Annual Council Meeting December 18th 1920;

(2) "Seeing that the Durham delegates at the National Conference (with the exception of two or three), on September 24th voted for a week's suspension of the notices, which was contrary to our mandate, this Council Meeting calls upon all such offenders to resign their positions." Follonsby, Merrington, Harraton and others.

(3) "That this Council Meeting calls upon the members of the National Executive of the M.F.G.B., who supported the government offer, immediately to resign their positions." Follonsby, Merrington, Harraton and others.

19. Mowat op.cit.;

"Signs of the slump were only too manifest in 1921 and 1922. The value of Britain's overseas trade declined: exports by 47.9 per cent, imports by 43.7 per cent, in 1921, as compared with 1920; in 1922 the value of exports recovered by 1.7 per cent, but imports declined further by 7.5 per cent. The monthly average production of pig-iron, which was 669,500 tons in 1920, was 217,600 tons in 1921, 415,700 for the third quarter...The fall in wages was equally great. Wage rates, which reached their peak in 1920, when the index number was 260 (1913=100), had declined to 170 by 1922. Actual earnings (allowing for the number of workers unemployed) were 244 in 1920 but 147 in 1922. The Ministry of Labour's cost-of-living index, meanwhile, which reached 276 in November 1920, was

180 in December 1922. The "Economist" estimated that the working man had lost three-quarters of his wartime wage increases by 1922, and commented that he was waiting for the trade revival which was supposed to follow the wage reductions.

Yet the average of ordinary dividends was 10.2 per cent in 1921, 8.4 per cent in 1922." p.125

20.D.M.A. Circular March 19th 1921

21.Special Council March 26th 1921

22.cf. Page Arnot (1953) op.cit., p.309-321

23.Fed. Board Minutes May 24th 1921

24.June 11th 1921 D.M.A. Records

25.Garside op.cit., p.153

26.Ibid., p.155

27.D.M.A. Circular December 30th 1921.

28."Durham County Advertiser" July 22nd 1921;

"In the nature of things there can be no truce between the upholders of the present system and these prophets of a new age. The fight must go on, but it might be transferred from the industrial to the political stage.

There is a section of the Labour Party who honestly think that the salvation of the proletariat can be won by industrial action. I believe that section is losing ground. Recent events may be convincing the worker that the strike weapon is a boomerang that rebounds upon those who throw it, and that, at least until Labour achieves unity, the employing classes will always beat the workers with the whip of hunger. If the workers can be convinced that their dreams will be actualized only through the ballot box one great cause of

industrial strife will have been removed."

29. "Durham County Advertiser" August 19th 1921;

"It is common property that at their meeting on Saturday the Council of the D.M.A. were engaged on more irritating subjects than the resolutions to be submitted to the annual conference of the Miners' Federation. The representatives of the extremist sections had another tilt at those who occupy positions of authority and responsibility respecting whom demonstrations of indispensability were unnecessary. Needless to say the vast majority of the council was against any such drastic action, and the proposal was rejected by an overwhelming vote. Such a douch of cold water would have settled, for all time, the ill-conceived ideas of ordinary constituted mortals, but those associated with trade organizations are conversant with the self-satisfied assurance of the extremist class and their persistent and mischevicious clamour. Hence it is too much to hope that even now they will cease from troubling. The fact is the D.M.A. has more to fear from attacks from within than from without. The Ablettites have had a sufficiently long innings, and when they realize that there is no room for soviet methods in the D.M.A. a great step will have been taken towards that solidarity of which we hear so much nowadays. Any other course means throwing back the cause of progress. Surely the difficulties confronting coal-mining in the county of Durham are a sufficiently hard preoccupation for the executive without their being persistently harassed by pin-pricks such as those of last Saturday."

30. Programme Council Meeting August 11th 1922;

"We appeal against the Executive Committee in not placing our resolution on the last Council Programme, viz.-

"That as an Association we affiliate with the Red International Trades Union." Morrison

The Appeals' Circular of the committee was particularly instructive, the leadership objecting because; "its methods, as fixed in its objects, are definitely opposed to the methods approved and adopted by British democracy and Trades Unionism."

