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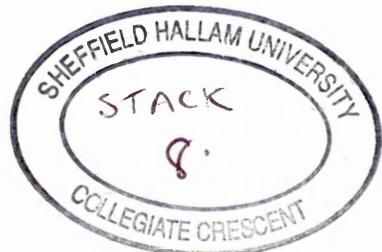
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Working-class politics in Sheffield, 1900-1920: a regional
study in the origins and early growth of the Labour Party

by

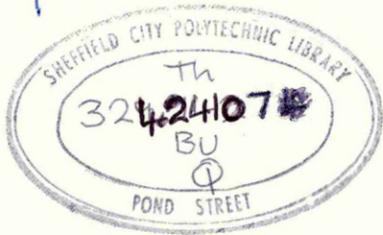
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Working Class Politics in Sheffield, 1900-1920: a Regional Study in the Origins and Early Growth of the Labour Party

by Catherine Burke

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to an understanding of the nature of working class politics in one local context and to understanding of the main areas of ideological struggle endemic at this time. In this sense, the work will enrich both the field of local political history and the broader area of historical analysis.

The study is divided into four sections. The first examines local trade union organisation and practice, across the local trades and industries. It locates specific areas of weakness and strength, estimates the importance of tradition, leadership and nature of work in contributing to a political perspective, and adds to our knowledge of industrial organisation particularly in those industries employing mainly women and in the railway industry.

The second section examines the nature and communication of a dominant ideology and considers its impingement on the development of an organised working class challenge. It examines the activities and comments of a local industrial bourgeoisie in effecting and maintaining a balance of control in the workplace, in Party politics and in the community. This section is complemented by an appendix which lists the names and interests of this group.

The organisation of working class politics is, throughout the study, considered according to the different strategies and perspectives of Lib-Labism, Labour-Socialism and Socialist-Syndicalism. The organisational expressions of such perspectives and the nature of their differentiation are examined in the third and fourth sections. First, Party organisation is considered in relation to local trade unionism and the emergence of a dominant form and strategy. Secondly, the local challenge to the principal tenets of a dominant ideology is examined in the assertion of alternative definitions of class, imperialism and patriarchy. A further appendix, attached, shows the parliamentary election results for the period 1894-1918.

Acknowledgements

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All errors of fact, interpretation or typing are mine alone.

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"Politics for the Artisan" Sir Howard Vincent*

"If I were an artisan, assuredly this should be my political creed. I would not trouble about Liberal or Socialist, or Home Ruler or payment of members. I would say to the canvasser, my politics are good wages and constant employment for myself, a comfortable home for my wife, clothes and food for my children, and therefore I am an Imperialist, Conservative and a Fair Trader."

S.D.T. 19.10.1898.

Introduction

One feature of labour history practised in the 1960's and 1970's has been the paralleled attention given to the spheres of popular culture and politics and the spheres of industry and economics. In the following thesis, which examines the nature of working class politics in Sheffield between 1900 and 1920, it is argued that the challenge to political power can only be understood in the wider context of workplace and community relations.

The local studies of G. Stedman Jones, John Foster, Robert Gray, Patrick Joyce and Stephen Yeo, in considering the nature of working class culture and consciousness in the last century, have established the workplace as a central area of ideological and practical struggle. There is general agreement among historians that technological and managerial innovation, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was fundamentally challenging the nature of industrial relations. The following study has considered the workplace, and local industrial relations, as one area of antagonism which impinged on relations of power in the political and social spheres. It will be argued that specific areas of ideological contention which manifested themselves concretely in the form of disputes, in the organised challenge of working class political protest, or in the comment and activity of the local bourgeoisie, provide a key to the nature and strength of that challenge and to its internal divisions.

An important element in the study is concerned with the power of social and cultural definition. In capitalist society

it is the owners of property and power who set the terrain of debate and contest in the industrial, political and social spheres. They do so through the means of mass communication at their disposal, through the press, the churches, and public bodies. Working class political response is in the main reflexive. At times of crisis in the maintenance of authority and control, brought about by fundamental changes in organisation in industry or society, this response can have the effect of setting the bounds of subsequent struggle.

It is found that working class political challenge is diverse, divided amongst itself and in form and content subject to the constraints of ideological norms. One main aim of this study is to account for the internal divisions manifested within the organised working class in Sheffield at this time. It is argued that this can only be realised through the perspective of ideological struggle. Through an examination of the principal areas of ideological struggle, it has been found that the key areas over which a political differentiation was effected were the definition and operation of the concepts of class, imperialism and patriarchy. It is argued that each political perspective and grouping was organised around a particular definition of the relations between these key concepts as they were perceived to operate in industrial, political and social life. Where such a definition conformed closely to that preferred and communicated by the industrial bourgeoisie, it proved to be the most successful of all possibilities.

While most historians would count success in terms of a party's performance at the electoral polls or in terms of membership, this is not the only form of acceptance which the

following study seeks to address. The acceptance of a particular form and expression of working class politics by an influential and powerful bourgeoisie was of crucial importance in effecting the nature of socialist and labour challenge in this period. The question is asked; what is the relationship between these two forms of acceptance, and how do they impinge on each other?

Recent historical work on the nature of labour relations in modern industrial capitalism has shifted the focus from an overriding concern with the organised working class, rooted in the industrial experience, to one embracing the working class as a whole. The relations within the class have been highlighted by studies in women's history. The following study hopes to contribute to this body of work in suggesting new perspectives supported by new evidence of the political organisation of women and the challenge to the sexual division of labour.

Abbreviations

Where an asterisk follows a name, (*), this denotes their inclusion in appended biographical list.

S.G. Sheffield Guardian

S.I. Sheffield Independent

S.D.T. Sheffield Daily Telegraph

S.F.T.C. - Sheffield Federated Trades Council.

T.&.L.C. - Trades and Labour Council.

Ch. of C. - Chamber of Commerce.

CHAPTER ONE

SOCIALISM AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATION

The trade union movement has traditionally defined its role as the protection of the industrial worker in conditions of employment. Further interpretations of legitimate areas of concern and activity have sprung from varying levels of class consciousness which were dependent on different interpretations of the nature of 'employment' and 'work' under capitalist relations. These variations in working class theory and practice are central to any appreciation of political consciousness and challenge in the period under study. It was from the interaction and internal debate within the labour movement that, especially at moments of crisis, significant developments in theory and practice were created.

In Sheffield, as elsewhere, trade unionism was focused on work in the manufacturing industrial sectors where originally great skill and expertise was required of the worker.¹ Apprenticeship control was an essential element in the building of strong union organisations in certain trades during the early part of the nineteenth century.

In certain trades by the end of the nineteenth century apprenticeship was under attack by the employers and as such was a very important issue in local industrial relations.

The concept of skill learned through apprenticeship training had far wider social implications than mere manual dexterity. It encompassed the means of restricting output, control over the labour process, the ability to demand a 'family wage' and a degree of pride in the product. Working with dangerous materials and within hazardous environments were additional contributory factors in strong craft unionism.² By contrast, workers in non-manufacturing areas such as service, clerical and finishing work, as well as nursing and teaching - forms of work which do not visibly produce a profit - were at a considerable disadvantage in terms of protecting their own interests.³

The trade union movement struggling to achieve legitimacy throughout most of the nineteenth century developed its structure in relation to the development of social policy at a national level and the response of employers at a local level. The political relationship this entailed was understood in different ways from different perspectives and traditions within the movement. Alterations in the systems of production and exchange which were developing rapidly towards the end of the nineteenth century undermined the original bases of trade union strength and capacity. Mechanization was increasingly undercutting

the reality and necessity of apprenticeship. Improvements in the provision of factory inspection and the introduction of techniques providing healthier working conditions undermined to some extent union strength based on physical capacity. The expansion of women's work into traditionally male occupations carried with it a direct threat to the concept of the 'male bread winner', the 'family wage' and traditional forms of trade union organisation.⁴

In effect, late nineteenth century and early twentieth century changes in British capitalism, both in terms of new technology, new forms of management, and a new relative position in the world economy, collided with mid-nineteenth century trade unionist practices and procedures creating a political dimension perceived and acted upon by sections of organised workers. Old practices and traditions were upheld for as long as possible, often at the encouragement of employers.⁵ Where the anachronisms became acutely perceived however, there resulted a political realignment among membership which was often at odds with official leadership. Alterations in practice thereafter were the results of a political reinterpretation of a complex set of relationships which will be examined below.

At any one time in the trade union movement as a whole, varying forms of political consciousness existed side by side in whose interaction the political debate flourished. It is the purpose of this chapter to

examine this interaction and the factors which contributed to such a politically diverse appreciation of events and relationships.

Tensions between theory and practice complimented to some degree tensions experienced between the 'industrial' and the 'political'. This was heightened by differing understandings between official leadership and membership. This has been described by Eric Hobsbawm who has written of the "tension between the 'political' and the 'industrial' in the British trade union movement."⁶ Within this tension it is possible to locate a political position expressed in theory and practice. The perceived relationship between the areas of work, politics and community experience can be examined in terms of varying levels of class consciousness. Central to this diversification is industrial and occupational type. However such factors as tradition of organisation, leadership and size of membership were important influences.

In the local context individual leadership, the condition of trade and relative position of women's work were contributive factors. One influence peculiar to Sheffield was the long established dichotomy in the manufacturing sector between the 'light' and 'heavy' manufacturing industries. This, by the end of the nineteenth century was becoming a powerful political dynamic.⁷

Responses from within the trade union movement to the challenge of late nineteenth and early twentieth century capitalist relations of production were directly related

to the development of the socialist and labour parties. The fortunes of one were linked to the other. But both wings of organised working class resistance and challenge occupied the terrain of struggle legitimated by the state and the upholders of its governing ideology. Therefore it would be a mistake to treat trade unionism, any more than labour party politics, as if it existed in a vacuum. The bases of local industrial relations in relation to national state policy must be born in mind in the following examination of industrial politics.

i) The Politics of Craft Control

The direct threat to worker control posed through the introduction of new technology, new management techniques and political attacks by employers on trade unionism were perceived and acted upon in various ways by different sections of industrial workers in Sheffield. Using the perspective of working class politics according to a Lib-Lab, Lab-Socialist, Socialist-Syndicalist definition, this diversification can be understood more clearly. Where tradition of skill and restrictive practice was strong and geared to an official trade union structure and leadership which was based locally; where employer-employee relations were relatively harmonious, or at least were presented to be so; and where trade union strength was in relative decline and on the defensive, the politics of trade unionism were likely to be realised in the Lib-Lab

mould. This meant in practice an acceptance of the economic and commercial expertise of the employer in his sphere and a reaffirmation of the essential skill of the worker in his own sphere. Through this understanding of the relationship between the two spheres occupied by employer and employee there followed a commitment to effect harmonious industrial relations through negotiation and schemes of conciliation. This was underpinned by the understanding that the interests of the two were similar. Any re-balancing of industrial relations to meet new market conditions or systems of work would be achieved through agreement between the representatives of capital and labour. The representatives of labour who would be most 'successful' in such a task were those whose ideological outlook reflected most closely to that of their employers.

Where tradition of skill and restrictive practice was strong and trade union organisation was nationally based; where there was increasing tension between employers and employees, the political response was more likely to fall into the Labour-Socialist mould. This meant that representatives of labour were required to build up organisations of workers based on the recognition of the divergent interests of capital and labour and the unequal relation of power in industrial relations. Thus the relationship between work and politics was perceived differently to that of the Lib-Lab. The ideological

foundations of industrial and political power and authority were recognised to a certain extent and this was reflected in campaigns that stretched outside the workplace. Where the tradition of skill and restrictive practice was strong and where conciliation schemes had been set up and experienced not to work in the interests of the workers; where there was engendered a strong rank and file anti-officialism through the break down of such conciliation schemes, there was more likely to be a political trade unionism in the Socialist-Syndicalist mould. Here, national and international political strategy, rooted in imperialism, local industrial practice and ruling ideology, were each perceived as inextricably linked in support of the capitalist system. The practical response of Socialist-Syndicalist trade unionism was to construct alternative systems of representation in industrial, political and social experience which expressed a theoretical understanding of the the integral nature of work, politics and community experience. This position essentially rejected any idea of re-alignment in industrial relations designed to improve conditions within the existing framework of the capitalist system.

Apprenticeship was the means of entering the community of workers at their discretion and as such was an ancient practice with its roots in pre-industrial society. Originally an essential means of protection and transference of knowledge valued by the community as a whole, the emergence of industrial capitalism gradually eroded its social and political importance. The division of labour

in production increased the level of output and consequently of profit at times of high demand. At times of poor trade the worker was excluded from the process of establishing markets and controlling production. Once the worker became a one-process expert the degree of work control was severely limited. The relationship between the employer and employee in this context was based on the power of the employer to control the level of prices. The struggle of workers to maintain apprenticeship control in the face of the divisive introduction of mechanisation and graded work was one of the most determining features of industrial politics in Sheffield at this time.⁸

The politics of craft control reached far beyond the workplace. The ability to demand a 'family wage' was an important component as was a personal identification with the work and its product.⁹ It will be seen in this study that resistance to employer attacks on craft status could be expressed through Lib-Lab political trade unionism. At the same time this resistance could find expression in terms of Socialist-Syndicalist trade unionism. It is therefore not sufficient to understand the politics of trade unionism at this time solely in terms of work experience.

Across the industrial sector the tacit assumption in industrial relations was that the worker's wage arrived at through restrictive practices, price agreements and the like, constituted the 'family wage'.¹⁰ Women's work went unrecognised while it remained outside the employment contract. Work as employment was one element in the dominant ideology which received mutual recognition from

worker and employer alike. When women were working on equal terms with men in terms of the work process, the swelling of the labour force threatened a speeding up of the process of de-skilling and the division of labour. Although women did learn a trade in Sheffield as the daughter or wife of a craftsman the trade unions feared this practice and sought to restrict it along with the general restriction of numbers into the trade.¹¹ The restriction of numbers in the labour force in certain trades had the effect of maintaining the scarcity of skill and so provided one of the most immediate means of extracting the highest price for labour. It also had the effect of lessening the economic independence of working women which accorded more favourably with middle class ideology about the role of women in society.¹²

The male industrial workers whether organised or not were in the main wedded to the dominant view which was expressed in 1909 by the city's Medical Officer of Health, that it was

"almost impossible to imagine a healthy home with the mother working in the factory."¹³

Those industrial workers who came to question this point of view will be examined below in terms of their political perspective.¹⁴

The impact of new forms of technology as they effected the labour process became more intense towards the end of the nineteenth century in most areas of work. The impact on Sheffield's staple trades was long delayed by trade union resistance, but certainly by the time of the first world war foreign competition of lesser quality machine-made goods

had undermined worker's attempts to retain a place in the labour market. Larger works and factories began to produce cutlery at a lower level of quality and price.¹⁵

In steel-making and engineering from the 1880's onwards new larger units of production demanding increased capital investment on plant and machinery entailed a direct threat to the status of the apprenticed engineer and skilled steel teamer. James Hinton has summarised this process whereby

"Manual dexterity gave way to the machine... Turret and capstan lathes and particularly the automatic versions of these, made it possible for the bulk of the turners' work to be performed by a machine minder...a whole series of specialised machine tools, grinders, millers, borers etc were developed to take over work previously performed on lathes... the advance of repetition production made possible an increasing formalisation and simplification of the operations performed even on the more complex machines."¹⁶

The impact of this development on industrial relations in engineering centres and particularly in Sheffield was immense. Employers were able to employ less skilled, cheaper non-union labour to work the machines and furthermore were able to break the resistance of the unions in dispute in this way. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers which organised the bulk of the fitters and turners in Sheffield based its strength of organisation on strict apprentice regulations. Fundamentally opposed to 'set' or 'piece' work, the engineers, after their defeat over the machine question in 1897, "followed the machine" and concentrated their minds and efforts in securing machine work for their skilled

members.¹⁷

The impact of the threat to work control at this time was not of consistent nature across the industrial sectors. While the whole of the light trades were threatened by the breakdown of apprentice control, workers in the 'heavy' industrial sector were more diversely effected. This was due to the different forms of work processes found in the 'heavy' sector. In the armament and steel works a system of team work was practiced through the sub-contracting of labour. Here, the means of learning the trade was by means of advancement through the team. The leader of the team would often be earning twice as much as the second hand and was organised in a separate union. In this context, the influx of labour into the team advanced the interests of all while the introduction of piece work for the labourer was a form of emancipation from the sub-contract.^{18.}

In engineering and foundry work, however, the introduction to the trade was through jealously guarded apprenticeships whose number and quality were controlled by the unions. Piece work was fiercely resisted during the period up to the first world war under constant pressure from the employers.¹⁹ In this study the preservation of craft status has been considered in relation to developments in the form and content of industrial politics during the war years and will be examined below in the wider context of working class political challenge.

The system of work operating on the railways entailed the learning of skills which were especially well-guarded by the railway workers' unions. Before 1913 these were

the Associated Society of Railway Servants and the Associated Society of Locomotive Enginemen and Firemen,(A.S.L.E.F.). A.S.L.E.F. held out as a sectional organisation in spite of general moves towards amalgamation of the various transport workers' associations at this time. In 1908 the Sheffield branch underlined this sectionalism by commenting that

"there is as much similarity in the work of the butcher and the baker as there is in the work of the enginemen and firemen and the work of other grades, and beyond the fact of their all being railwaymen, there is not the slightest analogy."²⁰

However, all railway workers at this time were subject to general economies being enforced by the railway companies in their management of the labour force. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the national railway network was completed and competition between the numerous regional companies forced freight charges down. A situation which had encouraged an expanding labour force was fundamentally changed. An increased traffic load was being worked by a numerically static labour force as economies were made in the latter.²¹

The means of advancement in the railway service was through a rigid hierarchy of grades. The key grades were those of signalmen, guards, enginemen and firemen. The signalman began as a box-boy and learned the work from his senior. Passenger guards started work as station porters gradually receiving greater responsibility and promotion. In the context of an expanding labour force advancement was fairly sure as long as efficiency and

discipline were adhered to. However at the turn of the century increased economies in the labour force placed a double burden on the worker: the work load was increased and prospects of promotion curtailed.²² The importance of this development in the politics of railway trade unionism in Sheffield is explored below.²³

i(a) The 'light' Trades

While most trade unionists in Sheffield were at this time concerned at the threat to apprenticeship regulation upon which so much of their strength of organisation relied, their specific industrial occupation and often the traditions of organisation within their trade influenced the politics of their response. In the 'light' trades including cutlery and tool making, the impact of mechanisation was slow and sporadic and was resisted by strong union tactics for much of the nineteenth century.²⁴ However, as the experience of particular trades shows, by the turn of the century employers' advances in the use of machinery and cheaper labour had come to be the principal issues over which industrial relations operated.²⁵

By the turn of the century trade union strategy was very much geared to adjustment to new conditions due to the loss of traditional markets and the development of domestic industries in Germany and the United States. This adjustment entailed the recognition that the survival of the local trades depended on a renewed emphasis on quality, craft work and tradition. One element of this strategy was the publicising of fraudulent practices among foreign manufacturers including the use of the

name of Sheffield as a trade mark. This practice was also used by manufacturers of lesser quality goods made in other parts of Britain.²⁶ A closely related tactic was used by the trade unions in the local 'light' trades was one of convincing employers and workers alike of their interest in maintaining and indeed improving apprenticeship education.

Charles Hobson was one of the main spokesmen on the unionist side on this subject.²⁷ Speaking in 1894 of the decline in the British cutlery trades he saw the preservation of skill as the answer to the competition of cheap German manufactured goods. He said that

"in order to accomplish this, we should re-adjust our apprentice system."²⁸

There was, according to Hobson, a dangerous lack of highly skilled workmen in the 'light' trades of Sheffield which was the result of employer tactics of using apprentices for cheap labour, "sometimes called the team or sweating system" which prevented adequate technical instruction being carried out. The answer was a conciliation scheme which Hobson proposed might act as a model for negotiations across the industry.²⁹

The question was raised in Hobson's own trade early in 1900. In the Britannia metal trade the issue of apprenticeship training was of long standing contention between employers and employees.³⁰ Apprenticeships were restricted to the son of the craftsman or another union member's son.³¹ The union demanded formally indentured apprenticeships

learned under men of at least twenty five years of age. The proportion of apprentices to craftsmen was to be in line with conditions of trade.³² The union also called for the creation of a supervisory body of employers and employees and a committee in each firm in order to record the progress of apprentices. Hobson believed that

"If the masters will but honestly face the difficulty and forget for a moment the gain they hope to get out of the introduction of boy labour, they will say that they are not greatly in need of men to do the class of work I am speaking of."³³

Hobson's interpretation of the misuse of the apprentice system by the employers, while correct, refused to acknowledge any element of class antipathy in the crisis affecting the 'light' trades. Rather, by means of sober conciliation and negotiation the mutual interests of skilled workers and their employers would be realised.³⁴ He advised the setting up of a committee made up from

"the best men found among the trades of Sheffield ...with the power to settle disputes by conciliation or arbitration."³⁵

The question of apprenticeship regulation in the silver trades as it affected the Britannia Metal Workers came to a head with a strike which lasted for three months in 1902.³⁶ The dispute was nominally over prices but the employers were keen to point out the more fundamental area of disagreement. Organised as the Master Silversmiths Association, they commented that

"if the men would make a reasonable concession in the matter of apprenticeship, the employers would favourably consider the wages question."³⁷

The point of disagreement was the standard ration of

apprentices to the number of men employed. The employers wanted this to be calculated according to a system whereby each firm could contract at least one apprentice. The union wanted the ratio to be calculated strictly according to numbers employed, namely one for every ten workers over the age of twenty-five. But the real point at issue was about control during the period of training. According to the employers it was their capital investment which justified their direct control:

"We employers must have some control in our own workshops, and we cannot employ apprentices simply for the benefit of the men."³⁸

From the position of the workers the president of the union, John Wood, posed the question:

"Who should have control of apprentices but the father who has had the expense of education, of feeding and clothing him...if not, the man who sits by his side and teaches him his trade...this is the proper relation which we wish to encourage in order to maintain the reputation of our trade."³⁹

The dispute ended with a concession made by the unions to the masters' demands on apprenticeships in return for wage increases and the establishment of an arbitration board for the trade.⁴⁰ In spite of this defeat, Hobson kept the apprenticeship question alive in relation to the condition of the 'light' trades as a whole. He used his position as editor of the journal of the British Metal Workers Federation, The Metal Worker to raise the issue frequently. He wrote a series of articles beginning in December 1907 entitled, "How trades are taught and who

should teach them" in which he attacked the system of 'little mesters' so prevalent in Sheffield.⁴¹ At the same time he continued to express the view that the harmony of interests between employers and workers could best be encouraged and reaffirmed through structures designed for conciliation during disputes. These same structures would prevent disputes stopping production and this again was in the joint interests of employers and employees.⁴²

The condition of industrial relations in the file trade in Sheffield at this time illustrates something of the position of the light trades as a whole. The file trade which consisted of forgers, cutters and grinders employed 6,200 workers in 1891. Twenty years later the number employed had fallen to 4,850.⁴³ Traditionally women and girls worked as hand file cutters in spite of frequent attempts by the unions to prevent this.⁴⁴ In 1900 there were among the 2,300 hand file cutters 1,250 men, 200 boys and 600 women employed in workshops with an additionally registered 250 women working at home.⁴⁵

A union existed for file workers as early as 1784.⁴⁶ This was a highly skilled occupation carried out in dangerous conditions and throughout the nineteenth century the unions of file workers were able to effect strong organisation. The persistence of female and other non-apprenticed labour was combatted unsuccessfully by the unions who saw it as a threat to their livelihood. In 1847 the file smiths' society tried to eject the 200 women already working in the trade stating that "any member who permitted his wife or

daughter to work or assisted such women with their tools should be fined £3."⁴⁷ However the right to work was conceded to widows and orphans. The rule proved impossible to enforce and was ultimately altered to allow women to work at specific processes, for instance on smaller files.⁴⁸ In this way organised workers were able to maintain their position of strength in demanding prices for their work.