31. Garside op.cit., p.168-169

32. Voting 510,503 to 114,458 nationally } For abolition
73,210 to 22,269 Durham }

33. Robson said; "Nothing could be more disastrous to the mining community of this county. Financially, numerically and from every standpoint we have nothing to hope for from such a course. Our policy is to accept the terms, strengthen our forces and go into an enquiry with sufficient time on hand to review the whole factors that make against wages, and to insist upon Government action in giving effect to the findings of the enquiry." "Durham Chronicle" 5th April 1924

34. e.g. in July 1925 Cook was invited to see the King to discuss the crisis. He replied; "Why the hell should I go to see the King?...I'll show them that they have a different man from Frank Hodges to deal with now...I am going to fight these people. I believe a fight is certain. There is only one way of doing it. That is to fight." Quoted C. Farman, "The General Strike May 1926", Rupert Hart-Davis. 1972, p.25

35. Cook had resigned after criticism from the C.P. in 1921,

but he was still very much in sympathy with its early revolutionary tactics.

36. For just one example, which interestingly concedes his popular backing, "Durham County Advertiser", July 30th 1926;

"A Durham City councillor, on a passenger boat proceeding to London, had an interesting chat on the coal dispute with an experienced Horton miner the other day. The miner was bemoaning the fact that the expenses incurred by the East Boldon Miners' Lodge in connection with a 20-minute speech recently were no less than £1 per minute for the address. Mr. Cook, though billed for seven o'clock, did not arrive until 9.40. He spoke until ten o'clock, and for that brief meeting an expense of over £19 had to be met by the lodge.

"Why don't you speak out like this at your lodge meetings?" the miner was asked.

"If I were to speak in those terms", he replied, "I would be pitched out. All the young men back Cook because he brings them the message they want. The middle-aged miners are in the minority and are outvoted every time by the younger element."

"When is the coal dispute coming to an end?" inquired the councillor.

The miner's reply was brief and emphatic. "When Cook gets the sack", said he."

37. e.g. Will Lawther; "Imagine, where is the man to-day I don't care who he is... could draw the crowds like what Cook could do. Imagine in Durham, tramping to Burnhope anything up to thirty or forty thousand people and that was typical

wherever he went anywhere in the county." Interview in "Society for the Study of Labour History" Bull. 19, 1969 p.15
 A. Horner, "Incorrigible Rebel" MacGibbon & Kee 1960, p.72;
 "...we (Cook and Horner) spoke together at meetings all over the country. We had audiences, mostly of miners, running into thousands. Usually I was put on first. I would make a good, logical speech, and the audience would listen quietly, but without any wild enthusiasm. Then Cook would take the platform. Often he was tired, hoarse and sometimes almost inarticulate. But he would electrify the meeting. They would applaud and nod their heads in agreement when he said the most obvious things. For a long time I was puzzled, and then one night I realized why it was. I was speaking to the meeting. Cook was speaking for the meeting. He was expressing the thoughts of his audience, I was trying to persuade them. He was the burning expression of their anger at the iniquities which they were suffering."

F. Brockway, "Inside the Left", Allen & Unwin 1942, p.193-4;
 "Arthur Cook never left the rank and file. He had their thoughts, their language, their habits, their trusting comradeship and good fellowship. During this nine months' lock-out Arthur insisted on foregoing his salary and taking lock-out pay and nothing else. He lived in trains, travelling from one coalfield to another, addressing four or five demonstrations, thousands strong, day after day, wearing out his voice...He was loved by his men, who sensed his utter sincerity and who heard in his words their own thoughts expressed with a conviction and confidence which sent them

back to their struggle with new determination..."

33. For example, in one speech Cook told of his mother-in-law storing away an extra tin of salmon every week in anticipation.

Elsewhere; "Before 1925 is out...we shall be face to face in Britain with the greatest industrial struggle we have ever had, that will involve not only the miners, but the railwaymen, dockers, and engineers." Quoted in Garside, op.cit., p.177

"...this (Red Friday) is the first round. Let us prepare for the final struggle." Quoted Allen Hutt, "The Post-War History of the British Working Class" Gollancz 1957, p.113

39. Fenner Brockway, quoted by R.R.James, "Churchill, A Study in Failure, 1900-1939" Weid.+Nic. 1970, p.155

40. Indeed, an enemy of any threat to Toryism. Witness his earlier ordering of troops into South Wales colliery districts, intervention in Russia, his complicity with the Black and Tans in Ireland and his accusations of Bolshevism in the Labour Party.