The unions in the file trade fought long and hard against the threat of mechanisation and proletarianisation of their work. Machines for file cutting and forging were invented as early as the 1850s and those capable of producing high quality finished goods were available in the early 1860s. In 1864, Samuel Osborne was the first manufacturer in Sheffield to introduce file cutting machinery into his works in spite of much opposition from the workers in his employ. This innovation was made under the pretext of improved health in the workforce and philanthropic concern.⁴⁹ Thomas Turton followed suit in 1865 arousing strong opposition from the file smiths and file grinders unions which culminated in a major dispute in 1866. The unions were defeated after sixteen weeks in what had become a crucial test case of local union strength. During the next decade the unions managed to exploit good trade conditions in ensuring that only skilled craft workers were employed on any machine work.⁵⁰ However the 1880s proved to be a critical decade in the injection of increased capital investment which was possible after a period of stability in the trade. A strike fought in 1883 over price reductions

very much weakened the unions and in the following years the employers forged ahead with the implimentation of machine work. In 1886 the Sheffield Daily Telegraph commented:

"Whereas three or four years ago only a small proportion of local file manufacturers employed mechanical means, at the present time probably the majority of them use machinery to a greater or lesser extent."⁵¹.

From this time the hand file cutting union was in steady decline. From a relatively large membership in 1890 it had dropped to include only 110, including a few women, in 1913 when it was noted that

"machinery at last dominates the trade and is responsible for the bulk of the out-put..."

and their were but "a few hand-forgers to be found!"⁵²

The political perspective of unions such as the file trade was directly related to their defeat over the machine question and related struggle over apprenticeship. In 1894, when the very first Labour Day demonstration took place in Sheffield the file forgers union decided not to take part. In spite of fairly good trade conditions they decided not to support financially the newly formed sheep-shear makers' co-operative.⁵³

An exceptional political position was taken by the 110 members of the file hardeners union. They resolved in 1897 to support the locked out engineers with a contribution of £2 per week as a gesture of solidarity.⁵⁴

They were among the first of the unions among the 'light' trades to join the Sheffield Labour Representation Committee in 1903, "to further the Labour cause in Parliament."⁵⁵

An important factor in the development of the politics of trade unionism in the 'light' trades was the character of

leadership. The hand-file cutters were led throughout the period under study by Stuart Uttley, a leading Lib-Lab figure on the executive of the Sheffield Federated Trades Council.⁵⁶ A separate machine file cutters' union was established in 1897, thus acknowledging the inroads of machine production in the trades. This organisation also accepted women's membership. Altogether at the turn of the century there were five separate organisations of workers in the local file trade, all weak and dispirited.⁵⁷ Their efforts to find renewed strength and purpose in moves towards federation and amalgamation are examined below.⁵⁸

At the beginning of the first world war the trade union movement as a whole surrendered its traditional rights of protection under the Defence of the Realm Act.⁵⁹ This presented employers in all industrial sectors with an opportunity to break down restrictive practices and forge ahead with the mechanisation of work processes. In the Sheffield 'light' trades an unprecedented boom in trade for the duration of the war led to considerable alterations in the system of production including dilution, the extension of piece work and introduction of child and female labour. The crisis of war also presented an opportunity for employers to develop their rhetoric on the state of the world market and the relative stagnation of local labour processes and industrial relations. This was discussed in terms of anticipated re-capturing of lost overseas markets in a climate of post-war reconstruction. It is noted below that the move towards mechanisation in

the 'light' trades was viewed by employers very much as a local problem.⁶⁰ During the war years various attacks were made on trade union restrictive practices and were presented in the local newspapers in the context of a discussion on the state of the local cutlery industry.⁶¹

The boost to local trade during the war came in the main from government contracts as workshops were turned over to the production of army supplies. These were army knives, pen and pocket knives small tools and files.⁶² By 1915 there was reported to be very little unemployment in the city's 'light' metal sector and moreover, there was "very little antipathy to the use of machinery."⁶³ Later in the same month the shortage of labour led the local education committee to allow the release of boys over the age of thirteen from schools in order to be able to work on machines in the cutlery trades. Some trade union resistance to this was registered very much in the same terms as the attack on apprenticeship had been defended - in terms of the long-term interests of the trades.⁶⁴

The prevailing attitude, however, seems to have been one of compliance with employers' demands in the hope of prolonged boom conditions after the end of the war. In November 1916, an agreement was reached with the Spring Knife Grinders Union over the introduction of women workers on to machine work. This move had been strongly resisted by the union before the war as an integral part of the defence of apprenticeship control.⁶⁵ In effect, the employers were not slow to recognise that the agreement was "epoch breaking" in importance, considering that it

"clears the way for the general introduction of machinery for the production of pen and pocket knives."⁶⁶ The introduction of women workers on piece rates in the cutlery trades during the war did not have the effect of transforming a conservative craft-consciousness into a socialist perspective as it will be seen was the case in the heavy sector. The unions were in a weak position before the war and their leadership was traditionally tied to the conciliatory tactic of Lib-Labism. Perhaps more important than these factors was the relative lack of rank and file disaffection from official leadership. On the contrary, anti-officialism was almost non-existent in the 'light' trade unions whose secretaries were in the main local residents.⁶⁷

At the first meeting of the Sheffield Cutlery Trades Technical Society, held in October 1919, the assembled employers discussed "The Future of the Cutlery Trade". At the meeting the pre-war restrictive practices of labour, and especially apprenticeship control, were central to their deliberations. The worker was

"appealed to, to give up some of his freedom in carrying on his trade, so as to allow for the introduction of more regular and shorter hours."⁶⁸

This was the bait held out to the unions in order to secure a re-arrangement of working conditions more conducive to managerial control. Current "defects" in the system of production already operating were,

"the multiplicity of makers, resulting in the duplication of work and loss in efficiency and cost."

Suggested remedies included,

"a co-operative up-to-date factory equipped with

special machinery for dealing with general cutlery products ... the abolition of out-working and the complete control of the process by the manufacturer himself."⁶⁹

Finally, the system whereby the workers owned their own tools was deplored as archaic and altogether "fatal to the installation of modern machinery" in the cutlery trades. Only "a few skilled hands" would be required to continue the production of high quality goods. This would be entirely at the discretion of the employers.⁷⁰ The confidence with which the employers were able to impliment these changes during the war years rested on a record of industrial relations in the previous decade which saw the unions very much on the defensive in their political perspective. It was also due to the fact that alterations were carried out at the local level, by-passing to a large extent statutory industrial legislation.

i(b) The 'Heavy' Trades

The two groups of workers who were consistantly involved in struggles with the employers over the question of work control were the engineers and foundry workers.⁷¹ In both steel-making and engineering, technological innovation was fast making the skilled craft worker something of an anachronism. This was made clear to members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, (A.S.E.) in the national lock-out of 1897; a dispute which was fought principally over the question of apprenticeship and the working of machines. The moulders were involved in

a series of disputes in the city before the war and again in 1919. However, unlike the engineers, the moulders did not experience the effects of dilution during the war years.⁷²

The possibility of the introduction of piece work on skilled engineering and foundry operations was anathema to trade unionists whose status and standard of living was tied economically and socially to the dotal system of reward.⁷³ Non-union labour was a particular problem in Sheffield where some firms were able to employ only non-union labour on slotting machines and on lathes. The trend was increasing.⁷⁴ When questioned on the matter, T.E.Vickers, managing director at River Don Works illustrated the point well during the national lock-out of 1897:

"Intelligent men can be taught to work planing machines or to do rough turning work at a lathe in about a fortnight."⁷⁵

Skilled members of the A.S.E. asserted their superiority over labourers in the struggle to operate the machines at the rate of pay of a craft worker even to the point of threatening strike action. T.E.Vickers accounted for this saying:

"If a machine is started which does not require skilled labour and the union requires its members to insist on what they call a skilled man being put on the machine...in times of good trade, a threat to call all the men out in case of non-compliance with their demands is very difficult for the master to resist."⁷⁵

The Engineering Employers Federation, which was formed nationally shortly before the beginning of the dispute, considered well during the six months long lock-out some

of the benefits to be accrued in weakening if not, totally destroying the restrictive practices of the unions.

It was noted that,

"During the past three months the employers have had the opportunity of ascertaining some of the effects of interference. In many cases from 20% to 50% more work of equal quality has been produced from machines by comparatively inexperienced hands compared with that by men who previously worked the machines."⁷⁶

If such a statement were entirely accurate, and in the context of the dispute this seems fairly unlikely, it would point to a certain amount of Ca'canny among the skilled engineers who worked the machines in normal conditions of employment. The "misuse" of trade unionism was the main reason for T.E.Vickers to join the lock-out which, he thought was representative of the feeling of the Employers' Federation as a whole:

"There was so much interference on the part of the unions with the working of machines, so many attempts to curtail the amount of work done that we felt sooner or later there must be a strong resistance on the part of the masters."⁷⁷

Through the experience of the dispute, when imported non-union labour ensured the continuation of some production in the factories, the Sheffield A.S.E. membership came to realise to what extent their claims to skilled status were outdated. It has been suggested that "the main factor in the creation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 was the decisive defeat of the A.S.E. in their lock-out of 1897, which destroyed the confidence of the unions in their industrial strength."⁷⁸ In Sheffield, the experience of the vital support of non-unionists in the city

encouraged the Sheffield Federated Trades Council to call for a federated organisation of all workers in the city. The Annual Report of the Council declared;

"The Capitalists have learned well the lesson of combination, and it will be well for labour to also learn wisdom by experience... it is evident that in future, if Labour is to be successful in maintaining its position, fully 90% must be financial members of their respective unions. The whole of the unions must be federated."⁷⁹

The A.S.E. although aware of the serious nature of the defeat on the question of machine operation, and weakened financially by the lengthy dispute, still retained the craft basis of its membership. Indeed, the Sheffield branches worked towards the further separation of its organisation from other groups of workers in the city. This was achieved not only in terms of wage rates, but socially and culturally. A Mutual Improvement Society was formed by the local branches in 1904 to fund the setting up of an Engineers Institute. Heeley branch A.S.E. commenting in 1908 on the impact of new technology on the strategy of engineering trade unionism suggested:

"Methods we adopted a few years ago to get and maintain our rights as workmen, are no longer of any real value, but better and less expensive methods may be adopted to gain our rights and standing as men and citizens. ... Strikes are a clumsy and cruel weapon which too often hurts the worker most. Members, let us educate ourselves on the better methods of gaining our goal."⁸⁰

This response can be understood in terms of a Labour-Socialist political strategy which relied on a working class representation elected on to public bodies as the best

means of superseding Capitalism. Unlike the Lib-Lab perspective which saw the better understanding between Labour and Capital as one means of solving the apprenticeship question, the approach of the engineers was to emphasise its sectionalism combined with a strategy of effecting official working class mediation of public bodies. From the Socialist-Syndicalist perspective, both approaches were foolish. "The Futility of Craft Unionism" was outlined by Frank Hedley of Sheffield Socialist Labour Party, in 1906:

"Craftsmanship is the basis of the union, while Capitalism abolishes the craft...modern industrialism is founded on the division and sub-division of labour, and is fast reducing the craftsman to a mere one process man only. The apprentice is, or soon will be unknown, except as being another name for young and therefore cheap labour."⁸¹

The struggle against the introduction of piece work in the engineering trades and against union control over the number of apprentices entering the trade, continued until the out break of the first world war. Then, the already close relationship established between state and local employers was carried a stage further.⁸² During the war this struggle developed into a more militant phase which focused on dilution into the trade. Piece work rates were subject to bonuses which out-stripped the relative position of the skilled engineers on data^l pay. The un-skilled and semi-skilled workers were well organised and were as such able to improve their position considerably relative to their pre-war situation.⁸³ However, while

the conservative craft-conscious tendencies of the engineers in Sheffield helped to create important advances in the politics and structure of industrial organisation, J.T.Murphy was one of the first to point out the limitations of the Amalgamation movement. He declared in September 1919, when the return to peace time conditions threatened to destroy the advances made;

"Craft prejudice has been responsible for a great deal of the weakness that exists in the working class movement. Is it now to be organised for open conflict on a grand scale? The workers in industry are not divided in this way. Every workshop and factory, every department of industry, has within it all degrees of labour which can be organised in social groups for productive and distributive purposes. Why then allow this artificial division to be any longer maintained ?" ⁸⁴

ii Trade Union Organisation and Strategy

(a) The 'Light' Trades

It is the purpose of this section to examine some of the consequences in terms of political perspective for trade unions in the Sheffield 'light' trades, of the challenge posed by changes in industrial relations. It will be argued that the work process, the tradition of organisation and leadership combined with a relatively weak position in industrial relations, all contributed towards a political orientation towards Lib-Labism.

The apparent weakness of the sectional organisation of the 'light' trades encouraged a move towards ideas of federation and amalgamation. These ideas were of current interest

across the whole trade union movement, but in certain trades and industries found a particular form with a specific political character. In the Sheffield 'light' trades moves towards federation were guided by a Lib-Lab leadership whose political perspective rejected any notion of class antagonism and embraced an ideology of the mutual interests of Labour and Capital. Such a perspective dominated debate and activity despite attempts made by a section of the trade union movement to introduce ideas of federation based on a Labour-Socialist political perspective.

The local character of industrial relations was maintained throughout the construction of negotiating bodies and procedures. This had important repercussions in terms of the politics of trade unionism in the 'light' trades. The practice of negotiation under a changed system of organisation was merely a re-alignment of traditional forms of industrial relations. Unlike workers in industries where conciliation schemes were set up and operated on a national scale, workers in the 'light' trades experienced the results of conciliation procedures very much in local terms. Thus much of what was crucial for employers in confronting trade union resistance to mechanisation and to new forms of management, that is a political alliance with a political leadership entirely local in character, was maintained.

The first trade associations in Sheffield emerged from the period of illegality and underground activity at the end of the Napoleonic wars. They were a mixture of benefit and trade protection societies based on the crafts of the staple cutlery and small tool trades. The increased division of labour in the nineteenth century led to a sectional unionism with societies for hafters, grinders and finishers becoming the norm.⁸⁵ This sectionalism was by the end of the nineteenth century considered the scourge of organisation in the 'light' trades.⁸⁶ Sectional organisation was effective as long as it was enforced by workers often by means such as confiscating non-unionists tools, and while piece work and hand work predominated. However many thousands of out-workers in Sheffield were left unorganised by the system. With the gradual mechanisation of the trades the basis of sectionalism and the means by which it was organised was undermined.⁸⁷

The problem of sectionalism in the 'light' trades as it was perceived by union organisers around the turn of the century was outlined by the Spring Knife Amalgamation in 1914: unions in the 'light' trades

"were unable to demand improved conditions for their members, because of their numerical and financial weakness...men engaged in the industry did not support their unions because they felt that the unions could not give them any assistance ...the unions were in a state of bankruptcy...the whole outlook of the trade was deplorable, and the condition of those engaged in the industry drifted from bad to worse."⁸⁸

In 1910 there were thirty-one trade societies in Sheffield in which only 4,667 workers were organised. Of the estimated 9,000 women working in the trades only a handful were organised.⁸⁹ Some unions were severely weakened by the implementation of mechanisation at the end of the nineteenth century. The Hand File Cutters were 1,632 members strong in 1896 but by 1910 were only 110.⁹⁰ In the 'light' trades as a whole, organised workers probably represented well under half of the total work force at the turn of the century.⁹¹

The nature of the work process, and in particular its small scale and low capital intensity had led in periods of poor trade to the multiplication of 'little mesters', or workers seeking and securing work contracts independently of union and employer control.⁹² This 'independence' of the Sheffield craftsman was considered by unionists and employers alike as the primary inhibiting factor in union strength. At a time of rapid mechanisation this 'independence' was a source of comfort to the employers for this reason.⁹³

Apart from the 'little mesters' who worked when able in their own right, many firms employed out-workers or home-workers.⁹⁴ The uncertain nature of the market meant that under-employment was a constant feature of the trades. Home-work, therefore, often undertaken by women and children, was a necessary component of the family income in many cases.⁹⁵ However, both employers and trade unionists conformed to and perpetuated the dominant ideology of the male 'bread-winner'; on the

one hand exploiting cheap labour, and on the other, failing to recognise it as a problem of organisation.⁹⁶

In spite of their decline in strength and numbers, the unions in the 'light' trades did enter into disputes with the employers in search of improved conditions and prices in this period, with varying degrees of success.⁹⁷

The main areas of struggle were mechanisation, the apprentice question and prices.⁹⁸ The following section will examine the response of the trade unions in the 'light' trades in terms of organisational and political strategy.

It has been noted above that trade union leaders in the 'light' trades were concerned primarily with pointing out the need for increased apprenticeship training and attention to quality. However, it was becoming increasingly clear that members' skill counted for less than sheer numerical strength when confronted with an organised federation of employers. This recognition strengthened a move towards ideas of federation at this time.

Attempts to form federations of workers in related trades were made at the end of the nineteenth century but were generally short lived. Much of their failure was due to a reluctance to relinquish union autonomy.⁹⁹ An edge tool amalgamation was formed in 1890, and a federation of workers in the razor trade in the following year.

In the file trade, moves to co-ordinate union strategy were registered intermittently from the 1890's until the first world war. The secretary of the hand-file cutters' union, Stuart Uttley, tried to create a file trade federation

in 1898.¹⁰⁰ This attempt was continued in 1907 by A.L.Morton whose scheme was proposed through the pages of the Independent Labour Party paper, The Sheffield Guardian.¹⁰¹ This scheme was aimed to destroy the "wretched and arrant snobbery" which persisted in sections of the trade, particularly among the better paid grinders. It prescribed a far-sighted reorganisation of membership and control of the sectional societies. The new organisation was to be called the Amalgamated Society of File Workers and its objects were, "to protect the interests of the male and female workers in all branches of the file trade and promote fair conditions of labour." Membership would be open to all workers and the executive was to consist of two representatives from each of the main branches of the trade. Where women were working in large numbers, in the hand-file cutting section, for example, they were to be represented on the executive council, with two representatives. It is clear, in terms of organisation, the scheme broke new grounds. It acknowledged not only the need to overcome sectional organisation, but also to break down the barriers existing between the skilled, the un-skilled and the sexes. In political terms, this indicated a strategy based on a perspective which differentiated itself from the Lib-Labism which characterised earlier proposals. The organisation would be committed to,

"the furtherence of direct labour representation on all governing bodies and in parliament by affiliation to the Labour Representation Committee."¹⁰² It was, therefore

firmly wedded to the Labour-Socialist tactic. The scheme failed to attract much support October 1915, when war-time conditions encouraged further efforts at amalgamation and the Sheffield Amalgamated Union of File Trades was formed.¹⁰³

Before the war, the most 'successful' schemes, in terms of their operation, were those sponsored and directed by leading Lib-Lab spokesmen whose politics and ideology was identified with the concept of close, harmonious relations with the representatives of capital. One such scheme was The Cutlery Council; a body formed in 1907 designed to act as a negotiatory and advisory council to prevent disputes and deal with them if they occurred.¹⁰⁴ The Sheffield Guardian, the organ of the local Independent Labour Party, chastised the Council early in 1907 as a "sub-committee of the TULIP gang to assist in packing the S.F.T.C." ¹⁰⁵ It went on to call for a United Cutlery Union, to act in the workers interests, rather than a body designed to cover up the antagonism between Labour and Capital.

Although the Cutlery Council was not an industrial union in the sense that the commentators from the I.L.P. required it did acknowledge the need to work towards federation in the local 'light' trades. It advised several unions in their negotiations with the National Amalgamated Union of Labour in the period just before the outbreak of war. The N.A.U.L. was led in Sheffield by Lib-Lab, A.J.Bailey.¹⁰⁶ Although other unions existed in Sheffield, who were prepared to organise workers from across the industrial sectors and of varying levels of skill, the political orientation

of the N.A.U.L. was such as to compare closely to that of the sectional 'light' trade societies.

The first of the craft societies to amalgamate with the N.A.U.L. was the Table and Butcher Blade Grinders, in 1913. The society, with a membership of 250, was organised on traditionally sectional lines. The bulk of the trade were 'tool-owners', that is skilled craftsmen who paid rent for their work space and were paid by the piece. However, there were an increasing number of 'datal men' working in the trade who were paid by the hour. These accounted for two-thirds of the total membership in 1913, and the system of datal pay and team work was becoming increasingly common owing to the more definite division of labour operating in the trade. The leaders of the union recognised that their strength could no longer rely solely on apprenticeship restrictions based on skilled work, and an attempt to organise the datal men into the union paralleled the move towards amalgamation of the whole trade. From 1907 onwards, the society's minute books record repeated efforts to introduce datal men into the union. The difficulties associated with different methods of remuneration were recognised and it was suggested that rather than maintain the prevailing system of hourly pay the datal men could find common cause with the 'tool-owners' by means of a percentage price list.¹⁰⁷

The amalgamation of the Table Blade Grinders with the NAUL came as the result of a lengthy battle to win union recognition and a revised price list from the organised employers.

With the increased incidence of government work, the society was seeking a standard rate¹⁰⁸ An agreement on a 5% increase was achieved early in 1911 but was soon followed by employers' attempts to increase wheel rents.¹⁰⁹ The Cutlery Council intervened in order to bring about an agreement while in view of good trade, the union and datal men decided to press for a 10% advance. This action culminated in September 1913 in a mass meeting of workers in the trade who, on hearing of the employers' rejection of the revised price list, were encouraged to strike. A crucial pledge of support was given by the datal men who decided to "stand by the 'tool-owners' in their demand... and abstain from working for any 'tool-owner' who doesn't demand the 1913 list of prices."¹⁰⁹ A.J.Bailey of the N.A.U.L. addressed the meeting, spelling out the benefits of unity noting the advances in terms of wages and conditions made by the un-skilled in the 'light' trades over the previous year.¹¹⁰ The meeting resolved unanimously that the workers in the trade should join the N.A.U.L. and that the unions should amalgamate, retaining full identity and management of affairs.¹¹¹ At the end of January 1914, the new price list was recognised by the employers and the strike ended. The society again pledged itself to organise all unskilled workers in the trade into the union, and in February 1914 a shop steward was appointed at Soho Wheel. Membership stood at 800 in 1914.¹¹²

Other branches of the 'light' trades which amalgamated with the N.A.U.L. before the war were the Pen and Pocket Knife

Grinders and Cutlers; a trade worked by increasing numbers of dotal workers; the Scissor Forgers and Scissor Work Board Hands. These last two societies were also subject to increased division of labour.¹¹³ During the war, these were joined by the Haft and Scale Pressers Union. By the end of the war, the Cutlery Workers' Amalgamation of the N.A.U.L. included twenty-two local trades and sections. This incorporated machine and hand workers and all sections of women workers.¹¹⁴

In the silver and related trades Charles Hobson, himself a Brittania metal worker, encouraged the formation of an amalgamation based on the three principal manufacturing districts in the trade: Sheffield, Birmingham and London.¹¹⁵ In Sheffield, a federation already established between societies of silversmiths, Brittania metal workers, the British Spoon and Fork trade, amalgamated with similar federations in London and Birmingham, in 1909. The agreement carried with it a pledge of mutual support and co-operation in the event of a strike or lock-out. Finally, in 1911, the Amalgamated Society of Gold, Silver and Kindred Trades was formed, incorporating these formerly sectional societies.

ii(b) The 'Heavy' Trades

The trade unions organising workers in the 'heavy' industrial sector during this period were the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the various steel makers' unions, general workers unions and organisations of women workers. The A.S.E was on the whole the most consistently successful. Local membership increased steadily from the general boom in trade unionism in the late 1880's and 1890's. The steel-making unions fluctuated rather more in membership and strength. The general workers and labourers unions organised a large proportion of unskilled and semi-skilled workers particularly as compared with other industrial districts.¹¹⁶ The women workers' unions made headway in the city only from about 1910 on a rising tide of labour and socialist political and industrial activity, but thereafter grew considerably in membership.

Workers in the 'heavy' trades were at this time subject to the challenge of technological and managerial innovation and market fluctuation. As has been seen, this was a common characteristic right across the industrial sectors. The organised response of trade union strategy in the 'heavy' trades contained in it elements common to the movement as a whole, including moves towards amalgamation and federation, and political representation. However, the political perspective through which these moves were made was particular to the 'heavy' trades, the work processes involved, tradition of leadership and experience of conciliation schemes.

It has been argued that a combination of factors influenced the political perspective which predominated in the 'light' trades. Similarly, it will be suggested that a combination of factors, perceived differently, contributed towards a predominantly Labour-Socialist approach in the 'heavy' trades. This was expressed as an understanding of the essentially opposed interests of Labour and Capital which might be reconciled through the increased role of Labour by means of representation on political and industrial bodies.

From a different political perspective, some workers in the 'heavy' trades drew lessons from the experience of the Labour-Socialist tactic. The key areas of disillusionment were closely related. One was the nature of official leadership and representation; the performance of official leadership was increasingly criticised, especially in the context of trade union bureaucracy and conciliation. Negotiations were carried out at a national level increasingly, although a strong local bureaucracy was maintained. The experience of official leadership and failure of conciliation schemes combined with other factors such as a charismatic socialist local leadership was, in the crisis of war forged into a militantly Socialist-Syndicalist political response.

The local membership of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was, at its foundation in 1851, composed of just 50 members.¹¹⁷ At this time the local 'heavy' industry employed about one-quarter of the total number engaged in the 'light' trades. In contrast to conditions in the steel making sector, the engineers enforced uniform wage

levels based on their strict apprenticeship rules. The three local branches established in the 1870's experienced for the first time conflict with the employers over wage levels and hours of work. By the 1890's, now with over 1,000 members and four branches in the city, in a strong financial condition and politically ambitious national leadership, the engineers were among the best organised group of workers in Sheffield.¹¹⁸ Trade was good, employment high; only four A.S.E. members of Attercliffe branch were registered out of work in January 1896. The mood in the union was to demand increased wage level and improvements in conditions of work¹¹⁹ Anxious to consolidate the strength of the union, newly elected president, George Barnes declared in January 1897:

"the time at our disposal...in the present spell of comparative prosperity should be utilised in discussing ways and means of minimising the ill effects of the of the next industrial depression and in getting down to the root causes of that social mal-adjustment of which unemployment is but a symptom."¹²⁰

The outcome was the protracted engineering lock-out which lasted for six months in 1897 and was fought primarily over the vexed question of the operation of machines and the eight hour day. While in Sheffield several thousand men were locked-out by the organised employers, only 10% of these were engineers. The rest were employed in the closely related steel industry. Non-union engineers represented only 10% of local engineers, but nearly all of these withdrew their labour at the commencement of

the lock-out. This directly effected 951 engineers including 479 A.S.E. members, 67 Steam Engine Makers, 110 United Machine Workers and 312 non-society men. The number of labourers affected was thought to be not less than 500.¹²¹

The dispute illustrated graphically the integrated nature of Sheffield's 'heavy' industry and its labour force. The press commented;

"intimation has been given to several thousand labourers, enginemen and steel smelters to the effect that their service will not be required again until the trouble is at an end...it is estimated that unemployment in Attercliffe and Brightside will reach 20,000 or 30,000 in two weeks."¹²²

The engineers' labourers were at this time amongst the least well organised group of workers in the city and were largely uninsured against unemployment. The importance of non-unionist support was considered to be crucial to the outcome of the dispute from both the employers' and employees' point of view. This was due to the central issue of the lock-out; the question of manning machines.

The experience of the dispute, from the view-point of the non-society men, taught well the lesson of organisation. Throughout the duration of the lock-out non-society workers were maintained out of A.S.E. strike funds. Each union branch was responsible for financial support of its own membership and non-society men collected their weekly allowance from the strike headquarters at the Temperance Hall. Less formal means were employed to raise funds for the labourers. There were collections outside of works, in

public houses, concerts and sales were held and 5,000 people watched a fancy dress cycle parade organised for the raising of funds.¹²³ All this helped to stimulate in the minds of the non-unionists something of the benefits of industrial solidarity. This impact was expressed at a meeting of the Sheffield Federated Trades Council in September 1897. John Atkin, a non-society engineer confessed;

"the lock-out had opened his eyes on the question of trade unionism (applause). And he now thought he ought to have been a society man years ago. Others felt like him and he believed they would become stronger and more enthusiastic as trade unionists than ever they had been as non-society men."¹²⁴

It was widely felt among trade unionists that the dispute was doing a great service in encouraging trade unionism in Sheffield. Applications for membership of the Allied Societies were said to be flooding in. Branch meetings were said to be crowded out every night, especially with new recruits. The Annual Report of the Yorkshire Federated Trades Council, published in September 1897, noted the general increase in membership particularly among the un-skilled during the year and went on to draw especial attention to the impact of the lock-out on local recruitment;

"dozens of men in various trades are reported to be joining their union, clubnight after clubnight."¹²⁵ Fred Maddison,¹²⁶ Lib-Lab M.P. for Brightside noted that employers had raised a spirit in favour of trade unionism which they would regret in future. The dispute, and its effects on trade unionism in the 'heavy' trades, was of great importance .¹²⁷

The lock-out ended in January 1898 with the capitulation of the London branches of the A.S.E. over the question of hours. This represented a total defeat for the A.S.E. nationally whose membership showed little sympathy with the direction of the official leadership. In Sheffield, the strength of unity was remarkable. The first ballot on the employers' proposals recorded 1,695 votes against and only three for acceptance. On the separate issue of hours, those accepting the offer of a 51 hour week numbered 427: those against 1,104.¹²⁸ The final agreement was based on the establishment of "Provisions for Avoiding Disputes" which was designed to ensure that future disagreements would be brought to the attention of a conciliation board comprising representatives from Labour and Capital. Collective bargaining across the engineering and allied trades was fixed as the legitimate mode of industrial relations for the following decades. The use of this system, and particularly its failure to meet the demands of rank and file membership, had important consequences in the politics of trade unionism in the 'heavy' trades as it developed in the years leading up to and during the first world war.

There were 100,000 workers organised nationally in the A.S.E. in 1906. In Sheffield, at this time, the local branches celebrated their 2,000 membership with a demonstration and tea.¹²⁹ In spite of the national control over the settlement of disputes, established in the terms of settlement after 1898, local branch autonomy persisted. Local discontent encouraged union initiatives to improve pay and conditions.

The A.S.E. worked with the Sheffield I.L.P. in a campaign against medical inspection as a condition of employment in the East End.¹³⁰ This was a levelling campaign as labourers and skilled workers were subject to the same rule. The issue was linked to the attempts of the employers to defeat the craft basis of local unionism by employing cheaper, less experienced boy and female labour. The campaign helped to inspire the formation of the Sheffield District Engineering Trades Permanent Board in 1906.¹³¹

This organisation of local engineering and allied trades was one of the first stages of the amalgamation movement from which the later shop stewards movement emerged.¹³² In 1907 the Board consisted of local branches of the A.S.E., Patternmakers, Smiths and Strikers, Boilermakers, Steam Engine Makers and General Labourers. The inclusion of the labourers was significant in view of the strong craft basis of unionism in the trades. For the moment, the inclusion of the organised labourers presented them with a grim prospect in any dispute in the engineering and related steel industry. When a wages movement began in February 1907, spearheaded by this alliance, there was fear among local employers of a general close down of the 'heavy' industrial sector.¹³³ The Engineering Employers Federation refused to recognise the Board and were determined to negotiate with each union separately.¹³⁴

Under the terms laid down by the settlement of 1897 no stoppage of work could occur while a wages question was under negotiation. However where a stoppage occurred, the employers were able to negotiate with groups of workers who were not involved in the Joint Board, thus undermining

its credibility. At Hadfields, a firm which was not included in the Employers' organisation, the United Patternmakers formed their own agreement with the management, gaining a two shillings advance in April 1907. This isolated agreement encouraged the patternmakers in other firms to strike. Good trading conditions and high employment was encouraging a general movement to improve wages across the industrial sector. While the allied engineering trades secured an advance in the summer, the rest of the patternmakers who remained outside of the alliance proved insufficient in strength faced with the organised employers. The defeat of the patternmakers after four months provoked a row between the United Patternmakers Union and the A.S.E. among whose members workers completed patternmaking work. 135

This dispute underlined the necessity of federation. The patternmakers miscalculated on the ability of the employers to purchase non-union labour from outside the district. The agreement made at Hadfield's proved to be a false indicator of the possibility of a general advance. As the Sheffield Guardian pointed out, Hadfields, although not a member of the Engineering Employers Federation, secured all the benefits of the Federation.¹³⁶ The A.S.E. was chastised for showing insufficient solidarity with the patternmakers. The problem of sectional organisation was summed up by one A.S.E. member who said, at the conclusion of the dispute:

"No patternmaker belonging to the A.S.E. could walk along the street without being called a 'black-leg'...offenders in this respect were not the rank and file of the United Patternmakers but the hot-brained leaders...who have led their members into a hole" 137

The confident claim made by the patternmakers before the dispute regarding the viability of isolated agreements in the local trades was undermined. Once more, the employers in their imposition of the terms of the settlement, while maintaining sufficient flexibility to conduct internal negotiations in their own firms, succeeded in reducing the area upon which rank and file activity might take place and achieved a major victory.

The United Patternmakers' Union was severely weakened and the secretary of the Sheffield branch called for a national procedure of negotiation which would be managed by the executive of the union who, he believed, were "better able to form a clear and independent judgment than the actual participants."¹³⁸ Support for industrial and political representation at a national level was given a boost by the experience of the dispute. It is perhaps significant that it was a local member of the Patternmakers' Union, Joseph Pointer who in 1909 became elected as the first Labour M.P. for a Sheffield constituency.¹³⁹

A severe depression in trade and much local unemployment in the engineering trades followed the 1907 agreements. On this basis, the employers, in 1909, proposed a reduction of one shilling a week data, and $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ on piece rates in the engineering trades. Negotiations with the Joint Board led to an agreement designed to survive whatever trade fluctuation occurred during the following five years. Existing wages were to remain static for that period. This effectively nullified rank and file activity in these years.¹⁴⁰

After five years, the leaders of the amalgamation movement in Sheffield were keen to resist any further denial of local interest and initiative by the official union executives. Increasing rank and file distrust and disillusionment with official personalities and procedures had been expressed throughout the country since the 1907 settlements. In 1910, an A.S.E. Reform Committee was formed; an anti-official movement which demanded an opening up of the structure of the union to rank and file influence, some relaxation in the craft basis of membership and the immediate resignation of the existing executive.¹⁴¹ This movement, while it failed to achieve its immediate demands, was part of a continuous element of Socialist-Syndicalist political theory which was emerging from within the ranks of the organised engineering workers.

When in 1914 James T. Murphy, a Sheffield engineer, called for a halt to the distracting processes of national negotiations, he was drawing on a body of trade union experience and theory closely allied to the industrial unionist movement. He called for a rank and file revolt against the strictures of official union policy on the grounds that:

"Agreements have done nothing in the past but bind us down to a certain course of procedure which has nullified any activity we were likely to display."

He went on to advise:

"Under existing circumstances agreements should be repudiated, for by accepting them we are doing nothing less than making a present to the enemy of whatever power we have... we must keep ourselves free to adopt strong measures when required... get what you can by

talking but do not tie yourselves up so that you can do nothing but talk...be free ... to co-operate with others, and free to fight as the occasion demands." 142

In the context of exceedingly good trade with the armament drive in full swing, these fighting words of Murphy's were likely to receive enthusiastic response.

The engineering workers in Sheffield entered the war already embittered and discontented with their treatment by the organised employers and their own union officials through conciliation and arbitration schemes. On April 17th 1914 a special conference was held in London between the E.E.F. and the A.S.E. national executive where the membership of the union was asked to support negotiations between the two to achieve a further long lasting agreement. In the meantime, workers were expected to continue to support the 1907 agreement. The rank and file movement in Sheffield was led at this time by Ted Lismer of the Steam Engine Makers Union and British Socialist Party.¹⁴³ In January 1915 Lismer expressed the growing discontent over the constraints on political and industrial activity that the state had enforced for the duration of the war. He regarded official union leadership as blameworthy in this respect. He observed that at the request of the government,

"inadvisedly in my opinion, we gave up certain trade rights without recompense, in order to accelerate the output of munitions of war, and surely we have not to be the only class to suffer because of this European calamity in the making of which we had no voice, and were not even consulted." 144

Already on Clydeside, one of the first major disputes of the war was taking place and negotiations between employers and trade unionists from Clydeside were carried out at a special conference held in Sheffield in March 1915.¹⁴⁵ This event, at which local trade unionists attended, probably contributed to a more informed knowledge and interest among local workers about the condition of industrial relations in the country's engineering industry as a whole. Certainly in February 1915, Ted Lismer was already encouraging local engineering workers to demand increases of wages in line with rampant inflation.¹⁴⁶

In March 1915, the Allied Trades demanded an increase of five shillings but eventually settled for the one shilling offered by the employers. Significantly, at the same time, the organised un-skilled and semi-skilled workers in Sheffield were winning major increases.¹⁴⁷ By October 1915, the engineering workers were justifying their wage demands on the higher rates of wages being earned by the less skilled, especially on shell work. In view of this, local branches of the A.S.E. formed the Day Workers Committee in order to assert their specific grievances.¹⁴⁸ The demand for a ten shillings increase on day work and a 25% increase on piece work prices was rejected after lengthy consideration by the Board of Arbitration of the Committee of Production in February 1916. Again, the less skilled workers were gaining advances through war bonuses.¹⁴⁹

The infiltration of the less skilled on to work traditionally carried out by skilled workers increased dramatically in the second half of 1916.¹⁵⁰ Growing anxieties about the shortage

of domestic labour power produced more government interference in industry. Rumours of industrial conscription were rife.¹⁵¹ The scale of resistance to government interference was expressed graphically in Sheffield in a dispute which occurred over the conscription of one skilled engineer in November 1916. Twelve thousand workers, probably the total membership of the Sheffield engineering unions struck work.¹⁵² The government was forced to give way by the sheer solidarity of feeling and action. The success of the organised workers relied to a large extent on structural changes which were being effected within the unions realised as a result of the impact of dilution and the necessity for shop floor vigilance against conscription and was fuelled by a developing political perspective and critique.

The Sheffield Shop Steward Committee which organised the November strike was led by the principal figures in the local Socialist-Syndicalist political movement at this time. One of these, James Murphy, influenced the restructuring of trade union rank and file politics early in 1917 when the Committee re-organised itself into the Sheffield Workers' Committee, an unofficial alliance of skilled workers.¹⁵³ In the same year, Murphy published The Workers' Committee in which he outlined structural changes based on shop floor organisation which would ensure official recognition of rank and file control.¹⁵⁴ As one observer observed in 1919:

"The workshop is the basis of organisation instead of the branch and the interests of the craft is to be

relegated to the power within the workshop, it afterwards becomes merged in the general interests of an industry, and finally of the whole working class."¹⁵⁵

This was a practical working out of a Socialist-Syndicalist political perspective which characterised a section of the rank and file movement in the organised engineering trades at this time. Its theoretical basis was founded in an acceptance of the reality of class struggle, a disillusionment with official Labour representation coloured by the Labour-Socialist tactic, and fundamentally challenging of the dominant ideology of work, politics and society. One example of this theoretical breadth was expressed by Murphy in his consideration of the relevance of the political and economic disadvantages of women to this conception of industrial politics. In The Workers' Committee he noted:

"Woman labour is usually cheap labour; women generally are more servile than men (and they are bad enough) ...they(women) are most difficult to organise because of these defects, thinking less about such matters than men. For these reasons they are more the victims of the employing class. The blame is not altogether theirs. We, men and women of today have now to pay the price of man's economic domination over women which has existed for centuries. Content to treat women as subjects instead of equals, men are faced with problems not to their liking."¹⁵⁶

The status and support which the Sheffield Workers' Committee received from the rank and file was well expressed

during the May 1917 strikes which were made in response to government measures to abolish the trade card scheme and to introduce dilution to private work.¹⁵⁷ Both these moves were provocative to skilled workers in the engineering trades as they indicated what might become normal practice after the war - the negation of craft control and the increased power of management.

The District Committee of the A.S.E. initiated the strike in Sheffield although the official leadership of the union did not recognise this action and sought to dismiss the Committee.⁵⁸ However, there was considerable overlapping in membership of the Sheffield Workers' Committee and the District Committee and the latter were re-elected at a mass meeting to act as the Strike Committee. The government recognised the extraordinary influence which local leaders of the rank and file movement exerted and threatened them with prosecution under the Defence of the Realm Act. Two of these, Stanley Burgess and Walt Hill were arrested on 19th May and had their "literature seized"¹⁵⁹ This only served to harden the support for the strikes in Sheffield while in the rest of the country, there were moves back to work. Sheffield workers returned to work only after the unconditional release of those arrested. There remained much distrust of the national agreement.¹⁶⁰

In December 1917, the Sheffield Workers' Committee was acting closely with the Trades and Labour Council in a protest action about the high cost of food. This reflected a broadening of the political perspective which recognised and sought to use the links between industrial and community

action. President of the Trades Council, A.E.Chandler,¹⁶¹ suggested that trade unionists should down tools and take the place of their wives in the food queues and requested that the Workers' Committee and Joint Board of Engineering Trades organise a demonstration against the unequal distribution of food. A Food Vigilance Committee was set up to monitor the need and effect of such action.¹⁶²

The 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % war bonus granted to skilled workers by the government in October 1917 cleared the way for a general move for advances across the industrial sectors. In Sheffield, the opportunity to transcend craft exclusiveness was recognised by the Workers' Committee which, in close association with local branches of the Workers' Union spearheaded a campaign which involved strike action among steel workers and women shell workers.¹⁶³

The importance of a number of charismatic working class intellectuals in the development of the structural and theoretical reorganisation known as the Shop Stewards' Movement cannot be over emphasised. As on Clydeside where John Maclean encouraged popular resistance to the government's industrial and domestic policies through the perspective of a Socialist-Syndicalist politics, in Sheffield there was no lack of vital understanding and communication. The Shop Stewards' Movement did not supplant official trade union machinery; it had no funds, for instance. It remained an organisation of workers in industry but its political perspective drew such intimate links between the experience of work, politics and community, links which outside of the crisis of war it was the purpose of the ruling ideology to fragment, that it came closest to a revolutionary politics in this period.¹⁶⁴

The major efforts and achievements of the Steel Smelters' Union in Sheffield focused on securing closed shops in several of the large firms. Efforts by employers to use non-union labour and to destroy the union of the steel workers were consistent. In 1889 Jessops dismissed workers for joining the union.¹⁶⁵ Organisation was weak and insecure until 1905-6 when the branch was reorganised and an official organiser was appointed in Sheffield. This produced an increase in membership, a political commitment to Labour representation and a markedly more militant strategy in industrial relations. An important dispute at Cammells in March 1907 succeeded in securing the job of the branch secretary after he had been dismissed for his union activities along with forty others. Non-unionists supported the strike and some joined the union during the dispute. As a result, the firm was forced to recognise the union.¹⁶⁶

Similar action in other firms focused on the struggle for union recognition. At Firths, in 1913, a twelve week dispute was fought involving 300 members of the Steel Smelters' Union. During the war the iron and steel trades were not in dispute with the employers until January 1918 when a much increased local membership fought for the government's 12½% bonus.¹⁶⁷ Amalgamations further increased union membership. By 1918 the Iron and Steel Trades Federation had within its organisation 46 branches and 8,750 members.¹⁶⁸

Industrial organisation in the foundry trades, especially among moulders, relied for its strength on resistance to mechanisation through the protection of craft status.¹⁶⁹ There were two local branches of the Friendly Society of Ironfounders in which most of the apprenticed moulders were organised. Like the engineers, the industrial strategy of the moulders combined a craft consciousness with a commitment to the idea of Labour representation on political and industrial bodies. Again, like the engineers, the skilled moulders worked alongside a large semi-skilled workforce which was a potential threat to their industrial strength and status. As a centre for the large scale production of steel, Sheffield attracted a large number of semi-skilled and labourers to the foundries. At the same time, the employers were anxious to destroy the distinction between the different sets of workers by the introduction of mechanisation and universal system of pay.¹⁷⁰ The relationship between the well organised moulders and the poorly organised, less skilled coremakers, had an important influence in the politics of trade unionism in the foundries.

Disputes occurred over the question of the use of non-union and unskilled labour throughout this period. In 1897, Sheffield moulders were in dispute with their own national executive over the use of strike action as a means of preventing employers' use on non-union labour.¹⁷¹ In 1906, with a pick up in trade, a strike was more was threatened over the same issue.

The chairman of the Engineering Employers Federation, Bernard Firth, outlined the main cause of the 1906 dispute. The central issue was alleged "limitation of production". The Ironfounders' Union was accused of fining its members for over-production. It was in the interests of the trade that this practice be stamped out:

"We want a certain amount of freedom which we don't have today in the working of our foundries ...with regard to the restrictions put upon the men with regard to their output... and in the question of set work or piece work."¹⁷²

In response, the secretary of the local branch of the Friendly Society of Ironfounders, John Davison, replied that setwork was;

"the most pernicious system in existence."¹⁷³ Because of the exceptionally good condition of trade, the employers were compelled to make agreement with their separate workforces and a strike was averted. However, Firth's Steel Works, a large employer of non-union labour reserved the right

"to arrange for set work to be introduced into the foundry...and to employ moulders who may not be belonging to the Friendly Society of Ironfounders."¹⁷⁴

Union opposition to the introduction of new technology was not a simple case of anti-machinery. The union leaders in Sheffield were concerned that they support the introduction of up-to-date methods as long as they were in control of the application of man-power. This point was made clear after the publication of an article in The Times which had suggested that Belgian steel castings could be sold in

Sheffield 25% cheaper than Sheffield firms could produce them.

The employers blamed this on the moulders who,

"supported by their union...would not bestir themselves and resisted all systems of piece work and all schemes which offered inducements to increase the output."¹⁷⁵

A representative of the organised moulders declared that the workers were in favour of the introduction of new methods of production and the division of labour. The fault lay with the manufacturers who "have not kept pace with the times in affording modern facilities to the men."

The key point was the control over labour in the foundries. The moulders' argument was that while the skilled workers were expected to do their own fetching and carrying, work which should be carried out by the less skilled, the actual skilled moulding work was delayed. Any attempt by the employers to destroy the demarcation between types of labour was, according to the moulders, detrimental to the quantity and quality of output. Where modern methods were used;

"the moulders have no labouring whatever to do ... they are occupied the whole of their time at work in practical moulding, and what they require is at hand."¹⁷⁶

The general secretary of the Friendly Society of Ironfounders summarised the nature of industrial relations in the trade in 1909:

"In the last 20 or 30 years a system of simplification and specification of work has gone on in the trade with the result that much of the work, both in coremaking and moulding, that used to be made by our members, is now being made by partially skilled

workmen, who are outside the control of our Society.

It is to be hoped in the interest of the Society, that some means will be shortly devised that will bring all those engaged in any kind of moulding into one Society, and under one government."¹⁷⁷

Efforts were made in the direction of federation and the creation of one union for all workers in the foundry trades but the weakness of the coremakers was seen to be the main impediment.¹⁷⁸ The employers sought to capitalise on this weakness in order to break through the moulders' strong resistance to changes in the management of their work. One form of attack was to stipulate that once promoted to the position of foreman a worker must leave the trade union in which he was involved.¹⁷⁹ Another tactic was to introduce piece work, with the promise of financial benefits, in certain firms.¹⁸⁰

In 1912 the moulders in Sheffield went on strike for five weeks over the use of non-union labour in the foundries. The strike received strong support from the Trades and Labour Council whose Socialist-Syndicalist leadership, at this time, called for the formation of One Big Union for all foundry workers.¹⁸¹ A Demarcation Board was set up in an attempt to find a settlement. This was made up from representatives of the Employers' Association, the Coremakers' and Moulders' unions. The latter refused to take part considering the Employers and Coremakers to be united in their objectives. In the following year, however, at a time of increasing trade and a general increase in industrial militancy, a three month

strike against the employment of non-union labour on piece work occurred and became interpreted by both sides of industry as an issue of the right to organise.¹⁸² This time, the coremakers were reported to be in support of the strike which Alf Short, secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, declared was "the entire workers' fight."¹⁸³ The T.&.L.C. invited workers involved in completing moulders' work to strike in support. Crane workers at one firm in the East End refused to work on moulders' produce at the outset of the dispute in July 1913. A mass meeting of moulders and coremakers was held to discuss ways of cementing the organisation of the skilled and unskilled without surrendering the control of the trades to the employers. Here it was stated:

"The time has arrived when some steps should be taken to bring about a closer amalgamation between the Ironfounders' and Coremakers' organisations."¹⁸⁴

A sub-committee was set up to draft the proposed merger. Eventually the Gas Workers' Union agreed to organise the unskilled and so the craft status of the moulders, organised in the Friendly Society of Ironfounders, was preserved until the war.¹⁸⁵

At the beginning of the war the moulders entered into a three year agreement with the Employers' Federation based on an agreed standard of 43 shillings a week. For the rest of the war further advances were gained in the form of war bonuses: March 1915 and in January 1917.¹⁸⁶ As in other trades, the removal of certain trade union rights gave employers the opportunity to carry through far-reaching alterations in production methods and management. This

was recognised at a meeting of the Employers' British Foundrymen's Association held in Sheffield in December 1916. Modernisation was to be achieved through mechanisation and the destruction of trade union restrictive practices.¹⁸⁷

Skilled workers in the city's iron and steel trades were aware that they had not profited by the war to the same extent that other sections of workers had, particularly the semi-skilled and organised labourers. Dilution was not possible in the moulding trade and therefore the moulders were not forced to defend their position and status. This was made clear during the dispute of 1919, a national dispute which saw Sheffield as the focal point. Here, the moulders sought to "get a bit of his own back on the engineers".¹⁸⁸ The demand for a 15 shillings increase was justified by the following:

- "1) the increased cost of living
- 2) a feeling that the class of skill required was not adequately paid, and
- 3) their economic position during the war had not improved to the same extent as less skilled foundry workers."¹⁸⁹

Attention was brought to the unhealthy and dangerous nature of foundry work. Employers' demands for modernisation of methods was accepted by the unions with the qualification that the skilled should be employed to operate any new machines while the less skilled should be employed totally on labouring work. However, the general strike in the engineering trades, which Tom Mann called for, went unheeded and firms were able to carry on production due to the large number of unemployed labourers there were in the city.

ii(c) The Organisation of the Unskilled and Labourers

By the time of the outbreak of the first world war, the unskilled and semi-skilled workers in Sheffield's 'heavy' trades were among the best organised of similar grades in the country.¹⁹⁰ There were three Unions catering for these workers and each concentrated on different sets of workers. These were the local branches of the Gas and General Workers' Union, formed in 1883; the National Amalgamated Union of Labour, formed in 1893; and the Workers Union, formed during the war. Each organisation was politically distinct both in terms of strategy and leadership.