41. Kingsley Martin, "The British Public and the General Strike" Hogarth Press 1926, p.58

42. A.J.Cook saw the situation in the black-and-white terms of its reality. Speaking at Burnhope in July 1926 the "Durham County Advertiser" reported on July 23rd 1926, "He referred to Lord Londonderry's speech that "Smith and Cook must go." The Lord Londonderry of to-day was no different from his grandfather; the difference was that he did not care to attempt what his grandfather did...We have

arrived at the stage when capitalism can be patched up no longer. To talk of the mining industry being played out is moonshine. The industry is not played out; it has never been scientifically played out, and the industry cannot be made successful until capitalism has been swept away.."

43. July 15th 1925 M.F.G.B. National Conference;

"The Executive Committee recommend the Conference to inform the Government that it can accept no Court of Inquiry that has for its object the ascertainment of whether mine-workers wages can be reduced or their hours extended, as these questions were fully discussed at the last inquiry; the Executive Committee further recommend that we repeat our willingness to meet the coalowners in open conference as soon as they have withdrawn their proposals."

44. For a full account see R. Page Arnot op.cit. 1953 p.356-357

45. J. Klugmann, "History of the Communist Party of Great Britain" Vol.2 1925-1927, Lawrence&Wishart. 1969 p.50

46. J. Symons, "The General Strike" Gresset P. 1957, p.32;

"The new Royal Commission included no representatives of labour, not any person who had even a remote knowledge of the coal industry."

47. cf. Arnot 1953 op.cit. p.393f, and letter from Home Secretary to the press, quoted R. Page Arnot, "The General Strike, May 1926" 1926, this ed. 1967, A.M. Kelly U.S.A. p.55

48. October 24th 1925 Council Meeting

49. January 30th 1926 Council Meeting

50. "Darnham County Advertiser" April 16th 1926

51. For an account see J. Symons 1957 op.cit.

C. Farman, "The General Strike May 1926" Hart-Davis 1972

R. Page Annot 1955 op.cit., p.421-456 and 1926 op.cit.

52. Milliband op.cit., p.144 and

Kingsley Martin op.cit., p.70;

"The T.U.C. entertained no thoughts of setting itself up as 'a rival to the House of Commons': 'no political issue has been mentioned or thought of' in connexion with the strike. 'It began over wages and conditions of working; it has never been concerned with anything else'. 'No attack is being made on Constitutional Government. We beg Mr. Baldwin to believe that.' It became daily more anxious to emphasize that 'the General Council does not challenge the Constitution,' was 'not fighting the Community', but 'defending the mine-workers against the mine-owners'. It was ready to call off the strike as soon as discussion could be entered upon 'free of any condition'..."

53. J. Symons op.cit., p.231;

"A General Strike can be used only as a political, indeed a revolutionary, instrument; and for such a use the General Council and the great majority of strikers were not prepared."

54. See A. Mason, "The General Strike in the North East" Univ. of Hull 1970, and his thesis 1967 Hull op.cit. for the best historical accounts of 1926, and "The General Strike in the North East" in "Our History" No.22 1961

"There was something over 15,000 cases in England and Wales concerning offences under the Emergency Regulations during the General Strike, 1,389 of which came under the heading

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of actual disorder or violence. Of those cases where violence had occurred, 583 had been in the English counties and 183 in County Durham." Mason 1970 p.103

55. To give an account of the efforts of Arnot and his comrades would take up too much space but it is recorded well in both of Mason's works (see above), Arnot's account of the General Strike of 1926 (op.cit.), and "Our History" 22, 1961.