The Gas Workers' Union concentrated on organising steel works labourers in the East End.¹⁹¹ An abortive attempt was made to organise women factory workers in 1890.¹⁹² At this time the Union was led locally by a labourer called Andrew Hall,¹⁹³ who was an active socialist in the Chesterfield area, and Jonathan Taylor,¹⁹⁴ a member of the Sheffield branch of the Social Democratic Federation. In the first decade of the twentieth century the Gas and General Workers' Union tied itself firmly to the rising tide of labour and socialist activity rooted in the Labour-Socialist tactic tending towards a left wing perspective. Around the time of a general upsurge in working class political activity and influence in the city, in 1906, a Sheffield District of the Union was formed and by July 1907 it was reporting "remarkable progress" in organising labourers in Attercliffe.¹⁹⁵ A membership of 4,500 grew to one of 10,000 by 1913 organised in twelve

branches. By the last quarter of the year 1913-14 the local membership stood at 16,000.¹⁹⁶

This solid base of organisation among labourers in the engineering works and steel works was an important element in the development during war time of a Socialist-Syndicalist political theory and practice in the Shop Stewards' Movement. The alliance between the engineers and the general workers to secure war bonuses in 1918 was characterised by a level of militancy which surpassed that in other areas of the country.¹⁹⁷

The political perspective of the Gas Workers' Union was expressed in its support for working class political parties which were active in the city before the war. In 1906, Neepsend branch supported officially the candidate of the Social Democratic Federation in the municipal elections for the Burngreave constituency.¹⁹⁸ At a banner unfurling ceremony in 1908, district secretary Charles Blackburn urged members to support the Labour Party, "the only party to which they could look for a solution " to social and political difficulties. The banner's motto spelt out the union's pledge to "Unity and the Triumph of Labour".¹⁹⁹

The first Labour Party candidate elected to the Sheffield City Council was R.G.Murray in 1905²⁰⁰ Murray was at this time active in the Gas Workers' Union and later developed his Socialist-Syndicalist politics within the Workers Union around the campaign for One Big Union. During the second decade of the twentieth century the Gas Workers' Union registered a more militant appreciation of industrial politics and disillusionment with the practice of the Labour-Socialist

tactic. Burngreave branch of the Gas Workers' Union supported Alf Barton as an Independent Socialist in the Parliamentary election of 1910.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, on the industrial side, well attended meetings were held to discuss the merits of Industrial Unionism.²⁰²

The National Amalgamated Union of Labour, originally the Tyneside and General Workers' Union, appointed a full-time "delegate" for the Sheffield area in 1893.²⁰³ The local organisation, under the leadership of A.J.Bailey, was actively involved in organising non-union labour in the engineering shops during the 1897 lock-out.²⁰⁴ Other areas of recruitment were among corporation employees, colliery workers and steel work labourers. Most activity focused on achieving a recognised minimum wage for labourers,²⁰⁵ and fair contract clause for corporation employees.²⁰⁶ Politically, the N.A.U.L. was rooted in the Lib-Lab strategy. Local secretary A.J.Bailey became a city councillor under Liberal Party auspices and declared in 1907 his unwillingness to sever links with the Liberals to whom "he owed his own position as councillor".²⁰⁷

The Workers' Union was not established in the city until 1916 although as early as 1912 an attempt had been made to form a local branch.²⁰⁸ Alf Barton, who defected from the Labour Party and helped form the Sheffield British Socialist Party in 1911 was a member of the Workers' Union in 1912.²⁰⁹ The Union concentrated its efforts on organising workers in the armaments industry, many of whom were new to the world of work and industrial politics. There was a

separate women's branch formed in 1918; many of the new recruits to the Union were women dilutees.²¹⁰ The political perspective of the leadership of the local Worker's Union was characterised by a disillusionment with the experience of the Labour-Socialist tactic and a move towards the Socialist-Syndicalist perspective in industrial and political relations. One example of this was expressed by R.G.Murray, an organiser with the Workers' Union in 1918. Murray, a Labour Councillor was involved in the non-conscription campaign during the war.²¹¹ There was a close relationship between leaders of the Workers' Union and the Sheffield Workers' Committee especially in co-ordinating wage movements in 1917 and 1918.²¹² The 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % war bonus granted to skilled workers in October 1917 provided the impetus for industrial action to secure the same bonus for the un-skilled. Leaders of the Workers' Union and Ted Lismer of the Steam Engine Makers' Union spearheaded the campaign. In January 1918, 2,000 women, who were mainly organised in the Workers' Union, struck work for two days and won the war bonus.²¹³

ii (d) The Organisation of Women in Industry

The appreciation of the significance of women's experience in conditions of employment, or in the home, varied across the whole perspective of working class politics at this time. However, it is possible to detect a differentiation according to the three categories of political theory and strategy identified in this study. In general it will be argued here that Patriarchy was one of the main areas of struggle around which working class industrial and political challenge defined itself. In terms of industrial organisation and the politics of trade unionism it is argued that the level of significance attached to women's work in its relationship to employment in general by working class organisations is indicative of a particular political perspective.

A marginal appreciation of the social, economic and political position of women was reflected in the comments and activity of the representative bodies of Lib-Labism. To these the importance of the notion of the 'family wage' and with it an aspiration towards middle class values and norms is clear.²¹⁴ In the Labour-Socialist perspective the place of women's work was appreciated as a component of a general strategy of reform to be carried out through Labour representation. The connection between the economic dependence of working class women and their political silencing was made clear especially by the local women organisers.²¹⁵

The appreciation of women's work within a political perspective which recognised intimate links between the exploitation of class and sex relationships, upheld by the dominant ideology which denied any such relationship, was expressed by a Socialist-Syndicalist theory. Through this perspective women's work was a point of antagonism not to be overcome by the exclusion of women from conditions of employment, but through a social and political revolution in consciousness affecting work-place, community and personal relationships.²¹⁶

The idea of forming a local organisation of female industrial workers was discussed at a meeting of women workers held at the Temperance Hall in May 1876. Emma Patterson, secretary of the Women's Protective and Provident League, addressed the gathering and urged the formation of a trade union for the women workers of Sheffield. Several local women gave their names and subscriptions intending to begin to organise but there is no evidence of any continuation of this initiative.²¹⁷

During the period of a general revival in trade unionist and socialist activity an effort was made to organise women confectionary workers. The Sheffield branch of the Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union, led by Jonathan Taylor, enrolled between 300 and 400 women into the Union in 1890. Hours were reduced and wages advanced. The average wage of the women workers was six shillings a week. To encourage further organisation, Taylor invited Clementina

Black, a national trade union organiser, to take part in the Sheffield campaign. The success was short lived due to the victimisation of the employers. As Taylor explained to the Royal Commission on Labour:

"Immediately after those women had joined our union their employer gave them notice that unless they withdrew they would be discharged, and a little later, 34 were discharged...the remainder of the 300 and odd who had joined our union withdrew from the union in consequence...and we have had no women in connexion with our union in the Sheffield district since that time, which was October 1890."²¹⁸

The employers, at Bassett's Confectioners, corresponded with Clementina Black and posted bills around the factory spelling out the consequences of union membership. The factory employed only women and young girls and in view of the vast pool of cheap labour available, the women were in an extremely weak position. From that time the Gas Workers' Union did not make a concerted effort to organise unskilled women workers. The National Amalgamated Union of Labour began to recruit women working in the 'light' trades during the war.²¹⁹

The beginning of a women's trade union movement in Sheffield can be dated around 1910. Unlike other industrial districts where factory work was more prominent, in Sheffield, the small scale of the staple trades which employed the largest number of women in manufacturing industry was prohibitive of trade union organisation.²²⁰ It was noted in 1908 that "there are trade unions for women in every town except Sheffield."²²¹ Two events helped to encourage the formation of a local trade union for women in 1910.

The first was a strike of sixty-two female cabinet case makers at Dewsnaps, Sydney Street.²²² The employers were attempting to introduce a new system of payment by the piece. The women, who were already organised in a trade union whose offices were based outside Sheffield, were aware that this could prejudice their conditions of work. The strike, which lasted for six weeks, gained much publicity and occurred at a time of local activity in the Labour movement. The Trades Union Congress held its meeting in Sheffield during the time of the dispute which attracted many national officials of the Labour and Trade Union Movement. Arthur Henderson addressed a large meeting of women workers at the Temperance Hall on the merits of industrial organisation.²²³ The Sheffield Guardian described the strikers as "the brave pioneers of Trade Unionism among women workers in Sheffield."²²⁴

The strike boosted the efforts of the Women's Trade Union League which in the same month was beginning a campaign in Sheffield holding outdoor meetings for workers in the print, shop, clothing and cutlery trades. A female section of the Society of Tailors and Tailoresses was formed as a result.²²⁵

The first local branch meeting of the National Federation of Women Workers was held in September. The branch was officially launched in December when secretary Miss Airey spoke of the failure of women to recognise their general degradation and linked this to their economic exploitation.²²⁶ The branch decided to concentrate its efforts on the organisation of women workers in specific trades.²²⁷ Weekly meetings were held

at the I.L.P. rooms, Charles Street, and women activists in the local labour movement gave their active support. These included Mrs C.Gee, branch president and Mrs Jenny Pointer, wife of Attercliffe M.P., Joseph Pointer.²²⁸

Women active in different organisations came together and co-operated in propaganda work. Eleanor Barton of the Women's Co-operative Guild (W.C.G.) took up the issue of equal wages for equal work; Jenny Pointer, of the Women's Labour League (W.L.L.) spoke on the issue of conditions of work.²²⁹ Gertrude Clarke, secretary of the Sheffield Fabian Society, helped the local branch of the National Federation of Women Workers (N.F.W.W.) in its campaign against the inadequacies of the government's National Insurance Bill.²³⁰ This issue was adopted by Mary McArthur at a meeting held in Sheffield in 1912.²³¹ Concentrated efforts were made to encourage female domestic servants to take an interest in improving their conditions of work, through organisation. A propaganda campaign was carried out by the Sheffield N.F.W.W. in 1912 to this end.²³²

The various strands of the organising movement united in July 1912 to form the Sheffield Women Workers Organising Committee (W.W.O.C.) with the object of organising in a trade union every woman worker in the city.²³³ Supported by the Labour Party, the Committee initially held weekly surgeries at the I.L.P. rooms, to advise women of their rights under the new legislation. It organised conferences and approached firms where women were employed in order to recruit and advise. By June 1913, seventy-five meetings had been held outside factory gates, "in spite of police interference."²³⁴

Women and girls working in the laundries in Sheffield, of which there were some fifty in 1912, were among the lowest paid of all workers.²³⁵ In 1913 the Sheffield N.F.W.W. campaigned to organise these and establish a minimum wage. From November 1913, workers employed by the Co-operative Laundry gained recognition of a minimum wage and it was hoped that this would encourage a general improvement in conditions by demonstrating the benefits of organisation.²³⁶ In the following month a minimum wage for women workers in the local spice factories was established by a Trade Board.²³⁷ The Women Workers' Organising Committee supported this but at the same time stressed the need for the women to organise themselves in order to resist possible efforts by employers to reduce costs in other ways.²³⁸

While the Committee succeeded in helping to establish several local women's trade unions including a branch of the Domestic Workers' Union and a Street Traders organisation,²³⁹ it was anxious also that male dominated trade unions should consider the question of women workers. One means of influencing the wider labour movement in this direction was through the Trades and Labour Council and Gertrude Wilkinson of the W.W.O.C. was elected to the Industrial Committee of the T.&L.C. in 1913.²⁴⁰ In November 1913, Jenny Pointer, secretary of the Sheffield Women's Labour League, criticised the National Union of Railwaymen for failing to incorporate women employees of the railway companies in their new organisation.²⁴¹

In the period before the war the broad campaign conducted by the local women's trade union movement incorporated more

than the basic educational and recruiting function. The social and political disadvantages of women were underlined and were consistently related to their economic exploitation. In such a way the political perspective of the movement was forged as one which recognised a central ideological struggle as essential to any material advancement. Eleanor Barton outlined the objections to married women in paid positions in an article published shortly after the war:

"The first is that her husband should keep her. This in itself creates false impressions - (1) the idea that married women do not contribute anything to the family, whereas really their work keeps the home going, and the same domestic work done for anyone else would be well paid for; (2) the idea that a married woman is being kept and that it is wrong for her to earn money tends to damage the belief that the wife should have an equal position in the home with the husband...are we to say that because a woman marries a man she is always to remain at the level of his achievements...?" ²⁴²

While at the theoretical level the political perspective of the autonomous women's trade union movement made much more explicit the links between the different areas of experience and embraced an understanding of ideological struggle than did the main stream of the Labour movement, in terms of tactics, its still marginal position led it to adopt a Labour-Socialist position. As Eleanor Barton explained:

"It is especially important to have married women in paid positions because of the necessity of married women being represented by married women in Parliament, on public bodies, and such bodies as Trade Union executives, Co-operative Boards, and Committees." ²⁴³

At the onset of war the immediate dislocation of local industry led to fears of mass unemployment among women workers in the city and the first task of the Organising Committee was to campaign against this.²⁴⁴ The war increased enormously the number of women employed in local industry. Altogether 15,000 women and girls were employed in the munitions factories alone. The Defence of the Realm Act which restricted the activities of trade unions provided employers with renewed possibilities of exploitation. The vulnerability of the unorganised in these circumstances was highlighted by the Labour movement and sections of it took up the issue of women workers' pay and conditions; this section was that which in general can be said to have adopted a Socialist-Syndicalist political perspective.²⁴⁵ In spite of frequent agitation in the labour press on the subject it was not until May 1915 that a conference was organised to discuss the problem of achieving trade union standards of pay and conditions for women workers. It was declared that out of 20,000 women employed in Sheffield not more than 500 were organised.²⁴⁶ During the following week women began to be employed on the city's tram service and women were already taking the place of men and boys in the General Post Office at much lower rates of pay than the men had received. In view of these circumstances the Women Workers' Organising Committee proposed the following motion at the conference:

"That in view of the government's proposals for the special employment of women workers in suitable industries during the continuation of the war, to take the place of men who have enlisted, and the possible

menace under the guise of patriotism to the legitimate female worker, this conference, representative of the Trade Unions of Sheffield, pledges itself to use every effort to secure equal pay for equal work to all females so employed, irrespective of any particular trade."²⁴⁷

However The Sheffield Guardian Commented wryly:

"There will have to be more conferences, more agitation, more education before the men will agree to work with the women on equal terms."²⁴⁸

In July 1915 with increasing numbers of women working in all industrial sectors, estimated at about 60,000, moves were being made to create women's sections within the existing male dominated trade unions.²⁴⁹ The Gold and Silver and Kindred Trades Union opened a women's section to which some 50 women were transferred from the Sheffield N.F.W.W.. No woman member was among the executive committee and women were not encouraged by the union to take an active interest in its affairs.²⁵⁰ The Bakers and Confectioners' Society formed a national womens' section but men remained in control of the regional organisations. The A.S.E. was beginning to consider whether to organise women working in the local engineering workshops but the bulk of these were recruited into the Gas and General Workers' Union before 1916, and the Workers' Union after this date.²⁵¹

Women were employed in large numbers in the local transport industry both on trams and on the railways. In July 1915 over 100 women were working as conductresses and about half of these had joined the Tramway and Vehicle Workers' Union. By October this number had increased to 308 and there was some resistance offered by some of the men

to their union membership.²⁵² By July 1915, fifty women were employed as railway clerks by the General Central Railway Company; a training school was set up for them. The Railway Clerks' union, led by A.E.Chandler, one of the principal exponents of the Socialist-Syndicalist perspective in Sheffield, embraced women's membership, "believing as we do, that the women un-organised will not only be unable to better their own conditions, but will remain a menace to the advancement of the male clerks."²⁵³

The Trades and Labour Council pledged its support for the Women Workers' Organising Committee in 1915 and helped to organise several local conferences. The Sheffield N.F.W.W., with 300 members, affiliated to the Trades and Labour Council in November 1915.²⁵⁴ With the prospect of national conscription and consequent increase in demand for women's industrial labour, the Committee was keen to acquire as much support as possible from the local labour movement. As well as publicising the problems and difficulties besetting women in employment, the Committee was also keen to point out the exploitation involved in government propaganda which encouraged women and children to undertake voluntary work for the war effort, at sweated rates of pay.²⁵⁵

In August 1915, women between the ages of 15 and 65 were compelled to register for war work. The I.L.P. journal, The Sheffield Guardian, supported in its pages the suggestion made by Sylvia Pankhurst and the East London Federation of Suffragettes, that women write the following statement on their forms:

"I do not think it right to undertake Government work unless I have a guarantee that I shall be paid the standard rate of wages hitherto paid for the kind of work that I am asked to undertake, with the addition of any war bonus or increase in wages ... and that if the

work is unskilled and the wages hitherto low, I shall not be engaged to do it at a lower wage than 7d. an hour. I consider that women's labour should be safeguarded by the possession of the Parliamentary vote."²⁵⁶

Sixty thousand women were reported to be employed in local industry in July 1915. Already they were working on shell production at Hadfield's.²⁵⁷ At Vickers' Holme Lane works women employed on shell and lathe work earned between eight and fourteen shillings a week with a shilling war bonus only payable if good time was kept. The fact that women were working on men's work and earning considerably less than they did was not lost on the trade unionists. Suddenly the task of incorporating women into the world of politics through the trade union movement was seen to be urgent.

As The Sheffield Guardian commented:

"The capitalists are going to fight like hell to keep the cheaper labour in their establishments. And the sixty thousand is to be multiplied by ten before many weeks are passed. Now is the time my brothers ... He has got to get those women organised...on terms of equality with himself. In the same unions - yes, and the wages paid to women must not be less than those paid to men employed on the same work. Or the male trade unions, and especially the big craft unions, look like fading away into thin air when the war comes to an end." ²⁵⁸

No longer an issue which pended the successful advancement of the working class through the labour movement, the situation of women was perceived as a central element in that whole process.

The Military Service Bill became law in January 1916 and with the Universal Conscription Bill which was introduced

in April, it marked the beginning of a more intensive effort to recruit women into domestic industry. In this context of increased pressure, absenteeism was a growing problem for employers as working mothers sought to balance their domestic and industrial commitments. From the summer of 1916 women began to appear frequently at the Sheffield Munitions Tribunal where they were charged with slackening.²⁵⁹ Here they were defended by representatives of the Women Workers' Organising Committee and a middle class organisation, the Sheffield District Women's Interests Association.²⁶⁰ It was noted that there was a particular problem of absenteeism among women on Mondays, traditional washing day. This sometimes amounted to a 20 % absenteeism and was deplored by the employers who were defended by the local Tribunal. The Women's Interests Association pointed out the difficulty for working mothers in view of the complete lack of child minding facilities. This was not sufficient excuse for the chairman of the Tribunal, Sir William Clegg who, declaring his reluctance to fine women, nevertheless said:

"If women would claim the privileges of men they must also take the disadvantages. They were becoming bad time keepers and discipline must be enforced."²⁶¹

By the autumn of 1916 women had come to form such a large proportion of the local labour force that their place in peace-time market conditions came to be critically considered. Canteens and welfare facilities were beginning to be provided in some of the larger firms and these were publicised in an effort to induce still more women to come forward for work.²⁶²

These facilities, meagre though they were, suggested to some observers in the local labour movement that women's place in the labour force was being established. In September 1916, in the context of a growing anxiety about the future of local employment prospects, a conference was organised by the Womens' Interests Association to consider the issue. It was chaired by H.A.L. Fisher and was attended by male and female trade unionists.²⁶³ The first resolution of the meeting demanded that the government should provide some form of out-of-work cover for women workers who would be displaced in peace time; this was in view of the fact that women workers were not covered by existing insurance legislation. The resolution was supported by Eleanor Barton of the Women's Co-operative Guild and Women Workers' Organising Committee. Mrs Jenny Pointer seconded the motion and commented:

"Up until quite recently they were told their place was in the home. Since the war began they had had to get out into the industrial world, or else they were not patriotic. After the war there would be a lot of women displaced, and she honestly believed that the only way of dealing with the problem was to organise in time."²⁶⁴

Mrs Wilkinson, representing the Sheffield branch of the N.F.W.W. protested at the current rate of 4d. per hour earned by women working on jobs not previously done by men; she also supported the motion. This was lost, however, in favour of an ammendment which refused to accept that unemployment would be a necessary feature of any post-war reconstruction. For the majority of trade unionists the particular disadvantages of women workers would, in terms

of political strategy, be attended to as a consequence of Labour's increased political power and not as an essential means of gaining it. This point of view represented the dominance of the Labour-Socialist tactic at the expense of all others.²⁶⁵

In November 1916 the Trades and Labour Council appointed a sub-committee to investigate and protect women workers' interests. At the Annual General Meeting of the T.&.L.C. in 1916 the popularity of and confidence shown in Gertrude Wilkinson was reflected in the votes cast in the election of the executive committee: she received the largest vote in a contest in which some of the leading figures in the Shop Stewards' movement were standing. In the following April she was elected vice-president of the Council.²⁶⁶

The increase in union membership among women workers in Sheffield during the war was immense. Of the unions catering specifically for women the N.F.W.W. increased from 350 to 5,000 members in June 1918. The N.A.U.L. had a female membership of 900 and the Workers' Union had its own womens' branch.²⁶⁷ In spite of these improvements the tactics of the political leadership of the women's trade union movement had to recognise that their relative strength disposed them to ally themselves with the dominant perspective of the wider Labour movement; that is the Labour-Socialist tactic of increased organisation and representation to bring about reform.

Railway workers were experiencing changes in their system of work and industrial relations in this period not unlike workers in other sectors. The impact of market changes and consequent technological and managerial innovation contributed towards a crisis of control in the industry. The purpose of this section is to examine this crisis as it affected the politics of railway trade unionism and its wider influence on the development of working class politics in Sheffield.

The struggle for power which characterised industrial relations in the railway industry at this time involved the re-organisation of trade unionism on a national scale in a move against sectionalism. This internal alteration in the bases of organisation was developing within the wider context of illegality as employers consistently refused to recognise the workers' organisations as trade unions. The main thrust of trade unionism in the industry in the period before the war was in the direction of federation, conciliation and Labour representation. These priorities supported a growing trade union bureaucracy and officialdom. The experience of conciliation and negotiation through official structures inspired the formation of a hostile anti-officialism within the rank and file among whom were a number of political activists and theoreticians. This element contributed to a developing Socialist-Syndicalist critique within the organised workforce which was fuelled during the war by a tenacious craft-consciousness held by certain sections, notably the Associated Society of Locomotive Enginemen

and Firemen.

Before 1913, when the National Union of Railwaymen was formed, railway workers in Sheffield were organised sectionally as members of the following unions: The Associated Society of Railway Servants (A.S.R.S.) 1871; the Associated Society of Locomotive Enginemen and Firemen (A.S.L.E.F.) 1880; the General Railway Workers' Union (G.R.W.U.) 1889; the United Pointsmen and Signalmen's Society (U.P.S.S.) and the Railway Clerks' Association (R.C.A.), formed in Sheffield in 1899. The majority of organised railway workers in Sheffield were members of the A.S.R.S.²⁶⁸

The nature of work in the railway service, the stress on duty and discipline, the division of labour and strict hierarchical system of promotion, and the sense of skill, all influenced the kind of industrial relations and politics of trade unionism which developed. In particular, the reluctance on the part of the Railway Companies to recognise trade union organisation among their employees and the construction of elaborate schemes for conciliation, influenced the temper and political perspective of railway workers. The breakdown of such schemes and the subsequent breakdown in the relationship between the rank and file and official union leadership, was an important element in the development of a Socialist-Syndicalist perspective among sections of the workforce. Increased pressure applied by the employers on points of discipline and physical fitness fuelled discontent and provided a vital issue around which political discussion could focus.²⁶⁹ The failure of the employers to maintain notions of duty and mutuality of interests with their employees was a further contributory factor in a remarkable politicisation which developed among railway workers in Sheffield in these years.

The railway workers' sense of grievance in relation to other groups of workers at a time of a rising cost of living can be understood by comparing the relative increases in earnings over the period 1886-1906. In the railway industry weekly rates of wages had risen by 5% while in the same period average increases in the building trades was 18%, in cotton 23%; and in engineering 26%.²⁷⁰ Hours were long and conditions of work were extremely unsociable and hazardous. The final years of the nineteenth century saw an increasing mood of militancy among railway workers and the formation of a first National Programme calling for the united action of all grades to overcome the fragmentation which resulted from working in regional sections and from the division of labour in the industry.

In November 1896 the national conference of the A.S.R.S adopted a programme for a ten hour day for goods guards and shunters. The mood was tempered by doubts in the effectiveness of an all grades movement expressed by official leadership and underlined in an article published in The Railway Review by Fred Maddison.²⁷¹ However, the campaign boosted membership temporarily and promoted the election of Richard Bell as general secretary of the Society. There was a marked move towards the politics of independent Labour representation as a result. As Pelling and Bealey have noted, A.S.R.S. members "were virtually the sponsors of the conference" which saw the inauguration of the Labour Representation Committee.²⁷²

In April 1905 members of A.S.L.E.F. launched their National Programme which included the demand for an eight hour day. In November 1906 A.S.R.S. revived the National

All Grades Movement. Both these moves were made at a time of increased interest and activity in railway trade unionism. Membership of the Sheffield district A.S.R.S. doubled between 1903 and continued to grow rapidly during the campaign.²⁷³ There were five local branches. The Sheffield number one branch increased its membership by 50% (from 196 to 296) between the end of 1906 and September 1907. Grimesthorpe registered a similar increase (from 262 to nearly 400) in the same period and the active interest of members made it difficult for organisers to find a room sufficiently large to accommodate meetings.²⁷⁴ At the same time the Railway Clerks' Association reported a rapidly growing membership in August 1906.²⁷⁵

The All Grades Movement was chiefly an effort to enforce trade union recognition but it also provided a vehicle for the expression of more general complaints. The Railwaymen's Charter of 1907 showed that over 100,000 workers, or 39% of the total, earned under £1 per week; only 7% worked an eight hour day; and over one quarter worked more than twelve hours a day.²⁷⁶

The Sheffield Guardian published details of local earnings in support of the workers' grievances.²⁷⁷ It also provided a valuable medium for the channeling of particular complaints. In August 1907 the paper printed details of a meeting held by Grimesthorpe A.S.R.S. which passed the following resolution:

"We strongly resist the system now being enforced by the Midland Railway in this district, with regard to the long hours being worked and the short periods of rest that are allowed to drivers, firemen and goods guards, they being expected to be in readiness at the

expiration of nine hours and in some cases only eight hours. This we contend is detrimental both mentally and physically to the men concerned and also to the safe working of the railway."²⁷⁸

The A.S.R.S. and General Railway Workers' Union held joint demonstrations calling for the introduction of the eight hour day with increasing political comment.²⁷⁹ Edward Carpenter²⁸⁰ spoke to a crowd of sympathisers in November 1907 at a meeting which called for a national stoppage in the railway industry.²⁸¹ The Railway Clerks Association, steered locally by a Socialist-Syndicalist leadership, declared its full support for the proposed action "realising that in the present contest they (the railway workers) are fighting our battles as well as their own."²⁸² Throughout the campaign in Sheffield the utmost confidence was expressed in the official leadership.

Railway workers managed their complaints traditionally according to a system designed and controlled by management. The construction of a conciliation scheme to avoid disputes developing into strikes was a means of avoiding official trade union recognition and the consequent boost to Society membership which that would have brought about. A method of conciliation also maintained something of the system of industrial relations in the Companies which secured the allegiance on non-society workers. The political perspective of non-society workers during the 1907 dispute was outlined by a local railway signalman who gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Railway Conciliation. He said that industrial relations were

"very favourable in years gone by and we improved our position largely...we received advances of wages

on two or three occasions...The feeling of the men was not behind the officials of the Society in presenting the ultimatum to the Companies...most of us thought the time was not opportune for making a demand on the Companies when trade was so depressed."²⁸³

It was the desire of management that such an attitude be maintained and expanded for such close identification with the interests of the Company had obvious advantages. However, between 1907 and 1911, as a result of increasing disillusionment with the practice of conciliation, there was a more pronounced identification among organised workers with Labour and Socialist politics.

In this period the Sheffield district A.S.R.S. branches were active in campaigning for union recognition, an end to sectional organisation and the move towards achieving federation. Advances were made to the local A.S.L.E.F branches regarding the merits of federation in view of bringing about a nationalisation of the railway network.²⁸⁴ In the immediate aftermath of the settlement in November 1907 Sheffield A.S.R.S. was structuring its argument linking the protection of Society membership with the ultimate nationalisation of the industry. A developing political perspective is evident in remarks made at this time. The District declared its "disgust" at,

"The victimisation of several of our members during the progress of the National All Grades Movement and we express our emphatic opinion that it is essential to individual freedom of speech and action that the industries of the nation should be collectively owned by the whole community and administered by representatives of the people."²⁸⁵

In the following year, this call for nationalisation in its opposition to official executive policy, was recognisably more confident. In response to a current debate on the relationship between the trade union movement and the Labour Party, the Sheffield District A.S.R.S. commented:

"This council emphatically repudiates the opinion of the executive committee...regarding the relationship of the Labour Party to Socialism, which it considers reactionary and absurd and furthermore considers in the light of the tyranny and victimisation now prevailing under private ownership it should be apparent to every intelligent railwayman that only by national ownership and public control of the nations' industries can the liberty of the subject be secured."

It went on to declare its support for the Labour Party's approval of such a scheme.²⁸⁶

Ideas of action to secure the nationalisation of the railways, combined with a growing rank and file disillusionment with the political perspective and tactics of official union leadership, was the point of growth of a Socialist-Syndicalist challenge among sections of the workforce.

From 1909 a branch of the Advocates of Industrial Unionism was established in the city and several A.S.R.S. branches invited speakers from this organisation.²⁸⁷ After one such talk presented by Tom Ring in May 1909, the secretary of the Railway Clerks' Association, A.E.Chandler, commented:

"We have placed a master class in power by our trade union highly paid officials and their jealousies are a great bar to unity."²⁸⁸

At the same time local members of A.S.L.E.F., still clinging to their sectional skilled status, were beginning to show

signs of discontent with their own official representatives, and support for nationalisation.²⁸⁹ Anxious to maintain its local autonomy, Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. protested vehemently at the action of its executive in over-ruling its own selection of a delegate to represent their interests at a Society conference:

"We, the members of the Sheffield branch do hereby express our complete disgust with the action of our general secretary and executive and also inform them that we have lost all confidence in them."²⁹⁰

The growing rank and file disillusionment with official leadership which was expressed in the years following the establishment of the Conciliation Boards was nurtured and given direction in Sheffield by a Socialist-Syndicalist leadership. Prominent in the Trades and Labour Council and president in the year 1917-18 was A.E.Chandler of the Railway Clerks' Association. Along with Charles Watkins of the local A.S.R.S. Chandler contributed a political perspective to debate within the railway trade union movement which reflected a commitment to Syndicalist theory and tactics. This involved a critical appreciation of the reformist tactics of the Labour-Socialist perspective and a wider interpretation of the concept of class struggle. Speaking on the general consequences of the 1907 settlement Watkins considered that it had placed railwaymen,

"more completely in the grip of the capitalists" than before and this "had the warm approval of their own trade union leaders...the immediate result of the settlement was the dispersion of the men's forces the dissipation of all energy generated by the national movement and the indefinite postponement of the men's grievances."²⁹¹

In an article published in the Industrial Syndicalist in 1907, Watkins went further than a demand for nationalisation brought about by increased political power through the representation of Labour and distinguished a Socialist-Syndicalist perspective. There should be no nationalisation "which means the capitalisation of the railways" but workers should take care to ensure that they secure "the entire control and management of them by themselves in the common interest." This could only be achieved through industrial unionism which embraced the tactics of class conflict.²⁹²

Chandler, of the Railway Clerks' Association, consistently injected a Socialist-Syndicalist perspective into debate on railway industrial relations. At the Annual Conference of the R.C.A. held at Hull in 1910, Chandler, representing the Sheffield branch suggested:

"The time has arrived when the means of production and distribution of wealth should be owned and controlled by the people and worked in the common interest of all the workers."²⁹³

Sheffield's perspective on the issue was out of harmony with the outlook of the national Association and Chandler was ruled "out of order" in proposing such a motion on the grounds that it had no direct relationship with the business of the meeting.

This Socialist-Syndicalist political critique was an important strand in the development of railway trade unionism before the war. Within the context of a swelling tide of industrial militancy and ever-increasing cost of living by 1911 Sheffield railway workers were united as never before in their opposition to the Conciliation Boards and determination to achieve trade union recognition.

The national transport strikes of 1911 were an indication of the extent of rank and file discontent with both employer and official trade unionist dictates and, through the political nature of the conflict, they became a means of developing a class consciousness among sections of railway workers.²⁹⁴ In Sheffield, the unrest already indicated after the period of conciliation came to embrace several related areas of discontent. These included increasing management autocracy, more frequent medical inspection, the speeding up of work and rotas, sub-contracting, de-skilling and the avoidance of agreed scales by management.²⁹⁵ By 1911 the price of food had risen by approximately 14% since 1900. At the same time wages in the railway industry had remained fairly static. Sheffield railway workers received the following rates in August 1911:

"Goods Porters - 10 hours - 17s. to £1 per week.
Passenger Porters - 10 hours - 14-19s. per week
Station Porters - 10 hours - 17s-£1.
Parcel Porters - 10 hours - £1 to 22s.
Guards, Passenger - 10 hours - £1-25s
Guards, Goods - 10 hours - 22-30s.
Signalmen - 10 hours - 21-30s.
Signal Lampmen - 12 hours - 12-16s.
Shunters - 10 hours - 22-30s."²⁹⁶

The strike action among railway workers followed several months of unrest at the main docks of the country, action which was led in the main by the unskilled. Syndicalist and Industrial Unionist theory from 1909 had concentrated on the construction of united action of workers regardless of grade. In May 1909, A.E.Chandler spoke to the Trades and Labour Council on the subject of Industrial Unionism. For him the first practical step was the general strike wherein;

"all forces of organised Labour in the city..."

(would) bear upon the side of the workers, affiliated or otherwise in any and every dispute making the concern of one, the concern of all."²⁹⁷

Unofficial strike action among railway workers began on Mersyside early in August 1911 in sympathy with the dock-workers with whom there was a close working relationship.²⁹⁸

The potential of such an alliance brought about the swift action of the state. Violent conflict between workers and troops in Liverpool helped to widen the relevance of the struggle for transport workers all over the country. In the week following 'Bloody Sunday', August 13th, when a massive labour demonstration was dispersed by police and troops and after two strikers were killed, Sheffield railway workers began to show their solidarity with the national movement. Traffic from Liverpool and Manchester, loaded by 'black-leg' labour, was arriving in Sheffield and workers informed the employers through their elected representatives that they would not handle the goods. Mass meetings of all grades in the city demanded the abolition of the Conciliation Boards, a two shillings advance in wages, time-and-a-half for Sunday duties and time-and-a-quarter for overtime. When these demands were ignored by management, workers at the Wicker Goods and Midland passenger stations struck work. On Tuesday, 15th August, signal workers at Heeley decided to support the action and in the evening a mass meeting was held at Barker's Pool where leading figures in the city's Socialist-Syndicalist movement addressed the workers and their families.²⁹⁹ Significantly, the Railway Clerks Association declared their solidarity and pledged to refuse to do no 'black-leg' labour during the dispute.³⁰⁰

The extent to which members of different railway unions united in action during the strike has been commented on.³⁰¹ There was also considerable solidarity shown by non-society workers, workers in other industries and among railway workers' families.³⁰² In Sheffield both A.S.L.E.F. and A.S.R.S. membership registered similar grievances and united in opposition to management tyranny. At a mass meeting held in April 1911 the number one branch A.S.L.E.F. declared:

"Periodical medical examinations are calculated to create a feeling of insecurity among individual employees which may result in some further disaster owing to such of them who hold responsible situations being in constant fear of physical deterioration which may bring about a reduction in position or possible discharge."

The branch went on to demand that the Companies bear the financial burden of any loss of wages due to failing any examinations as such failure would be entirely due to the nature of their employment.³⁰³ On this point, the local membership of A.S.R.S. felt equally strongly.³⁰⁴ The main concern of the Railway Clerks was their lack of representation on the Conciliation Boards.³⁰⁵

A strike committee was formed from the membership of the various Societies. The principal leaders were John Healey of A.S.L.E.F., A.E.Chandler and J.O'Brien of the R.C.A.³⁰⁶ Support was given by G.H.Fletcher of the Sheffield Social Democratic Party which underlined the political character of the struggle.³⁰⁷ The strikers received support from the two Trades Councils and the I.L.P. The Women's Railway Guild gave official and practical support, taking part in

picket duties. They were joined at lunch time by female buffers who helped to overturn drays outside the Midland passenger station.

Clashes with the authorities occurred throughout the strike. The Lord Mayor and several leading citizens issued the following statement on the 17th August:

"Crowds would not be allowed to assemble in dangerous numbers and pickets would only be allowed to practice persuasion."³⁰⁸

From the start the police escorted goods through the city but the invitation to the Gordon Highlanders militia to take up residence for the duration of the dispute caused anxiety among the strikers. It was unclear on whose authority the troops had been invited to the city but their presence helped to polarise and politicise the dispute.³⁰⁹

The settlement agreed to by union officials, after government mediation, provided a further stop-gap in industrial relations on the railways in the form of a Royal Commission of Enquiry. In the meantime the Conciliation Boards were to remain in tact. The settlement caused anger and dismay among wide ranks of railway workers in Sheffield. The carters for a time refused to return to work.³¹⁰ It was declared that the leadership had betrayed the rank and file. Those who returned to work suggested that they would be ready to strike again if the deliberations of the Royal Commission proved futile. On 22nd August a meeting of the Midland railway A.S.R.S. membership repudiated the decision of the official leadership and called for a renewed national stoppage. A meeting of local A.S.L.E.F. members stressed the need to ensure against victimisation and demanded reinstatement at positions held

prior to the strike.³¹¹

An increased interest in trade union and general political activity was registered by the Societies in Sheffield, and with it a move towards the favouring of federation, and Labour representation.³¹² At the same time the Socialist-Syndicalist perspective within the railway workers' organisation was apparent within certain branches. Heeley and Grimesthorpe branches purchased Charles Watkins' pamphlet The Railwaymen which outlined a scheme for workers' control in the industry.³¹³ Other local branches declared their interest in a general fusion of unions in the industry.³¹⁴ In August several leaders of the strike in Sheffield were among those who formed the Sheffield branch of the British Socialist Party which distanced itself from the theory and practice of the Labour Party.³¹⁵ And in December, Grimesthorpe and Heeley branches called for an amalgamation between railway and tram workers and that such an organisation be controlled by the rank and file. The political campaign among corporation employees to transform municipalisation into socialisation which had been proceeding since 1906, after the election of the first Labour councillors, had laid the ground for such an alliance. The Tramway and Vehicle Workers Union declared in 1906:

"We who believe in municipalisation of public services recognise the fact that municipal enterprise can be little more than a form of capitalism so long as the workers do not send their representatives to the council to manage the municipal undertakings."³¹⁶

The authorities reacted with anxiety to the strike and efforts were made to bring about restrictions on strike action. The Sheffield Chamber of Commerce requested government assistance

at times of local industrial militancy in the form of troop deployment.³¹⁷ The Socialist-Syndicalist leadership reacted angrily to this request pointing out the imbalance which existed in terms of power between the organised forces of Labour and Capital. At a delegate meeting of the Trades and Labour Council held in November 1911 the A.S.R.S. protested strongly;

"against the action of the Chamber of Commerce asking for the abolition or minimising of the right to picket during strikes and lock-outs and(urged) the government to disregard such resolutions."³¹⁸

It was suggested at the same meeting that a responsive action to such manouvres should take the form of a general strike. A.E.Chandler commented on the Home Office's proposal to enrol special constables for strike duty:

"Working men and Trade Unionists ought to organise and drill themselves in order to be ready in case of emergency."

He advocated the setting up of a local trade union special constabulary "to do their share of the shoving during a strike disturbance" ³¹⁹. The suggestion was taken up by the militant Grimesthorpe A.S.R.S. who considered that "if necessary we shall have an armed force in case of any dispute."³²⁰ Other branches condemned the idea reflecting a Labour-Socialist political orientation in their confidence instead in improving organisation and representation through federal schemes. Heeley A.S.R.S. expressed this point of view in calling on all railwaymen,

"to at once take steps to get the machinery of the various unions under the control of the rank and file, and to link up and solidify our forces by becoming

amalgamated to the Transport and General Workers' Federation as soon as possible...placing ourselves in a position to fight organised capital on more equal terms."³²¹

Clearly, the dispute had taught well the nature of class relations in industrial society.

The general feeling among local railway workers was after the 1911 settlement one of profound disillusionment and distrust of the official executive of their Unions. In the context of a general rise in the temper of industrial and political militancy in the city, this attitude was to harden.³²² On December 14th 1911, it was reported that number six branch A.S.R.S. had called on the national executive to resign rejecting its advice to accept the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Enquiry.³²³

The strikes in the transport industry in the summer of 1912 were regionalised and failed to capture national support from railway workers. It has been suggested that this can be related to a general decline in the influence of industrial syndicalism. James Hinton has commented:

"Lacking any systematic doctrine and entirely dependent on the momentum of industrial militancy, the syndicalist movement grew with meteoric speed during the great strike movement of 1910-12 and fell just as fast in the year before the war"³²⁴

Certainly a general strike relying on the revolt and discontent developing among sections of organised workers did not occur. This is not to say, however, that there was not considerable unrest and a move in certain sectors towards direct industrial action which by-passed official union bureaucracy.³²⁵ In the end constitutional methods prevailed

and the politics of Socialist-Syndicalism were for the moment superseded by the dominant tactic of Labour politics. The rank and file movement in the railway industry was assuaged by the formation of the National Union of Railwayworkers in January 1913.³²⁶

In Sheffield, both within the transport unions and on the Trades and Labour Council, the 'forward movement' or Socialist-Syndicalist projection was carried by a strong contingent of railway workers. Local A.S.R.S. branches had supported the candidature of Joseph Pointer who was elected to Parliament in the Labour interest in 1909 but along with other sections of local working class politics, were becoming increasingly disillusioned with his performance in the House of Commons³²⁷ The issue of industrial militancy and state legislation was debated locally with regard to the usefulness of the Labour-Socialist tactic of Parliamentary representation. The support given by Joseph Pointer in Parliament to the idea of legislating against strike action provided the Socialist-Syndicalists with valuable evidence of what it considered to be the futility of reformism.

The idea of supporting any form of conciliation or arbitration in industrial relations was attacked by A.E. Chandler at a delegate meeting of the Trades and Labour Council in March 1912.³²⁸ At the same time the prosecution of Tom Mann and other leading syndicalists under the Incitement to Mutiny Act of 1797 released a flood of support from sympathisers within the Sheffield Labour movement. Prominent in this expression of support were the railway workers' unions.³²⁹ Once more, Labour M.P. Joseph Pointer was seen

to use his influence in opposing the syndicalist perspective.³³⁰
A.E.Chandler suggested that Pointer's view was "entirely out of harmony with the working class view of the matter." and he called for the Trades and Labour Council to formally disassociate itself from it. He underlined the point by comparing Pointer's political perspective to that of the Czar of Russia. The motion of censure was lost by 37 votes to 14.³³¹

The Railway Clerks Association, under the guidance of A.E.Chandler, sought to influence a change in the constitution of the Trades and Labour Council in the direction of a closer recognition of the links between industrial and political action. It was proposed that,

"All officers, including the executive, shall before taking office declare their intention of not accepting any paid permanent office under any public body, local or national, whilst the affairs of the country are managed by, and in the interests of, the employing classes."³³²

This reflected an anti-officialism which was an important element in the construction of a Socialist-Syndicalist politics. The motion was lost on a vote, but the debate marked the increasing influence of the personalities who, within the Council, were active critics of the Labour-Socialist strategy.³³³

Although the railway workers were granted a form of recognition as a result of the 1911 dispute, still grievances

persisted. These were frequently neglected or ignored by the official union executives who were anxious to avoid further disputes.³³⁴ In Sheffield, during the summer months of 1912, several A.S.R.S. branches pledged their support for the London Transport Workers' strike. In June, number six branch declared:

"We wish the Transport workers success in their efforts to uphold the principles of trade unionism and pledge ourselves to render every assistance in bringing the fight to a successful issue."³³⁵

Several protests were made by local branches about victimisation and increased discipline since the end of the dispute. In June number 6 branch protested at what it described as "the black-tie-craze" at the Midland passenger station where management was punishing workers for their general appearance. In July, Grimesthorpe A.S.R.S. repudiated the statements issued by the national executive "that there is no unrest among British Railwaymen. At Sheffield Midland Railway men are being treated as dogs and discharged."³³⁶ Heeley branch spoke of "Russianised methods adopted by officials" at the same station and declared:

"The time has come to make a definite stand and stop such tyranny"

They called on the executive to take immediate action to "terminate our present agreement" and initiate a move towards securing an eight hour day and minimum wage of thirty shillings per week for all railway workers.³³⁷

Although the strike action collapsed in London, Sheffield railway workers continued to call for increased militancy.³³⁸ As a means of effecting united local action a deputation of A.S.R.S. members visited Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. to discuss

ways of reconstituting the joint action achieved during the previous year.³³⁹

The formation of the N.U.R. in 1913 went some way to placate the syndicalist tendency amongst locally organised railway workers however it was maintained through the action and comment of individual activists. Early in 1913 number one branch A.S.R.S. declared that "Conciliation boards are expensive pieces of machinery and more direct action was justified."³⁴⁰ Charles Watkins elaborated on this supporting an alteration in trade union structure in the industry on the lines of the Shop Stewards' Movement in engineering. He said that Sheffield N.U.R.

"realise the need for a more expeditious and effective means for dealing with cases of tyranny and victimisation on our railways as they arise and recognising the importance of securing greater and more democratic control of our organisation and movement than has been possible hitherto, this branch favours the proposal of national and local vigilance committees ...one member from each branch...one central committee (or national council) to work in conjunction with the executive." ³⁴¹

When in September 1913, Irish transport workers struck work, support in Sheffield was significant. Traffic to and from Dublin was 'blackened' and street demonstrations were held.³⁴²

It is clear then that a crisis in control, combined with a break down in confidence with official trade union machinery and tactics, contributed to a politicisation among sections of the organised railway workers which, temporarily at least, realised a Socialist-Syndicalist perspective. Perhaps this is best illustrated in the anti-militarist

position taken up by the local district N.U.R. in the month immediately preceding the outbreak of war. Both Sheffield and Chesterfield districts protested against the build up of international enmity and called for workers to prepare their forces for offering the most determined resistance to any war.³⁴³

During the war the local railway unions, and particularly A.S.L.E.F., maintained a political perspective which, while falling short of industrial militancy, left the management and government in no doubt that a post-war struggle in the industry was imminent. The craft-consciousness of A.S.L.E.F. served to heighten their political stance not unlike the experience of the skilled engineers. Conscious of their precarious position in the industry and sensing the imminence of radical changes in the system of work and management, local members of A.S.L.E.F. were particularly anxious to influence as much as possible the changes affecting their future. Combined with a long-held discontent with the practice of conciliation the effect was to bring about, in the crisis of war, a forthright comment on matters affecting the industry and on wider aspects of social and political life.