Unions affiliated to the Newcastle Strike Committee include;

1. Northumberland Miners' Association
2. Northumberland Colliery Mechanics' Association
3. Northumberland Union of Distributive + Allied Workers
4. T. + G.W.
5. General and Municipal Workers
6. Boilermakers' Union
7. Fed. of Engineering + Shipbuilding Trades
8. Railway Clerks' Association
9. N.U.R.
10. Builders' Federation
11. Shop Assistants' Union
12. A.S.L.E.F.
13. E.T.U.
14. A.E.U.
15. Plumbers' Union
16. Printers' Union
17. Gateshead Strike Committee

56. Mason 1967 op.cit.;

"Mr. Will Lawther, whilst playing a prominent role in the work of organizing the two counties for a stoppage, could in no way be construed as an official representative of this union, his connexion with the Minority Movement and his 'leftist' tendencies not having endeared him to the official leadership. Co-operation between trade unions, never easy to achieve, was a plant which needed careful tending; even during a general strike; it was only prudence not to give the impression that the sole impetus for the hoped for organization came from Burt Hall. It was therefore agreed that Mrs. Arnot should visit Durham in order to invite the

co-operation of the D.M.A....On the Tuesday morning when Mr. Arnot arrived at the miners' headquarters in Durham, a Council meeting was in progress. He therefore returned the next morning, Wednesday May 5th, to be told by Mr. Robson that he would bring the matter before his colleagues, and that the appointment of a representative could only be made after the proper constitutional action had been taken. Apart from an official visit which Mr. Peter Lee paid to Burt Lee later on in the week, no decision about either forming a Council of Action or sending a representative to the regional strike committee in Newcastle was arrived at by the leaders of the D.M.A. until May 12th, the day on which the T.U.C. called off the strike. This inevitably loosened the authority which the Newcastle strike committee hoped to obtain, especially in South Durham, where the scattered mining villages were to prove almost impossible to include in the organization, communication difficulties serving to aggravate the situation." p.246-247

57. "Durham Chronicle" January 9th 1926

58. "Durham County Advertiser" June 4th 1926

59. "Durham County Advertiser" July 23rd 1926

60. "Durham Chronicle" October 29th 1926

61. Wages cut over 7/- per shift and 1 hour extra per day.

N.B. Place of publication is omitted in these notes if the work was published in London.

Conclusion.

This analysis has of necessity, chiefly for conceptual purposes, been simplistic. Obviously, the very delineation of the tensions is itself misleading in that it forwards dichotomies where in fact a complex dialectic pervaded. For example, in the discussion of Crawford it is somewhat inaccurate to say that he was a visionary compared to the pitmen and thereby suggest a continuum of consciousness. Such a schematic judgement is not to imply that all the miners trailed behind him. There were clearly advanced and retarded colliers (e.g. the North of England Socialist Society and those pitmen who joined Conservative Working-Men's Clubs respectively). Nevertheless, what is central is that the mass of the pitmen were in agreement with Crawford's views. Witness their very votes of confidence in his constant re-election not only to the general secretaryship but also as arbitrator, counsellor etc and that throughout his office there appeared no motions against his brand of Gladstonian-Liberalism even on Council Programmes (indeed, the most significant resolution is a criticism of Crawford's lack of orthodoxy). Of course, this is not to say there was not considerable practical dissatisfaction with trade union arrangements, but these constraints were obviously insufficient to change the political world-view of the lodges (even if they were an implied criticism of the laissez-faire creed). It would certainly have assisted the work to document the activism of the articulated minority in opposition, but to reiterate the intention was to understand the consciousness as a whole. By far and away the best method - since the inactive rarely (if ever) document their apathy - was by way of the D.M.A. Council minutes and the struggles in which the miners participated. In what was essentially a closed shop here were the politics (even if a particular economic rationality is simultaneously a political philosophy discontent with the manifestations of the former does not mean an abandonment of the latter) of the majority of Durham pitmen (particularly when it is held in mind that the Council Programme was voted on in advance at individual collieries and the lodge delegates mandated how to vote). On the other

hand, in 1926, with the enormity of the owners' demands, the will to resist impelled the pitmen into immense militancy. No doubt, sharing as many did by then a vision of 'socialism' with some of their agents they interpreted that goal (and hence panacea) as something more down-to-earth than the utopian dream of the Labour Party. However, again the point is that the majority politically, if they temporarily abandoned the Labour Party parliamentarians, did not undertake revolutionary politics. On the contrary, the nine months' lock-out (and that they waited until the actual crisis to fault their agents) attests to their failure to organize an offensive strategy against Baldwin and his cohorts. In so doing, it bore witness to their encapsulation in bourgeois hegemony. They realized they had to resist, but in temporarily dropping Labour Party negoti^{at}ionism the miners did not step outside capitalist domination to see the fight for a seizure of power to avoid defeat. 1926 was the most tenuous situation the pitmen had been in since Labourism was ~~shattered~~ undermined when the capitalists attacked, but to remain oödurate against an affront is still a giant step from avowing socialist revolution. It meant that the pitmen were condemned to remain the exploited class and victim to further capitalist crises. One cannot avoid the conclusion that ideologically they were not ready in 1926. Not only had the Labour Party thoroughly castrated them, but their unionist antecedents added to Labour's fatalism. Moreover, the defeat left them further prone to accede to the dominant mores.

To discern the dialectics of incorporation has been the aim of this work. In an area which felt so acutely the whims of capitalist booms and slumps this is not an easy phenomenon to delineate and certainly the relation between industrial stridency and political consciousness was at times hazy. However, the very fact that the existence of these sharp oscillations in the labour-capital nexus (added to the acute deprivations of day-to-day working of a pit) hurled the miners into activism itself underlines the contamination of bourgeois ideology in that they could not see beyond (or more particularly a way beyond) the status quo. Their actions were primarily protests rather than revolts. This study argued that this con-

sciousness is explicable by understanding the gestation of Durham's peculiar variants of Primitive Methodism, Liberalism and Labourism both within the wider society and within the county. A coming to grips with the important similarities and differences of these relationships is axiomatic to comprehending the Durham miners. More work must be done on the agitators in Durham, especially in the early years of the 20th century, but if the weight of this study can have any influence it will lay stress on the need for any serious political analyst to consider that even more elusive factor: the politics of non-activists (i.e. the people who supplied the mass of the workforce). That this non-activism is itself an indication of subjugation is not enough. Research is needed to understand the complex tensions that this indoctrination had when the necessities of life - particularly in coal accountancy - clashed with it. Moreover, just as central must be the examination of how the political innovations acted upon (and were influenced) by the positions of the rank and file and the wider social milieu.

One of the major ambitions of this dissertation has been to stress the role of the idea in shaping men's consciousness. Economic relations do not simply shape the social situation (though they do play an integral ~~of~~ part) as the unionism of the Durham miners throughout the period has illustrated. There has been a tendency here to conceptualize a dichotomy of the politics of the miners as somehow removed from the industrial sphere. The reality is a blurred amalgam. There is no doubt, for instance, that the pitmen's Labourism had little in common with Londonderry's Toryism. However, the critical issue is that it did have some similarities in a situation where the socio-economic basis polarized the society. Capitalism creates its own ideology and it encompasses the whole social order. Its inherent contradictions naturally create a complex dialectic since labour and capital are in a continuous series of conflict. Labour, thrust into industrial turmoil, cannot easily accede to ~~the~~ bourgeois hegemony. It establishes its own ideology as a response. However, in that creation the dilemma remained on the Northern Coalfield. The beliefs which

developed in the working class were a mixture of creation and permeation. As such they were simultaneously a reflection of the inherent conflict and an extrapolation of the ideological consensus developed by the bourgeois to legitimate their control. In such a way a particular brand of pitmen's representation developed within this social matrix (at varying levels of incorporation since the agents in particular moved that much more into the cultural apparatus). The pitmen's occupational strictures made it an impossible task to practically carry out the implications of this hegemony (and obviously the industrial relations had a considerable influence on shaping the sort of meanings which developed - as did later the political agitators of Labour). To fully accede to the hegemony of capitalism the pitmen, say in the zenith of laissez-faire, would have had to resist ~~the~~ regular strikes. What happened, of course, was that conditions of work were such that they necessitated localized protest and even the favouring of a particular type of Liberalism (and Liberalism itself was a relatively dissentient group from that highest ideological articulation of capitalism the Tories) in the radical democrats. Nevertheless, their very selection of a steely humanitarian doctrine like that of William Crawford testifies to the success of bourgeois culture in restricting the consciousness of the miners to the bounds of the free trade doctrine. Integral to any unionism of the Durham miners was this ambivalence: they bowed down to the ideological superstructure of capitalism while frequently striking against its effects. The result was a moral squamishness which led to a reluctance to challenge the coal-owners. They had, on the contrary, to be thrust into disputes as a defence against the onslaughts from the owners. The pitmen may have despised the coal kings, but in failing to break the chains of bourgeois rationality they could not confront the capitalists with anything other than intractability.