The rising cost of living and the shortage of food during the war was a constant theme in the comment of local A.S.L.E.F. branches. This focused attention on the war-time bureaucracy, set up to facilitate the distribution of necessities. As these offices were in the main controlled and directed by local employers, the class dimension in social life was amplified.³⁴⁴ It was moved at an A.S.L.E.F. branch meeting

in January 1915:

"That in view of the alarming increase in the cost of living and for which no adequate reasons are forthcoming we urgently request the executive committee to end the terms of truce made with the Railway General Managers Committee and to at once present our programme as decided at the 1914 annual conference and complete the new scheme of conciliation. And further that the whole of our branches be called upon to hold meetings with a view to ascertaining their feelings in regard to extreme action being taken."

The resolution was carried.³⁴⁵

In the following year the commentary of Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. on the same theme reflects a developing class consciousness. The national executive was critical of the perspective of Sheffield railway workers who suggested:

"There are thousands of working men and women who are suffering through inflated prices of food, fuel and other necessities of life, who are not receiving the benefits of increased wages."

and went on, on behalf of the working class in Sheffield, to refuse

"to be charged excessively for goods in order to create capital for shipping companies to build new tonnage after the war...the burden of taxation has fallen heaviest on the working classes owing to the 'Rich' passing on the burden thus placing practically one whole of taxation on to labour, either directly or indirectly."³⁴⁶

The issue of food scarcity and rationing had the effect of broadening the perspective of working class politics from the confines of the work place. There were increasing signs

of adversity as queues of women waiting for provisions became a common feature of life. Chandler, of the Railway Clerks Association, referred to this in terms of the sexual division of labour. This silent exploitation would continue unless its place in relation to the production of goods and profit was underlined. He suggested that to do this the men should take the place of their wives and mothers in the food queues on one or two days each week. This would cause much industrial upset and would effect a change in the basis of food distribution.³⁴⁷

Already subject to a strict regime of work discipline the railway workers were particularly suspicious of moves to increase the control of management through the extension of conscription to include industry.³⁴⁸ As in the 'heavy' industrial sector, this resistance contributed to a politicisation of work experience among sections of the workforce anxious to prevent the erosion of their craft status.³⁴⁹ This was expressed in local and national terms. On the one hand, there was a move towards supporting a parliamentary levy and on the other, a secession from the Lib-Lab Sheffield Federated Trades Council in favour of the Socialist-Syndicalist led Trades and Labour Council. As Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. explained:

"We are of the opinion that without political as well as trade union action, democracy cannot hope to overcome the forces arrayed against them."³⁵⁰

Again, as in the 'heavy' industrial sector, de-skilling, or the threat of it, in the extraordinary conditions of war time, was a very important factor in the political interpretation of industrial experience. Women were

employed on the railways during the war, not merely in clerical work. Of the railway workers' unions only the Railway Clerks Association welcomed women into its organisation, recognising the particular challenge this posed to trade unionism.³⁵¹ This reflected the Socialist-Syndicalist perspective of the local R.C.A. leadership. The N.U.R. was not so courageous considering women's employment to be a temporary phenomenon and taking a narrower perspective than the R.C.A. on the relationship between work and social experience. The craft-conscious membership of A.S.L.E.F, although able to transcend their inherent conservatism on other issues, were unable to do so on the question of women's work. They complained bitterly about women's employment as shunters and on signal work and "rumours being current that they are about to be placed on the footplates" they requested the executive to take action to prevent this. It was suggested that women working alongside A.S.L.E.F. railwaymen would "tend to demoralise our men in addition to placing more work and responsibility on them."³⁵² This reflected some of the major concerns of pre-war years; the vindictiveness of management, the destruction of their skilled status and increased work load. This inability to transcend their defensiveness indicated a decline in confidence of their own sectional trade union strategy.

As a consequence of its war time experience, Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. came to re-consider its basis of organisation and tactics in view of the impending conflict with the Companies. The branch forwarded the following motion at the annual

conference of the Society in 1918:

"That the conference is of the opinion that the time has arrived in view of the fact of closer combination of employers and the consequent consolidation of the British Trade Union Movement, when steps should be taken to open up negotiations with the N.U.R. for all Loco men to be in one union which would give departmental management and autonomy for our fraternity to manage our own affairs."³⁵³

During 1918 and the closing months of the war the messages of discontent and calls for industrial action from Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. increased. The issues specified reduction in hours, increased wages and holidays with pay. By September, the executive was being urged to give the Railway Companies and the government six weeks notice before pressing forward with the National Programme. In December Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. was suggesting that the notice should be reduced to only twenty-four hours.³⁵⁴

Consistent pressure on the national officials to desist from its lengthy negotiations and call a national stoppage stretched into the first months of peace. New branches of A.S.L.E.F. were formed at Millhouses and at Grimesthorpe.³⁵⁵ The threat of a new war against Soviet Russia provoked further protests from local branches who suggested there should be a "down tools policy" in the case of any British mobilisation.³⁵⁶ Rank and file resentment was displayed as no official recognition was forthcoming of local protests about troop movements to strike areas and continued conscription. Addresses by members of the Sheffield Workers' Committee may have encouraged this as well as increasing incidence of industrial militancy in

general.³⁵⁷ The support of the local Socialist-Syndicalist movement was evident in the 1919 national railway strike. The Railway Clerks Association supported the N.U.R. and A.S.L.E.F. in Sheffield in un-official action.³⁵⁸ The strike was also supported by the Trades and Labour Council which viewed the dispute as crucial to Labour's long-term interests:

This Council considers that the present rail strike is the result of an attack by the government on Trade Unionism and realising that the transport industry is the one industry which perhaps unwittingly assists the government to defeat the workers, we urge upon the Transport Federation to immediately withdraw the labour of the members of the affiliated organisations."

The motion was carried, unanimously.³⁵⁹

During the 1919 dispute, and after, Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. maintained its strong identification with Socialist-Syndicalist politics. In particular it maintained its suspicion of official procedures and personalities. It demanded that the national executive consult local membership over the details of any negotiated settlement:

"We refuse to recognise any alterations in working locally which may be arranged under the new method of procedure unless such alterations have been laid before this branch."³⁶⁰

On the question of nationalisation which was subject to debate across the Labour-Socialist movement as a whole, Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. was quick to point out its desire that any such move should be directed by the working class and not by any mediator. This point of view was extended to the proposed nationalisation of other industries. A.S.L.E.F. threatened to "down tools" to ensure that in any nationalisation

of the mining industry, "a miners' and consumers' association" take over control.³⁶¹

The National Programme, which called for the standardization of conditions for all grades and the introduction of the eight hour day, continued to fire rank and file spirit against supposed official union slackening. In April 1920 the local A.S.L.E.F. membership called for the "resignation en block" of the national executive, "making way for other men who are more alive to what our members desire...and carry the members' wishes out without imagining they know better than the members what they require."³⁶²

iii Trade Union Representation: The Sheffield Federated Trades Council and the Trades and Labour Council

The three political perspectives in industrial organisation, which it has been found useful to identify in the period 1900-1920, were reflected in the history of the Trades Council movement. The Sheffield Federated Trades Council had its origins in the 1850s when local trades societies, principally those in the 'light' trades, associated to protect and further each others' interests. It was led by the secretaries of the unions in the 'light' trades who were by the last quarter of the nineteenth century under pressure from the Liberal Party for their political allegiance. These secretaries were among the first working class representatives elected to the City Council. The development of independent labour and socialist politics with its roots in the city's 'heavy' industrial sector increasingly came to challenge the politics of the S.F.T.C.³⁶³

To an extent this was a split across two generations. The

'light' trades were led by an ageing executive. As Tom Shaw, secretary of the Scissor Makers' Union, observed in 1902:

"At a meeting of cutlers, only old (are) to be seen, at engineers', chiefly young."³⁶⁴

After the formation of the Labour Representative Committee in 1903 and the candidature of the first independent labour and socialist candidates at the municipal elections in 1905, the relationship between the Lib-Lab and Labour-Socialist personalities and perspectives within the S.F.T.C. became even more strained. In December 1906, the S.F.T.C. cut its ties with the L.R.C. relinquishing its political role to that body. There followed trade union withdrawals from the S.F.T.C. and continued antagonism between the polarized factions resulted in the final split between the two bodies in June 1908 when the L.R.C. formed itself into the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council with both political and industrial functions. This body came to represent the industrial base of the Labour-Socialist perspective in local working class politics until the two Councils were reunited in 1920.³⁶⁵

The industrial base of Socialist-Syndicalism came to dominate the executive of the Trades and Labour Council after 1912 and this was sustained during the war years. An initiative to revise the constitution of the Council in the direction preferred by the Socialist-Syndicalists failed but marked the emergence of this group within the Council's leadership.³⁶⁶ During the war, this group came to dominate the executive and influenced the politics of the Trades and Labour Council towards extra-parliamentary activity in the political and rank and file activity in the industrial fields.

Immediately after the war the two councils were reunited after frequent abortive attempts. This move, always favoured by the Labour-Socialist element, represented the domination of that perspective in 'normal' peace-time conditions and the supersession of the Socialist-Syndicalist tactic by a reformist and predominantly Fabian Labour movement.³⁶⁷

After the establishment of the Trades and Labour Council in 1908 some trade unions saw the value of affiliating to both Trades Councils. There was certainly a conflict of interests between the membership and leadership of the 'old' and 'new' industries which underlay the political manouvre which set up the second Council but it was not such a clear-cut division as historians have later described it.³⁶⁸

Before the official 'split' in the local trade union movement, several societies had already seceded from the S.F.T.C.. These were the Builders' Labourers in 1905; this organisation went on to affiliate to the Labour Representation and Trades Council as the Building Trades Federation. The Boilermakers and Ironship Builders seceded in 1905, affiliated briefly to the L.R.C.&T.C. before amalgamating with the kindred trades. The Coremakers' Society seceded in 1903 and affiliated to the new organisation two years later. The Table and Butcher Blade Grinders quit the S.F.T.C. in 1904, went out of union briefly until 1907 and was among the first of the cutlery societies to affiliate to the N.A.U.L. in 1913. The Wire drawers Union seceded in 1905 after succeeding in resisting the introduction of 'team work' and the extension of semi-skilled labour into the trade. The Tramway Workers' Union left in 1905 and transferred allegiance to the L.R.C.

in the following year³⁶⁹ The Tramway Workers' Union leader, H. Stockton, initiated the move to amend the constitution of the Labour Representation Committee in 1908 which eventually led to the 'split'.³⁷⁰ Five local branches of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers left the S.F.T.C. between 1898 and 1907 although two branches maintained a dual affiliation.³⁷¹

It is notable that the fore-runners of the political move against affiliation to the S.F.T.C. were distinguished not primarily by their belonging to the staple trades as much as their tendency towards amalgamation, federation and resistance to the introduction of new technology.

The unions which transferred directly from the 'old' Trades Council to the 'new' included the Cabinet Makers, whose local secretary, Tom Ring, was a prominent Socialist-Syndicalist and advocate of Industrial Unionism. The National Amalgamated Society of Enginemen, Cranemen, Boilermen, Firemen and Electrical Workers; the Steam Engine Makers; the Amalgamated Tool Makers and Machinists; and the Friendly Society of Ironfounders were in this category.³⁷² The secretary of the latter, J. Jeavons, who was a member of the Sheffield Independent Labour Party, explained that the society had seceded from the S.F.T.C. because;

"it was useless in present circumstances in National Engineering Trades who were bound down by agreements and joint boards with employers, and (the S.F.T.C.) thought the industrial side could be left alone, if the political was well attended to." ³⁷³

Jeavons was referring to the parochialism of the S.F.T.C. in its preference for localised agreements with individual employers.

Some unions of the 'light' trades affiliated to both Trades Councils after 1908. Others made distinct choices. In 1903, the File Forgers' Union voted to affiliate to the Sheffield Labour Representation Committee immediately it was set up, "to further the Labour cause in Parliament."³⁷⁴ In 1909, the Silversmiths decided to leave the S.F.T.C. in preference for the new body.³⁷⁵ Several of the 'light' trade societies affiliated to the L.R.C. when it was established but only left the S.F.T.C. after the official 'split'. These were the Coachmakers, led by prominent Lib-Lab, Tom Marker; the Edge tool Forgers; Silver Finishers: Spoon and Fork Filers; Associated Society of Tailors; Table and Butcher Blade Hafters; Joiners; Haft and Scale Pressers and Cutters. All of these societies were sympathetic to the Lib-Lab political perspective.³⁷

The transport workers were to the fore in the creation of the local L.R.C. and Trades Council. The Tramway Workers' Union affiliated to the T.&.L.C. after 1908. A.S.L.E.F. remained affiliated to the S.F.T.C. until the war. During the war a distinct political re-orientation occurred in the political perspective of Sheffield A.S.L.E.F. and this was underlined by a change in affiliation when the society affiliated to the Trades and Labour Council.³⁷⁷

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57. Lloyd, *op cit.* p. 319.
58. see below, pp. 28-37.
59. First enacted August 1914, and strengthened during the war.
Made strikes illegal and gave the government increased powers
of censorship.
60. see below, pp.153-154.
61. S.I. 16.10.15; 26.10.15; 27.10.16
62. S.I. 16.10.15. For further discussion of the impact of
the Government Contract on local industrial relations,
see below, pp. 133-136.
63. S.I. 16.10.15.
64. S.I. 29.10.15.
65. see above, p.p.17-18.; Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, 6.6.16.
66. S.D.T 27.11.16.
67. see below, pp.28-37.
68. S.I. 2.10.09. W.H.Bolton, Secretary of the Sheffield Cutlery
Trades Technical Society, an employers' organisation.
69. S.I. 2.10.09.
70. *ibid.*
71. An estimated 85% of all Moulders in the United Kingdom
were organised in the Friendly Society of Ironfounders.
Sheffield was the national centre of the trade. S.I. 23.9.19.

72. S.I. 23.9.19.
73. Mainly apprenticed workers organised in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Iron and Steel Manufacture, Engineering and Boilermaking are among the industries identified as containing a relatively high proportion of Labour Aristocrats. E.J.Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (London) 1964, fifth edition, p. 286.
74. S.I. 10.8.97. Some firms were able to employ only non-union labour, before 1900. This was the practice at Firth's Steel Works.
75. S.I. 29.10.97.
76. S.I. 29.10.97. Reply to the Board of Trade.
77. S.D.T 16.10.97.
78. R.O.Clarke, 'The Dispute in the British Engineering Industry 1897-98: An Evaluation' in Economica May 1957.
see also S.Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement (London) 1977 (first published 1932) p.142.
79. Sheffield Federated Trades Council, Annual Report (Sheffield) 1897-98.
80. Sheffield Guardian (Sheffield) Weekly journal of the Sheffield Independent Labour Party, published 1906-16.
S.G. 17.5.08.
81. The Socialist (Edinburgh). Journal of the Socialist Labour Party. June 1906.
82. For further discussion of this relationship, see below, pp. 128-159.
83. see below, pp 48-53; 59-60
84. The Worker (Sheffield), Journal of the Sheffield Workers Committee. Sept 1919.
85. Lloyd, op cit. pp. 284-287.
86. The Hammer, Organ of Reform, 10.2.94.
87. see above pp. 13-20.

88. Pollard, op cit. p.71.
89. S.I. 2.2.06.
90. Lloyd, op cit. p. 318
91. An estimated 3,000 out of a total of 15,000 employed.
S.G. 26.4.07.
92. Lloyd, op cit. pp. 191-198.
93. see below p.154
94. Lloyd, op cit. p.198.
95. Women's Industrial Council, Survey of Married Women Workers
in Sheffield. 1909.(S.C.L.)
96. For discussion of this aspect of dominant ideology, see
below, pp. 193-199.
97. see above, p.p.13-17;18-19
see below, p.34.
98. see above, pp.13-17.
99. Pollard, op cit. p.218.
100. ibid. For Uttley, see ref.56.
101. S.G. 26.7.07.
102. ibid.
103. This body included women among its membership. It was
joined by the hand-file forgers and hardeners in 1917;
the file workers, in 1918. By 1920, it has a local
membership of 2,000. Pollard, op cit. p. 296.
104. Pollard, op cit. p. 219. It represented fifteen local
societies in 1908.
105. S.G. 26.04.07. TULIPS was a derogatory term used by
the Labour Party to describe Lib-Lab candidates at the
Municipal elections, who distinguished themselves as
Trade Unionist Labour Party representatives.
106. A.J.Bailey. Sec. local branch N.A.U.L. City Councillor,
Darnall, Lib. 1904. Narrowly beat Pointer, Lab. 1907.
Main spokesman for the Lib-Labs in the move to unite Trades
Councils. Alderman, 1923. Lord Mayor, 1924. Died, 1948.

107. Minutes of the Table and Butcher Blade Grinders Society.
(S.C.L.) Microfilm A112. Especially 25.9.07; 4.4.10;
25.10.11.
see also Lloyd, op cit. p.292.
108. S.G.19.9.13. The last price list had been agreed in 1859.
Minutes of T.&.B.B.G. 26.10.10.
109. ibid. 10.9.13.
110. ibid. and S.G. 12.9.13.
111. S.G.12.9.13. It was noted that Charles Hobson, of the
Brittania Metal Workers Union, and Lib-Lab City Councillor
supported the scheme.
112. Pollard, op cit. p. 220.
113. Lloyd, op cit. pp. 299-310; Pollard, op.cit. p.220.
114. Pollard, op cit. p. 298.
115. The Metal Worker op cit. March 1909.
116. Hinton, J. The First Shop Stewards' Movement (London)1973.
p.170.
117. Pollard, op.cit. p.84.
118. ibid. p. 174.
119. Amalgamated Society of Engineers Year Book, Minutes and
Quarterly Reports. (London) 1896. Head Office A.U.E.W.,
Peckham Rd. London.
120. A.S.E.Journal (London) January 1897.
121. S.I. 12.8.97.
122. ibid. 10.8.97.
123. ibid. 11.10.97.
124. ibid. 4.9.97.
125. ibid. 3.9.97; 4.9.97; 11.9.97.
126. Fred Maddison. J.Saville and J.M.Bellamy, Dictionary of
Labour Biography, Five Vols. (London) 1976.
Vol. 1. pp.119-122.

- 127 S.I.3.9.97;
128. ibid. 13.12.97.
129. S.G. 19.10.06.
130. ibid. 15.2.07.
131. ibid.
132. For the Shop Stewards' Movement in Sheffield, see Hinton,J.
op cit. and below, pp. 47-53; 249-250.
133. S.G. 11.2.07.; S.I.20.3.07.
134. S.I. 20.3.07.
135. ibid. 22.11.07.
136. S.G.30.8.07.
137. ibid.
138. S.I.22.11.07.
139. For Joseph Pointer, see below pp. 183;239-241;252-257;298-299.
140. S.I.28.3.09.
141. Challinor, R. The Origins of British Bolshevism (London) 1977
pp. 82-83.
142. On April 17th 1914, a special conference had been held in
London between the Employers' Federation and the A.S.E.
national executive where the unions were asked to support
negotiations to bring about a renewed agreement.
S.G. 7.8.14.
143. Ted Lismer. See Hinton, op cit. p.173,note 2.
144. S.G. January 1915.
145. S.G.5.2.15.
146. ibid.
147. S.D.T. 1.3.15.
148. Hinton, op. cit. p. 176.
149. S.I. 8.3.16.

150. Pollard, op. cit. p.271. This was the result of the introduction of the General Substitution Scheme in September 1916.
151. Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Minutes of meetings August and September 1916. (S.C.L.)
152. Hinton, op cit. p. 176.
153. James T.Murphy. For Murphy, see J.Hinton, Preparing For Power, introduction. (First published, London 1934) New edition, 1972. pp. 11-16.
- Hinton, op. cit. pp.172-174.
- L.J.Macfarlane, The British Communist Party (London) 1966 pp. 28-29.
154. For a detailed discussion of the Workers Committee, see Hinton, op. cit. pp. 162-177.
155. A.Lockwood. Loose, unsorted papers of Arnold Freeman, Sheffield University Archives.
156. Murphy, The Workers Committee (Sheffield) 1917.
157. Hinton, op. cit. chapter 7.
158. ibid, pp. -207-208.
159. S.I. 20.5.17.
160. Hinton, op. cit. pp.210-211.
161. A.E.Chandler. Secretary of Sheffield branch Railway Clerks Association. President of Trades and Labour Council (1916-1918) Chandler was the principal spokesman for Socialist-Syndicalism in the Trades and Labour Council. Instructed to leave city, 1918, by military authority. between 1909 and 1918. V.Pres 1910-1911, resigned over T&LC opposition to Barton, as Parl and Mun candidate.
162. Trades and Labour Council, Executive meeting 4.12.17; delegate meeting 28.12.17.
163. Hinton, op. cit. pp. 246-247.
164. For a discussion on this aspect of the dominant ideology, see below, pp. 128-133.

165. Pollard, op. cit. p.170
166. ibid.p.223.
167. ibid.
168. ibid.
169. ibid. p.174. A Closed Shop was established in some firms as early as 1853.
170. S.I.9.10.06.
171. ibid. 19.10.97.
172. ibid. 9.10.06.
173. ibid.
174. ibid.
175. S.I.19.1.11.
176. ibid.
177. Pollard, op cit. p.237.
178. Minutes of the Trades and Labour Council, 12.3.12.
179. S.I. 19.1.11.
180. Pollard, op cit. p. 232.
181. Minutes of the Trades and Labour Council, 29.7.13.
182. The Friendly Society of Ironfounders had declared a Closed Shop at Edgar Allen's Steel Works in 1907. S.I.9.11.07.
183. Minutes of the Trades and Labour Council, 29.7.13.
184. Pollard, op. cit. p.236.
185. ibid.
186. S.I.23.9.19.
187. S.D.T. 18.12.16.
188. S.I. 23.9.19.
189. ibid.
190. Hinton, op. cit. p.170.
191. Pollard, op. cit. p. 234.

192. see below, p.66.
193. Andrew Hall. A labourer from Chesterfield; secretary of local General Labourers Union; regular socialist speaker. Wilson MS. Collection. M.D. 5955: 25.10.90. S.Rowbotham and J.Weeks, Socialism and the New Life (London) 1977. p.63.
194. Jonathan Taylor. Obit. notice, S.G.11.11.10. Who's Who in Sheffield (Sheffield) 1902. p.56. (1905) p.74. S.D.T.8.11.06. S.G.27.7.06; 26.10.06.
195. Pollard, op cit. p.234; S.G.5.7.07.
196. S.G.April 1914.
197. Hinton, op cit. p.245.
198. S.G.5.10.06.
199. ibid. 8.5.08.
200. R.G.Murray. Attercliffe I.L.P.; organiser Gas Workers and General Labourers Union (Laundry proprietor). First elected City Councilor as a Labour representative, Brightside, 1905. Chairman Sheff. I.L.P. 1907-9. Stood as Socialist, Parl.elec 1918, Central. Founder member Sheff.Communist Party. Principal spokesman for the 'One Big Union'- 1920's.
201. For Barton, see below, p.267.
202. S.G. 29.2.10.
203. Pollard, op cit. p.231.
204. For Bailey, see above, p.115. S.I.11.9.97.
205. Pollard, op cit. 231.
206. S.G.1.3.07.
207. S.G.19.7.07.
208. S.G.1.11.12.
209. ibid.
210. Trades and Labour Council, Minutes. L.D.1625-1637. 14.5.18.
211. ibid. 15.1.18.
212. Hinton, op cit. p.247.
213. S.I.19.1.18.

214. see below, p.196.
215. The organisations principally involved were the Women's Co-operative Guild and the Women's Labour League.
216. see below, p.264;292-294.
217. Newspaper Cuttings relating to Sheffield (S.C.L.) Vol. 12. p.3.
218. Royal Commission of Enquiry on Labour, 1890-1892. Evidence of J.Taylor, Q.23,648; H.J.Wilson, Q. 23,600.
219. see above, p. 22.
220. Lloyd, op cit Chapter 7.
221. S.G. 11.12.08.
222. ibid. 5.8.10.
223. ibid.
224. S.G. 11.9.10.
225. S.G. 5.8.10.
226. Edith Airey, obit notice Sheffield Forward Sept. 1949 (Mrs Birch). S.G. 16.9.10.
227. S.G. 25.10.10.
228. Minutes of the Trades and Labour Council, 26.7.12.
229. S.G. 3.5.12.
230. The National Insurance Bill, passed in 1911, considered that, "Married women living with their husbands need not be included since where the unit is the family, it is the husband's, not the wife's health which it is important to insure." quoted in Fraser, D. The Evolution of the British Welfare State (Leicester) 1976. p.155
231. S.G. 7.6.12.
232. ibid 24.5.12.
233. Minutes of the Trades and Labour Council, 26.7.12.
234. S.G. 26.6.13.
235. ibid. 3.5.12.

236. S.G. 24.1.13. Wages for laundry work, for a 65 hour week were between 3 shillings and 13 shillings, according to age. Table ironers could earn 3/6d. per day.
237. Minutes of the Trades and Labour Council, 21.11.13. Average wages for women workers in spice factories were around 5 shillings for 6 days; overlookers could earn 9 shillings after 21 years service.
238. *ibid.*
239. S.G. 24.7.14; 8.5.14.
240. Trades and Labour Council, 18.11.13.
241. S.G. 21.11.13.
242. Eleanor Barton, Married Women in Paid Positions: A Plea For Solidarity Amongst the Workers. (W.C.G. Manchester) 1920.
243. *ibid.* p. 10
244. S.G. 11.9.14.
245. see below, p.75
246. S.G. 21.5.15.
247. *ibid.*
248. *ibid.*
249. S.G. 23.7.15.
250. *ibid.*
251. *ibid.*
252. S.G. 2.7.15.
253. *ibid.*
254. Trades and Labour Council, 30.11.15.
255. S.G. 19.2.15.
256. *ibid.* 13.8.15.
257. S.G. 23.7.15.; S.D.T. 31.7.16.
258. S.G. 23.7.15.
259. S.D.T. 25.8.16.; 23.8.16.

260. The Sheffield District Women's Interests Association met at 30, Campo Lane. Secretary, Miss Hilston.
261. S.D.T. 23.8.16.
262. *ibid.* 30.9.16. Women Crane Drivers were introduced at Cammells Works.
263. H.A.L.Fisher, industrialist; City Council(Conservative) 1895-98; 1901-4. First Minister of Education, 1919. Sheffield and District Who's Who 1905, p.114.
264. S.I. 4.9.16.
265. *ibid.*
266. Trades and Labour Council, annual meeting, 11.7.16.
267. Pollard, *op. cit.* p. 271.
268. Bagwell, P.S. The Railwaymen (London) 1963.
269. *ibid.* p. 95.
270. *ibid* p.262
271. *ibid.* p. 187-188.
272. H.Pelling and F.W.Bealey, Labour and Politics, 1900-1906 1958.
273. S.G.3.10.07. District membership totaled 1,500 in October.
274. *ibid.* 27.9.07.
275. *ibid.* 24.8.06; 13.12.07.
276. Bagwell, *op cit.* p.280
277. S.G. August and September 1907.
278. *ibid.* 30.8.07.
279. *ibid.* 12.5.07.
280. Edward Carpenter(1844-1929) Main source, Carpenter Coll. Papers, S.C.L. Saville and Bellamy, *op cit.* Vol 2. pp.85-92
281. S.G.27.9.07.
282. *ibid.*
283. Royal Commission of Enquiry on Railway Conciliation, 1907. Q7399 f.

284. S.G. 15.11.07.
285. *ibid*: Sheffield Railway Clerks Association forwarded a motion in favour of nationalisation at the Association annual conference, in 1910. S.G.3.6.10.
286. S.G. 3.9.09; 1.10.09.
287. *ibid*. 3.9.09; 1.10.09.
288. Trades and Labour Council, delegate meeting, 21.5.09.
289. Minutes of Associated Society of Locomotive Enginemen and Firemen, Sheffield Branch. (S.C.L.) 1.b. 8.3.08.
290. *ibid*. 8.11.09.
291. Trades and Labour Council, delegate meeting 28.2.11.
292. quoted in Holton, B. British Syndicalism 1900-1914 (London) 1976. pp. 106-107.
293. For Chandler, see above, ref 161
The Syndicalist (London) monthly journal of the Industrial Syndicalist Education League. 3.6.1910.
294. Holton, *op cit*. pp 89-110.
295. Sheffield Local Register. 23.4.11.
296. S.G. 18.8.11
297. Trades and Labour Council, delegate meeting 21.5.09.
298. The strike was made official on August 6th.
299. Account of the strike in S.G. August 1911.
300. Traditionally, management relied on office labour to break strikes in the railway industry. Bagwell, *op cit*. p 297.
301. Holton, *op cit*. pp. 100 and 104.
302. Women buffers joined the picket line outside the Midland Railway station during their lunch breaks. S.I. 18.8.11.
303. A.S.L.E.F. branch minutes, *op cit*. 23.4.11;
S.D.T. 25.3.10.
304. S.G. 22.11.07.

305. ibid.
306. S.G. August 1911.
307. For Fletcher, see below, p.267.
308. Leeds Mercury 17.8.11.
309. S.Y.B. 1912. pp. 405-407.
310. Trades and Labour Council, delegate meeting 28.11.11.
311. S.I. 23.8.11.
312. S.G. 3.11.11.
313. The Railwaymen, edited by Tom Mann, October 1911.
S.G. 13.10.11; 13.10.11.
314. ibid
315. These included Charles Watkins, J.O'Brien and A.E.Chandler.
see below, p.317. and above, p.118.
316. S.G. 125.06.
317. Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, 21.8.11.
318. Trades and Labour Council, delegate meeting, 28.11.11.
319. ibid.
320. S.G. 15.12.11.
321. ibid.
322. There were disputes in a number of sectors in the city during 1911 and 1912, including miners, foundry workers, workers in the cutlery trades.
323. S.I. 14.12.11;
324. Hinton, op cit. p. 278.
325. Holton, op cit. p. 33.
326. Bagwell op cit. p. 309-343.
327. see below, p. 252-257
328. Trades and Labour Council, delegate meeting 19.3.12.
329. Holton, op cit. p.115; S.G. March and April.

330. Trades and Labour Council, 21.5.12.
331. *ibid.*
332. Trades and Labour Council, *op cit.* del.21.5.12.
333. *ibid.*
334. Holton, *op cit.* pp.108-110
335. S.G. 14.6.12.
336. *ibid* 12.7.12.
337. *ibid*: a minimum wage of 30/- a week for all railway workers was demanded and an eight hour day.
338. S.G. 13.12.12.
339. A.S.L.E.F. branch minutes, *op cit.* 8.12.12.
340. S.G. 22.8.13.
341. *ibid* 28.3.13.
342. S.G. 5.10.13. demonstration of support. 10.10.13. Women's demonstration.
343. *ibid.* 7.8.14.
344. A.S.L.E.F demanded working class representation on these committees, branch minutes 3.3.18.
345. *ibid.* 13.1.15. see also 24.2.18; 3.3.18.
346. *ibid.* 30.7.16. The branch demanded free taxation for workers earning less than £250 per year, 20.7.19.
347. Trades and Labour Council, executive meeting, 4.12.17.
348. A.S.L.E.F. minutes, *op cit.* 28.11.15; 12.12.15.
349. *ibid.* 13.1.18; 5.5.18.
350. *ibid.* 16.12.17. Sheffield N.U.R. was already affiliated to the Trades and Labour Council.
351. S.G. 2.7.15.
352. A.S.L.E.F. minutes, *op cit.* 12.11.16.
353. *ibid.* 16.12.17.

354. *ibid.* 13.1.18; 19.5.18; 21.7.18.
355. *ibid.* 16.3.19; 15.6.19.
356. *ibid.* 23.7.19; 16.8.19. For the local anti-war movement, see below, p. 308-315.
357. *ibid.* 31.8.19. Meeting addressed by J.T. Murphy.
358. Interview with retired A.S.L.E.F. members, in author's possession. 25.2.80.
359. Trades and Labour Council, delegate meeting. 30.9.19.
360. A.S.L.E.F. minutes, *op cit.* 21.9.19.
361. *ibid.* 18.1.20.
362. *ibid.* 18.4.20.
363. Mendelson, Pollard, Owen and Thornes, *op cit.*
364. Women's Co-operative Guild Survey of the Crofts area of Sheffield, January 1902. (Microfilm, M/S. S.C.L.) interview with Tom Shaw, p. 20.
365. see below, pp. 251-261.
366. Chandler, Trades and Labour Council, 21.5.12. Chandler stood in election for vice-president at this meeting.
367. see below, p. 251-261.
368. Pollard, *op cit.* p. 199. "Broadly the rump of the old S.F.T.C. combined most of the societies of the old staple trades, together with the labourers unions, while the Trades and Labour Council included the remainder."
369. Sheffield Federated Trades Council, Annual Reports, 1898-1907.
370. Labour Representation Committee, LD.1625. S.G. 28.2.08; 19.6.08
371. S.F.T.C. Annual Reports, *op cit.*
372. The Industrial Unionist, monthly paper of the British Advocates of Industrial Unionism. Articles by Tom Ring, 1.6.08; S.G. 3.9.09; 1.10.09; 21.5.09; 9.9.10; 27.5.10.
373. S.G. 27.7.03.
374. S.G. 27.7.03
375. *ibid.* 23.3.09.
376. see above p. 13-23.
377. S.G. 9.12.17.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORGANISATION OF POWER AND CONTROL IN SHEFFIELD SOCIETY

The period in which it is possible to talk of a re-birth in socialist and labour politics was one of structural crisis which challenged the organisation of power and control at all levels of society.¹ From a position of authority, the most powerful classes in society had, at this time, to bring about alterations and adjustments in line with changed and changing conditions in economic, social and political life. It was essential for the continuation of capitalism that the industrialist / politician should dictate the points of reference around which popular political discourse might take place. The key to the success of such a strategy was first, in the social construction of 'normality'; the legitimation of certain behaviour and the influence of a 'climate of opinion'. Secondly, this was achieved through the fragmentation of working class identity by defining certain elements and traits as legitimate and others as subversive. A crucial factor here was the definition of the relationship between the areas of work, politics and culture.

In spite of the development of the first state welfare provision at this time, this process of readjustment and containment was, in Sheffield at least, viewed very much as a local struggle. It will be suggested that the means by which it was found possible to reproduce "the Capitalist as Capitalist, and the

wage labourer as wage labourer at the ideological as well as the economic level" ² depended greatly on the immediate social and political relations effected in Sheffield at this time. One means of locating this is through the rejection, by the local ruling class, of state interference particularly through legislation.

In this study of working class politics in Sheffield between 1900 and 1920, the aim has been to show how diverse and various the strategies adopted by the socialist and labour movement were. It seeks to understand the means by which class consciousness developed within the working class as a whole and how this process was contained, limited and fragmented. The development of working class politics and consciousness did not take place in a vacuum. Its character and nature was related not only to its own history and tradition but also to the particular historical conditions in which it existed. The rise of organised working class politics in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century was first and foremost a challenge to the organisation and distribution of power in society. This challenge was met, with urgency, by a ruling class anxious to retain and develop its position of authority, in radically altered circumstances. Its ability to deflect and contain the challenge of labour is an obvious factor in the development of working class politics at this time.

It was not the case that a pure, unadulterated socialist state, or set of relationships, existed within the ranks of labour only to be thwarted by capitalist containment. What

did emerge from the labour and socialist movement was as much dependent on capitalist relations of power in society as they operated as it was on its own experience, traditions and political theory. It was impossible to create conditions for the development of class consciousness and socialist production, distribution and communication within a vacuum. That space, in which the dominant ideology flourished, did not remain as a constant over the years during which the labour movement developed. The changes in response to the challenge of labour are examined in this section.

From the examination of the nature of the dominant ideology in Sheffield at this time, and of its operation, it has become clear that there were three related crucial areas of struggle. These were the definition and operation of Class, Imperialism and Patriarchy. Since the ruling class in Sheffield, as elsewhere, were able, through their control of the major channels of communication, to lay the ground for debate, the labour movement, to a large extent, was forced to comment or act at the level already set.

In proclaiming itself 'independent' of the two major political parties, the Independent Labour Party was, in 1893, setting a precedent which was maintained by the more 'successful' sections of organised labour in this period. This was an acceptance of the form of party politics, parliamentary democracy and much of the content of debate. It was accepted that through the adoption of such a strategy socialism would be achieved by means of persuasion. This has been described as the Labour-Socialist tactic in this study.

It is clear from an analysis of differing forms of working class challenge at this time that such a strategy received greater legitimation from the ruling classes; those individuals and organisations to whom the community looked for evaluation. Strategies which attempted to reject this legitimation as false and illusory were the least 'successful' in terms set out by the ruling classes, and therefore in terms of gaining power. The power and authority of the governing ideology in its containment of popular protest is examined here through the activity of an industrial and political elite whose composition cut across party lines. The manouvres of this group in Sheffield's industrial, political and social life are in themselves a useful measure of the labour and socialist challenge. The areas of struggle and contention are seen more clearly through an examination of the assertion of authority at certain vital points of antagonism and vulnerability.

The maintenance of control by the local ruling elite can be examined through the activity and comment of a group of individuals who appear to have been the most consistent arbiters of public opinion. Essentially a patriarchy, these 'City Fathers' were valuable in their pronouncements in ideological, religious, philosophical, political and juridical discourse. They were also among the leading group of industrialists and major employers of labour. For this purpose, they were prominent figures on the local, and sometimes national, Chamber of Commerce, the Cutlers' Company,

local Freemasonry lodges and Manufacturers' Associations. At the same time, as individuals, they took a very active interest in social and cultural life in the city by influencing communication through the press and the churches and also by dictating financially and academically the form and content of education at all levels. Leisure and recreational pursuits were legitimated by this group as were degrees of respectability, decency and efficiency.

The chapter is divided into sections which deal with the three primary spheres of experience, the work place, party politics and community and social life. The comments and activities of these men are included within the text and additional biographical material is attached.³ It is interesting to note from these biographies that a considerable proportion of the total were from the same generation. Several influential figures in local industrial and political life died in this period and it is questionable whether their place and particular role, was taken in quite the same way after their demise.

2. i The Industrial Organisation of Control

During this period a close working arrangement between the local elite and the state was being forged through increasing reliance on government contracts and state legislation. However, it was recognised that state interference in certain areas of industrial relations actually weakened the strategies of containment created to control the advances of organised labour. The readjustment in the system

of work and industrial relations was seen by the ruling elite very much as a local problem. The precise relationship which developed between this local group and the state will be examined here through the individual and collective comment expressed at the meetings of the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce on the subjects of (a) the government contract, (b) centralised conciliation schemes, (c) industrial welfare and (d) industrial legislation. These will be discussed with a view to assessing the response to the impact of organised labour and its deflection or containment.

(a) The Government Contract.

The relationship between local manufacturers and the government over the acquisition of work orders was becoming increasingly more vital at this time. This was so particularly in sectors of industry effected by the loss of over-seas markets or in highly capital intensive industries. In Sheffield the cutlery industry prospered greatly during the first world war and this was due, almost entirely, to government work.⁴ The armament industry was, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, largely dependent on the defence policy of whichever government held office. The transport industry was becoming increasingly aware of the limits of regional management and the changes effected in the operation of public transport during the war illustrated the practicability of nationalization.⁵

The consequences of increasing reliance on the government contract as it affected the operation of industrial relations are of particular importance to any understanding of the processes involved in the development of the organised labour

at this time. The 'special relationship' provided the employer with the combined authority of Capital and the State.⁶

While it was possible, even in the largest manufacturing concerns, to maintain a form of paternalist control over the workforce, the ability to defer control over the vexed question of the quantity of work to an anonymous state bureaucracy, had obvious advantages. The regulation of work-load through the government contract deflected the responsibility for the rythms of the trade cycle away from the immediate employer, and from the workers themselves, on to the shoulders of the state. Recognition of this underlay much trade unionist thinking at this time about the need for parliamentary representation. In the armaments industry especially, local employers who won special recognition from the Ministry of Defence in the heated competition for work orders could wield an additional political authority in their industrial and social comment. One means of effecting this was through participation in local and national election contests using the record of personal connections with the government ministries as a key argument for heir representation of local working class interests.⁷

In its requirements for an efficient war machine the government, especially after 1895, sought to achieve absolute control over the production and marketing of armaments. Firstly, it sought to remove the possibility of firms selling to customers other than itself and secondly, it sought to provide for facilities of extra capacity to be put to use in times of crisis. The construction of a tightly grouped reserve of manufacturing capacity, maintaining an element of

competition to ensure quality, was to be achieved by means of controlling the flow of guaranteed work orders and, consequently, high profit margins, which cut across the predominant mechanism of control, the trade cycle.

The advantages accruing to such a scale of production demanded intensive capital investment on plant re-organisation and re-equipment. The type of plant arrangement involved was tied to intensive international competition in armament design. In 1897, with the initiation of the British government's expanded defence policy, the three principal steel and armament manufacturers in Sheffield, Vickers', Firth's and Cammell's, were each engaged in plant alterations.⁸

The heavy demands of expenditure tended towards the creation of a small group of large enterprises, effected through mergers, producing the closely knit industrial potential which the government required. In Sheffield's 'heavy' industrial sector few firms were founded after 1893 and expansion and mergers enlarged existing companies.⁹ In 1897, Vickers merged with Nordfelt Guns and Amunitions Co Ltd. and purchased the Barrow Maxims Naval Construction and Armaments Company.¹⁰ In 1905, John Brown and Thomas Firth's amalgamated while Cammell's acquired ship building facilities at Birkenhead, as did John Brown at Clydeside and Vickers at Barrow.¹¹ These arrangements facilitated vertical mergers and with them more absolute control of the market. The symbiotic relationship between armament firms and government was achieved by these means in later decades.

The effect of the government contract in the local 'light' trades was felt more especially during the first world war

when much of the boost to orders came from the Ministry of Defence.¹² At this time the price of work had to be arrived at in a more remote way than had been customary in the trades. No longer a matter for individual contracting between master and men, the increasing importance of government work gave greater import to the trade union official.¹³ The greatest inroads into the control of the worker over the system of production were effected by local employers during the first world war when most government work was carried out. Its importance in undermining work control and the politics of industrial relations was therefore quite crucial.

The undermining of worker control in the 'heavy' industry of Sheffield was encouraged by the increasing use of the government contract where a handful of firms employed vast numbers in concentrated areas about the city. While still important in certain areas of industrial relations, the immediate, personal relationship between employer and employee was qualified by a new kind of internal bureaucracy which controlled the condition of the workforce. This new form of management which included increased emphasis on the medical examination as a condition of employment, relied to a considerable degree on traditional forms of control such as character reference.

In political terms, the control of the workload became linked to party politics. The government contract structured the form and content of political debate over national defence policy, a debate to which organised labour was therefore obliged to address itself. The argument was

presented as one of alternative choices between, on the one hand massive production of armaments and on the other, large scale unemployment. In such a presentation the capacity of worker participation in this debate was to an extent regulated by the government-employer nexus of control.

The problem of employment and unemployment, as an issue of local politics, became in such a way centralised as an adjunct of state policy. Any resolution of the problem had to include agreements concerning the work load and nature of production. This agreement was to be arrived at through the relationship between local employers and the state. At the same time, the management of the unemployed was also in the control of this same group of local employers in their civic role. Thus the elitist control of the question of employment was in effect the starting point from which organised labour had to structure its challenge. Its capacity to form an argument and strategy to challenge the basis of local employment was in this way qualified.

i(b) Industrial Welfare

The nature of industrial relations in Sheffield at this time obviously varied in accordance with the type of manufacture and system of production. This variation is an important factor in an understanding of the operation of trade unionism in each of the industrial sectors. However, while the speed of technological and managerial change differed across the local trades, the general move towards the provision of industrial welfare was an increasingly important factor. This was a provision according to state

legislation, or else it was provided on an internal basis.

The move towards industrial welfare provision was as much inherent in the nature of late nineteenth century - early twentieth century capitalism as it was the result of trade unionist and socialist pressure. The 'organisation of consent'¹⁴ in the workforce and their physical and mental efficiency could be seen to be attainable through the investment in measures of insurance with some concession to workers' demands, all buttressed by a supportive social and industrial hierarchical framework. In Sheffield's factories, workshops and railway stations, informal, arbitrary industrial welfare schemes were devised and implemented by management at this time. This often pre-empted state legislation and operated in some cases in spite of such legislation. Local management of welfare was on the whole preferred. Most schemes operated in accordance with character references, measures of physical and mental efficiency, punctuality, diligence and sobriety, the traditional means of personnel management learned through the experience of the nineteenth century.

In Sheffield, the employers most vocal in their pronouncements on the subject of workers' welfare, and particularly in commenting on their own provisions, have been found to be the same group of men most active in criticising state welfare legislation. These same men were most prominent in advocating moral and technical education provision for the working class. This is just one indication of the anxiety registered among local employers, either as individuals or collectively, over the loss of control in

their own establishments to the state. The local provision of industrial welfare has been examined as it operated in three areas; the regulation of hours and wages, the conditions of work and the provision of pensions for retired workers.

In the 'light' trades, the labour process involving, in the main, payment by piece, largely dictated the form of welfare provision possible and the informal regulation of hours and wages. Traditionally, the regulation of hours and earnings was the concern of the craftsman and in periods of good trade this was still the case. Apprenticed, skilled workers owned their own tools and contracted and subcontracted labour, paying room rent to the employers who deducted gas and fuel costs from the final payment.¹⁵ However, during slack periods the control of the work load was managed more often by the employer in accordance with the number of workers normally employed by him. The flow of work might be adjusted to ensure a 'living wage' for as many workers as possible. In this way the contract between employer and employee was maintained in the anticipation of an up-turn in the market. In giving evidence to the Royal Commission of Enquiry on the Truck Acts held in 1907, local employer A.J.Hobson described this practice. 'Efficient' workers were retained "by means of fixing a 'stint' or 'living wage' - the level of which varied between firms."¹⁶ The practice of fixing a 'stint' operated in some areas of 'heavy' industry particularly in the steel smelting and wire trades where the system of production was similar to that worked in the cutlery trades.¹⁷

In the cutlery trades it was usual for the price of work to be arrived at through negotiations between employers and

employees. During the period under study, the employees were increasingly represented by trade union secretaries in such negotiations. This practice was altered during periods of poor trade and was replaced by a system of informal consultation as in the following manner:

"The system obtaining at this firm (J.Rodgers and Sons) whenever they wished to reduce prices has been to call three or four of their old workmen into the warehouse and ask if they had any objection to a reduction, and if no objection was raised, they were asked to tell the rest of the men that it would take effect the following week."¹⁸

Alternatively the system might operate in a more devious manner. A worker might be informed individually that he or she was the last to concede the discount, thus placing false and inexorable pressure on them to agree.¹⁹ As Charles Hobson described it in 1908:

"Employers seldom or never attempt to inflict a reduction upon all sections at the same time, one at a time in their method...There are scarcely two places in Sheffield paying the same rate of wages throughout. Nay, men working side by side for the same firm frequently are working at different prices, each keeping his own secret, whilst the employer pays one off against the other."²⁰

Treating with individuals or sections in this way was much preferred by employers to negotiating with workers' organisations through their official representatives. As George Franklin^{*} explained, this tactic was in keeping with the dominant view among employers that,

"Combinations of men were apt to develop into the engines of tyranny, and certainly combinations of masters were apt to develop in the same direction."²¹

This attitude was given greater support by one feature of the dominant ideology which pointed to the mutual interests of capital and labour which is discussed below.²² The construction and operation of this feature of industrial relations helped to cement local employer authority and control at this time which often usefully by-passed official trade union functions.