This is the weight of the dialectic of cultural encompassment from partisanship to the mixture of assumptions and half-thought-out notions which contaminated ~~the~~ the Durham miners' attempts at trade unionism. It was the factor which explains how a union can be both dissident and conformist; both radical and conservative. A union

is by its very nature contrary to the capitalist ethos of individualism and competition, but to highlight the fundamental conflict does not mean there is no affinity. That the Durham unions endorsed the same doctrine as the capitalist class (not congruently but dialectically) meant they had an in-built ambivalence. Existing as dissidents they were simultaneously absorbed into contemporary values. Similarly the agents, that much more encompassed by the prevailing norms, present no surprises that they should be able to criticize their members' industrial vehemence (not that here is an ambivalence within a structure which itself is an ambiguity). Their consciousness was formed by a pull of their members' feelings and conditions and bourgeois society (they could hardly be passive receptors of opposing beliefs given pit life in Durham), but the manifestations were resolved in the degree of incorporation. Agents, especially when they have been long out of the pits and occupied in negotiationism, added to personality characteristics which ushered them into unionism in the first place, do not face the everyday pressures of the pitmen. The history of the D.M.A., particularly when Wilson took over the reins of government, pinpoint in an extreme way a danger inherent in all representational organizations formed as a defense against capitalism yet compelled to live with that system.

POSTSCRIPT

In the 1969 Gala handbill Alfred Hesler (Gen. Sec. D.M.A.) boasted "The record of our Union in the sphere of industrial relations is second to none, and a shining example to the members of some of the other great Unions in this country. If the workers in all industries showed the same fair-minded attitude towards the acceptance of change and undertook the same degree of joint responsibility for the efficient running of their particular industry, the Nation would be in a much healthier economic position today, and let us not forget that this willingness to co-operate has in no way gone against the interests of the membership: on the contrary it has brought in its train many benefits by way of improved working conditions and higher wages, safety and health legislation, social benefits and realistic schemes for the protection of earnings of men transferred and for compensation to those declared redundant."

In the year of Lofthouse, Seafield, Cynheidre and Markham; with hundreds more miners annually receiving injuries which cripple them for life, not forgetting the inestimable destruction of pneumoconiosis and attendant diseases; not eighteen months since the pitmen were forced into a bitter struggle to regain a fraction of the losses they had sustained in wages following the War; when thousands of Durham men are swept into the degradation of the dole now that coal accountancy has no need of them; in such a year the Durham leader's words are a terrible indictment of trade union complacency.

Frank Webster, August 1973.

APPENDIX

Primitive Methodists holding high office in D.M.A. or
Durham Federation Board.

1. William Crawford b.1835, married at 24, became a Primitive Methodist.
2. Patterson 1847-96, a founder of D.M.A., local preacher from age of sixteen.
3. John Johnson 1850-1910, M.P. for Gateshead in 1904 (against L.R.C. with D.M.A. support)
4. John Wilson, Secretary 1896 on, agent from 1882 to 1915.
5. William House 1854-1917 b.Pittington, preacher, supported L.R.C., though retained Primitive Methodism.
6. Thomas Cann 1858-1924, Sec. D.M.A. 1915-1922
7. William Richardson 1872-1930, ardent Primitive Methodist
8. Thomas Trotter 1871-1932, New Connexion Methodist
9. James Robson 1860-1934, Methodist, strong L.R.C. supporter.
10. Peter Lee 1864-1935, stalwart of Primitive Methodism, Labour Party.
11. Samuel Galbraith 1853-1936, New Connexion Methodist
12. Joseph Batey 1867-1949, Labour Party M.P.
13. James Gilliland 1866-1952, Methodist preacher.
14. William Whiteley, agent D.M.A. 1912-1922
15. John Wilkinson Taylor 1855-1934, pioneer of I.L.P.

- from R.F.Wearmouth, "The Social and Political Influence of Methodism in the 20th century."

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