In the 'heavy' industrial sector methods of production and means of remuneration varied but with the predominance of the shift system it was possible to regulate hours more easily than in the small workshops of the cutlery trades. In Sheffield, prominent industrialists active in the 'eight hours movement' included H.J.Wilson* M.P. and R.A.Hadfield* who were among the first to introduce the decreased number of hours into their firms.²³ On the pretext of personal, philanthropic interest they were able to expand their industrial welfare provision. At Wilson's firm, the Sheffield Steel Smelting Company Ltd., workers worked a forty-eight hour week in 1906. Overtime was discouraged but it was possible to take time off in lieu. A new scheme was introduced whereby each regular member of the workforce received a Christmas bonus proportionate to the amount of yearly profits accrued each year. This was controlled however, "in accordance with the general punctuality of workmen and staff."²⁴ It was also possible for the worker to leave the bonus as a fixed interest in the firm thus becoming a small shareholder. This was designed to strengthen the notion of the identical or mutual interests of capital and labour and to suggest the benefits of harmonious industrial relations. Wilson introduced

various kinds of welfare provision into his firm during these years. A canteen was provided with cheap meals for each shift and there was even a room provided for non-smokers.²⁵ A doctor was always available and the Company was thought to do "all that is possible to be done for (the workers') general welfare and comfort."²⁶

A holiday scheme was introduced in 1900 "To encourage punctuality, attention to work, general good conduct, thrift and a desire for healthy conditions."²⁷ This, once more, was strictly geared to work performance, length of service and loyalty to the firm. Workers were encouraged by means of a ten shillings bonus to take their break outside the city. This measure, which on the surface reflected the employers' concern that the workers enjoyed their break in good fresh country air, actually ensured that the worker did not find alternative, casual employment during the break.²⁸

General welfare facilities were improved during the first world war especially in the form of canteens and some special provision for women workers. At Vickers works, special cinema shows were introduced for work breaks during 1917.²⁹ At the end of the war Vickers and several other firms in the 'heavy' industrial sector had vastly expanded their welfare provision. Welfare superintendants were engaged to concern themselves entirely with the well-being of the workforce in the work place and in their leisure time. A holiday scheme was established for the recreation of working boys and girls in Vickers' employ. Sports clubs, bands, concerts and lectures were provided and an allotment scheme set up.³⁰ This increase in the scope of concern and provision for the welfare of the

local workforce, which forged a crucial link with the leisure time of employees, reflects well the deepened tension in industrial relations experienced during the war years.

The reputation of a 'model employer', gained through such internal welfare provision, was very influential in areas of activity outside the work place.³¹ An interest in employee welfare contributed to an employers' status in the community from which he could draw for political credibility.³²

The regulation of hours and conditions in the railway service was highly regimented and the sense of 'service' was underlined. As one manager suggested in 1892:

"You might as well have a trade union or an amalgamated Society in the army, where discipline has to be kept at a very high standard, as have it on the railways." ³³

With greater frequency, regional Railway Companies were combining over questions of industrial relations. But in general the traditional system of regulating wages and conditions was by means of the 'petition' or 'memorial' As Alf Braithwaite, signalman on the Midland Railway, explained in 1907:

"We always approached the Company by petition... stating what our grievances were and asking for certain things...they would then be presented to the superintendent or inspector...we received advances in wages on two or three occasions all through petitions...and also two additional holidays, six instead of four."³⁴

Each grade of railway workers were dealt with separately by the management which was designed to ensure against worker combination. The system of advancement through promotion, tied strictly to an understood hierarchy, was a useful means

of regulating work efficiency and maintaining sectionalism in the workforce. Promotion was by way of 'nobility', 'discipline', 'efficiency' and 'attention to duty' according to the satisfaction of the board.³⁵ In the regulation of hours it was understood that the worker's whole time was the property of management. This total control was maintained not by means of financial inducement - railway workers' pay was relatively static around the turn of the century - but by the ability of management to uphold the allegiance of the workforce to ideas of obligation and personal service. Any idea of a break down of such a bond was thought to be "revolutionary" in its connotations. As the general manager of the Midland Railway, Sir William Guy Grant, explained in 1907: acceptance of the principle of arbitration was,

"Revolutionary and only offered by the railway companies after the most mature consideration and with the greatest misgivings...it was taking out of the hands of the directors the power of deciding what the rates of pay and what the hours of labour were to be among their staff."³⁶

Moreover, the legitimation of workers' combinations in any recognition of railway trade unionism would, according to the management's point of view, throw the whole system out of balance:

"It would be almost impossible to devise recognition in the way in which it is asked for without interfering with discipline..."

And it was insisted that the rejection of the demands for union recognition was "not only in the public interest but in the interest of the men themselves."³⁷

Although eventually conciliation was agreed to management much preferred to continue, wherever possible, an essentially local, immediate system of industrial relations in the railway industry. In spite of the setting up of the Conciliation Boards, management was able to maintain its primary influence in terms of exacting fines and other penalties for slackening, work failure and trade union activity.³⁸

Conditions of employment on the city's tram system altered significantly around the turn of the century when the private companies were municipalised. Under the old system, workers had to find their own uniforms and hours were exceedingly long. Drivers received, on average, twenty-eight shillings for an 102 hour week; conductors received seventeen shillings for the same hours. Under municipal control hours were reduced to a sixty hour week and allowances for clothing were introduced. The system of hierarchical advancement was maintained as were fines for indiscipline. Medical inspections were increased in frequency in order, as the unions saw it, to find means of reducing the grade of individual workers so as to effect labour economies. The unions complained frequently of management harassment.³⁹

The provision of pension schemes and allowances was controlled in Sheffield by local employers before the introduction of statutory legislation.⁴⁰ In some cases, internal schemes were operated in preference to state schemes. These internal provisions might be informal, such as the keeping on of older, loyal workers. This was common especially in the 'light' trades.⁴¹ Here, where insurance contributions were relatively low, in proportion to

capital investment, it was easier to keep on older workers than in the 'heavy' trades where high capital investment in plant and machinery encouraged instead economies in the labour force. In the railway industry, "the companies were large enough to keep men on even when their health began to fail."⁴²

On the other hand, a more formal system was devised which was linked essentially to the traditional requirements of nineteenth century management; this included length of service and character record. In the 'light' trades the firm of Walker and Halls', silver and electroplate manufacturers, which employed some eight hundred in the 1890s, introduced a non-contributory pension scheme as early as 1892. J.E. Bingham⁴³; managing director, was a well known figure in local political and social life.⁴³ Care was taken to maintain full control over the operation of the scheme allowing for, "no outside interference" and it was presented as a voluntary gesture of gratitude by the management. It was intended "to cause unanimity of feeling and union of action amongst us." The pension was paid to the employee whose total service amounted to twenty-one years of uninterrupted labour. However, as always, the determining factor was that,

"no person shall be deemed eligible for the benefits whose incapacitation is due to intemperence or improper conduct."

Further it was hoped that workers would strive,

"still more to save and take advantage of every opportunity of providing against the time when they

could work no longer. If they did that and neglected no chance of placing themselves in a good position, they could look forward with less fear and misgiving to the evening of their days."⁴⁴

Bingham, who was a 'model employer' is a fine example of the continuity of Victorian philanthropic management within the changing conditions of early twentieth century industrial relations. His pensioned employees were apparently happy to "keep in order" the gardens of St Paul's Churchyard nearby the works. Here, Bingham donated seats to be situated in pleasant surroundings in order that his employees might take their lunch out of doors in the summer months.⁴⁵

When one questions how far this strategy effected employee deference, one is confronted with clear examples of its influence. On the occasion of the firms' jubilee celebration the workers presented Bingham with a life-sized statue of himself.⁴⁶ His death in 1915 prompted one of the largest funeral processions ever seen in Sheffield, very much in the style of the mid nineteenth century ritual. Amongst the "ten thousand or more" mourners who paraded to the cemetery were "over two thousand work people and pensioners."⁴⁷ This was not the only example of workers' deference and loyalty in this period.⁴⁸

In the factories of the 'heavy' industrial sector, various informal schemes were devised to provide for workers in their sickness and old age. Again, the determining factor was employee conduct and character. The workers' character reference was thought to be the primary guide for

management from apprenticeship through to old age. 'Character' included not only the usual features of respectability but also it might include reference to political activity or interest. As one employer writing in the magazine Engineering put it in 1897:

"If employers declare that they will not employ men who belong to certain organisations, they should be free to follow their determination. Further, works managers have a perfect right to apply to a former master for the 'character' of any workman they contemplate employing, in order to find out whether he is suitable for the work he undertakes."⁴⁹

The character note system was the means by which the worker was categorised according to the values and requirements of management and was brought into use at times of appointing, promoting and benefiting labour through bonus or other welfare schemes. The note included vital statistics such as the place and length of last employment and whether the individual was a member of a trade union or political party, naming the organisation. As G.H.B.Ward explained:

"A letter is written to the previous firm, and on receipt of a reply to the effect that the worker has connections with trade unionism or taken an active part in movements at such firm in favour of the betterment of working conditions...or connected as speaker, or worker with the labour / socialist movements or came out on strike. The worker is dismissed or denied a situation. The system is sometimes used to prevent employment of men over forty years or thirty-five occasionally."⁵⁰

The directors of the Sheffield Steel Smelting Company, the Wilson family, kept careful character notes of their employees from their first day of work. Bonuses and

promotions were regulated by these notes.⁵¹

The internal, immediate relationship between employer and employee, effected by these schemes, were operated in spite of the introduction of state legislation. At Vickers Steel Works, where some 4,400 men and boys were employed in 1907, there operated an informal arrangement for insurance against sickness and old age. William Marshall, managing clerk, gave evidence to the Royal Commission of Enquiry on the Poor Laws in December 1907. He outlined the welfare provision of the firm. In case of accidents at work the firm did not insure under the 1897 Workmens' Compensation Act. Instead, they preferred to carry their own risks, for "by so doing it is considered better relationships are established between employer and employed." A doctor was provided by the firm to attend to accidents and to examine workers as a condition of employment. Apprentices were also encouraged to attend evening classes on commercial and technical subjects, "to improve their character". The pension provided for old workers averaged about twelve shillings a week although foremen received a percentage of their former wage, up to seventy-five per cent. Foremen were obliged to be non-unionist and such a benefit was one of the inducements provided in compensation. As was usual, the amount granted was always determined by

"the service a man has rendered, also upon his circumstances and upon whatever we consider he has made good use of his opportunities of thrift."⁵²

In the railway industry there was a well established system of provision against sickness, old age and funeral expenses. Company Benefit or Friendly Societies were vital to employees

at a time of no union recognition. Contributions were graduated according to grade and wage. Full sick pay was allowed for a period but the right to benefits was dependent on "continued employment with the company" and, of course, on conduct according to management evaluation.⁵³ Evening classes for technical instruction were run by the workers and management together. Classes were compulsory, and even after trade union recognition was granted, as late as 1919, welfare was considered to be very much "a matter between local men and management."⁵⁴

One means by which employers in Sheffield could attempt to maintain a local interest in state legislation affecting industrial relations was through collective comment and petition from the Associated Chambers of Commerce. The period between 1897 and 1914 saw the construction of a formal, centralised policy on workers' welfare and industrial relations. In one sense there was a move designed to accommodate the mounting pressure from the labour and socialist movement, but at the same time, the traditional immediate relationship which operated between employer and employee over the settlement of grievances, was under threat.

Employers in Sheffield reacted in several ways in an attempt to maintain the balance of power in their own immediate environment, and indirectly, their social and political status in the community. Firstly, as has already been outlined, they continued to operate their own systems of industrial relations in defiance of centralised control. Secondly, the government and national industrial community was addressed through the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce.

Finally, it was ensured that whatever local bodies there were established to impliment legislation, the employers, or local industrial and political elite,acquired a directive role.

The activity of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and regional Chambers has been pointed to in recent work on the relationship between industry and the state in this period.⁵⁵ The Sheffield Chamber, it has been suggested, was in the forefront of the move to exert pressure on the government, along with the Birmingham and Midlands Chambers. However, before its reorganisation in 1916, the Sheffield Chamber had relatively small resources; its subscriptions from a membership of 465 amounted to only £750 in 1916. This compared with Birmingham's £9,000, Liverpools' £6,000 and Manchesters' £14,000 at the same period. In effect, the Sheffield Chambers' influence was disproportionate to its material strength.⁵⁶

In general the criticisms voiced by the Sheffield Chamber focused on resistance to statutory obligation to employee welfare, supported by an appeal on behalf of the traditions of local industrial independence. Whatever comment made was often accompanied by a claim to the superior knowledge of local industrial conditions and labour relations to that presented by, what was increasingly considered to be, an interfering central authority.

The Workmens' Compensation for Accidents Bill, introduced in 1897, made employers liable for the injuries suffered by employees in certain industries. The Bill received lengthy scrutiny from the Sheffield Chamber resulting in a series of

amendments drawn up for the attention of the government and local M.P.s. The Chamber protested unanimously at,

"the principle of the Bill imposing on employers the responsibility for accidents over which they have no control, and against the haste with which it is being passed through parliament."

More specifically, it was suggested:

"Where the injury is caused by the willful or wrongful act or default of the workman, no compensation shall be payable to him."⁵⁷

In order to gain ultimate control over the operation of the Act, the Chamber also suggested that a clause should be inserted providing the employer with the right to direct a first medical examination of the disabled worker and again at intervals during the workers' illness.

The regulation of conditions of employment in factories and workshops was a long standing requirement of employers but it was in the first decade of the twentieth century that controls came to be enforced with some efficiency. This tightening up of the operation of factory legislation was in some cases seen as a gross interference by the state in the affairs of industry. Particularly in the 'light' trades, where workers traditionally owned their own tools and rented work-space, the application of factory legislation was thought to be inpracticable. Fearful of the extra capital burden demanded of them in bringing workshops up to good sanitary standards, the local employers protested. Faced with the lengthy demands of the Factory Inspectors Enquiry into the Cutlery Trades in 1908, they were "most desirous to do anything that would be condusive to the health of the

grinders but...(they thought) the whole question ought to be faced quietly and...nothing done in a hurry."⁵⁸

Underlying this reluctance was an anxiety that state interference might alter radically the system of production in the trades and in so doing, alter the basis of local labour relations.

A Government Enquiry into Dangerous Trades investigated the Sheffield file trade and the manufacturers' use of grindstones in 1899. The Chamber's response was that this was an interference with the liberty of the individual worker's right to choose employment, regardless of the danger of work. Local employers were not consulted during the enquiry and their resentment was tabled in a petition to the Home Secretary stating:

"The trade is but a poor one at the present time. It is...a decaying industry, but carried on as it is, so much away from the employers' jurisdiction and at home, it is much cherished by the workmen on account of the independence of control which they enjoy, doing their work at their own time by piece and without interference and it is suggested that this being the nature of the trade, repressive legislation with regard to it should be directed against the workmen and not be placed in the drastic way the departmental committee recommended - that it should be placed in the giver of work." ⁵⁹

The superior knowledge of local conditions and particularly of labour relations was underlined in order to resist outside control.

In view of the widespread practice of deductions carried out in the Sheffield trades, for rent and for fuel, the Royal Commission of Enquiry on the Truck Acts was of special relevance to Sheffield Industrialists. The enquiry, carried

out in 1907-1908, received evidence from local employers and trade unionists. Several union branches registered their disapproval of the system of deductions in operation.⁶⁰

The employers, however, once more emphasised their intimacy with the nature of work in the Sheffield trades and contrasted this with the unfamiliarity of the commissioners. Both employers and trade unionists were agreed on the need for the commissioners to recognise the peculiar system of work operating in the cutlery industry. A.J.Hobson* offered his own experience of "trying to bring our men into the engineering discipline" which was resisted in favour of the "independence" of piece work.⁶¹ Robert Holshaw, secretary of the Scissor Makers' Union, thought that the toleration of the present system was due to the men's preference for their own discipline "deriving from traditions still strong in the trades."⁶²

To suggest still further the authority of local employers in resisting formal, external interference, Hobson spoke of the system of labour relations operating in the Sheffield 'light' trades as the culmination of generations of local practice. He suggested:

"Interference at the moment will produce disharmony between masters and men, and will hazard the gradual move towards machinery taking place."⁶³

The introduction of new technology, and the destruction of workers' control over apprenticeship, was viewed very much as a local matter.

In whatever strategy the government adopted in the field of industrial relations, the local employers were anxious that their voice be heard. In May 1906, they commented on the

proposed Trades Disputes Bill. This measure was designed to contain the levels of industrial militancy among workers and was discussed in Sheffield at a time when significant disputes were current in the steel industry.⁶⁴ The Sheffield Chamber of Commerce called for a rigorous Bill and suggested:

"Names and addresses of pickets be registered with the police and notation of time and place of picket ...limitation should be placed on the number of men employed in the picket."⁶⁵

In 1911, once more at a time of active militancy in the local trades, the Associated Chambers of Commerce called for the setting up of a special commission of enquiry into the operation of the 1906 Trades Disputes Act. The Chamber stressed its dissatisfaction with the Act and requested the government to provide military assistance in quelling local industrial militancy. They also suggested that a special constabulary should be set up in Sheffield on a permanent footing to deal with local industrial and political disturbances. The employers thought the Act should be repealed or so amended to make,

"trade unionists accept the responsibility for the acts of their representatives."⁶⁶

The general attitude that the forces of law and order ought to be tightened up in line with the increase in labour and socialist challenge, a readjustment to new conditions, was summarised by J.E.Bingham* who, in 1913, warned:

"There were troublesome times in store for the police when they would want staunch hearts and strong arms to put down the so-called peaceful picketing, syndicalism and sympathetic strikes...it was necessary

to have an organising force such as the police, good men, continually educated in that which was right." ⁶⁷

The regional Chambers sought to influence the content of National Insurance legislation, which was under consideration between the years 1908 and 1911. Sheffield employers expressed most anxiety about how it might affect the management of the 'light' trades. As insurance contributions were to be based on numbers employed, it was thought that this would weigh heavily on those trades "struggling to survive" but which nevertheless employed a large number of workers. They explained:

"The businesses which employ most labour in proportion to product are generally the least profitable to carry on." ⁶⁸

The employers re-affirmed their preference for voluntary insurance schemes. Criticism was voiced at the general neglect of local conditions reflected in the speed with which the government was proceeding, allowing only cursory comment from industrialists, and allowing them inadequate control over the implementation of legislation. ⁶⁹

On its enactment, the legislation was received favourably by employers, councillors and trade unionists alike. It contained much which was consistent with current management techniques. There were disqualifications from any benefits linked to character reference. Reservations were expressed by Friendly Societies and the Freedom of Labour Defence Organisation about the possible effect of the legislation in undermining voluntary thrift ⁷⁰ The women's trade union and labour organisations protested about the inadequacies of

the Act in its neglect of women workers.⁷¹

Further criticism of the National Insurance legislation continued after its enactment. George Senior*, speaking generally on the subject, expressed his fears that the relations of production which underlined social hierarchy and deference were being affected by outside interference, undermining natural order and throwing into question traditionally accepted ideas on authority. At a meeting of the Sheffield branch of the Freedom of Labour Defence League he linked up trends in industrial legislation and changes in the work process pointing out the need for care to be taken. He hoped that where, through such changes, piece work was no longer applicable, "two classes of labour might still be maintained to continue the beneficial influence of one class over another."⁷²

In 1912, A.J.Hobson* published a memo entitled The Increased Cost of Living as Effected by Recent Legislation. This continued his long standing polemic against state interference in local industrial and social relations. He regarded government legislation as allowing for "malingering" among the workers which under statutory regulation was outside the immediate control of the employers.⁷³

Resistance to statutory requirements continued during the war and culminated, towards the end of hostilities, in a campaign organised by the Sheffield Chamber against "excessive Profits Duty". Again, the superior knowledge of local conditions was presented as justification for criticism. The need to achieve an understanding with labour in altered

conditions was paramount. Efforts were made to reach a three year truce with labour to become effective immediately on the cessation of hostilities.⁷⁴ This re-adjustment would only be achieved through better organisation and increased discipline. It was declared:

"Sheffield employers had got to learn that discipline and organisation, and the putting of the state above the individual...were lessons which they could profitably learn from the enemy." ⁷⁵

But once more it was stressed that this was the task of local industrialists, not parliament. W.L.Hitchens*, chairman of Cammell Lairds, spoke in 1913 of the state's proper function. It should keep out of business; its real purpose was to lay down "conditions under which people might carry on industry and see that they were observed."⁷⁶

After the war, on the same theme, the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce stated:

"Politicians should stick to their main and most important questions involving cutting down the present heavy expenditure to something like the pre-war level" and should "leave capital and labour questions to those who understood all the points at issue." ⁷⁷

In ways such as these, the local industrial and political elite was able to define and authorise the relationship between the industrial and political spheres according to the dominant ideology. This had practical advantages in terms of operating industrial relations while it also had the effect of structuring the theoretical debate between labour and capital.

The overall response of the local industrial and political

elite to government welfare reforms and industrial legislation was to emphasise their corporate authority in the community. The development of the labour movement, and with it the emergence of full time trade union officials and Labour councillors, conversant with the details of legal rights, caused obvious anxiety to the business community. In 1897, one of the criticisms voiced about the Workmens' Compensation Act was that,

" in nearly every case, the workmen will be represented before the arbitrator by the secretary of his union, who, if not now, will become an expert in conducting these cases and the employer will be therefore at a positive disadvantage if he is not permitted to employ a Counsel or Solicitor." ⁷⁸

In one effort to counter this situation, local employers sought a directive role in the implimentation of legislation in the community. This maintained the traditional function of such offices as Lord Mayor and it will be noted that this office was held by a high proportion of the local elite at this time.⁷⁹

The local Distress Committee which was set up in accordance with the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 was directed by the Lord Mayor.⁸⁰ The Council of the Committee set up in 1909 was composed of four Lib-Lab Councillors and one Labour Councillor whilst the remaining twenty were representatives of the local business community, including several of the leading figures in the industrial and political elite. ⁸¹

The Advisory Committee of the Sheffield Labour Exchange as constituted in 1911 in accordance with the National Insurance Act was directed by W.F.Beardshaw* and W.H.Dixon*, two leading manufacturers. This relationship, between local

authority and state power, was intensified and expanded in scope during the war years. The local industrial and political elite took a controlling position in the local committees which were set up to monitor community life.⁸² H. Hughes* was chairman of the Sheffield Munitions Committee, organiser of the local recruiting campaign and organiser of the Special Committee on the National Reserve. Sir William Clegg* was chairman of the Munitions Tribunal, the Food Rationing Committee and National Insurance Committee. Clegg was also a Sub-Commissioner under the National Service Scheme and on the Special Committee on the National Reserve. A. J. Hobson* was a member of the Engineering Committee of the Board of Trade and was consulted by the government in his capacity as chairman of the Corporation Finance Committee. In this role, he

"induced the Chancellor to raise in the war loan all the money needed by local authorities for carrying out relief and other work during the war" 83

The role of the local elite during the war, in directing and controlling community life, served to amplify their function in times of peace. The war revealed the interdependence of life in the community, in the work place, and in politics. It also revealed the connected interests in each of these spheres which the local industrial and political elite used so powerfully in 'normal' times. It was their purpose to present these spheres of activity as distinct and separate while their war time function, in controlling and commenting on all areas of experience, and re-asserting dominant values, revealed them, to certain sections of the organised labour movement, as intimately connected.⁸⁴

2 (ii) The Political Organisation of Consent.

The authority of the industrial and political elite in Sheffield, created through industrial relations, social philanthropy and civic service, was grounded in the organisational tactics of Party politics. The dialogue between the Parties was, in its form and content, itself a kind of constraint on potential. It recognised the implicit class interests of the two Party system and provided a base from which to realise industrial and social ambitions.

Consideration of the local organisation and tactics adopted by the Conservative and Liberal Parties is important for any understanding of working class politics in this period; firstly in its effect of grounding the form of activity and secondly, in its structuring the form and content of popular political discourse. The two Party dialogue structured and defined major issues of debate into an essentially dual nature. There was, for example, the choice between Tariff Reform and Free Trade, Fiscal Reform and Socialism, Social Reform and the Defence of the Empire. The war-time political truce and post-war coalition in Sheffield, expressed concretely the common interests underlying the two Party system. The alternative challenge of a Labour Party, at the Parliamentary and Municipal levels, was unsustainable in the pre-war form of politics which relied so firmly on the presentation of polarised issues.

Conservative Party Strategy

The 1860's was a key decade in the electoral history of Sheffield. The establishment of a local Conservative organisation, supported by the more wealthy and influential families, had its roots in these years. Between 1864 and 1902, the

Conservative Party in Sheffield was influenced by the politics and journalism of W.E.Leng*, proprietor of the Sheffield Telegraph. Leng, and Party agent Christopher Porritt, created the structure of Party organisation in the period before 1902. Semi-autonomous organisations were built at polling district level while the public house became the basis of neighbourhood and street level organisation. It has been estimated that between fifteen and twenty district organisations were created in each of the parliamentary divisions and almost all of the public houses in the city were tied to the Conservative Party electoral machine.⁸⁵

Conservative Working Men's Associations were established during the 1860's and 1870's under the direction of Leng but only one, at Walkley, survived into the 1890's.⁸⁶ For the middle classes, the West End Conservative Club and the Freemasonry Lodges provided for the important space of social communication. Later, two Conservative clubs were opened with the specific object of promoting social communication between the classes.⁸⁷ The Primrose League, the Sheffield Branch of which was founded in 1886, provided for the incorporation of Conservative women into the Party organisation. The League concentrated its efforts in the social and cultural sphere.⁸⁸

The general approach of Sheffield Conservatism to the working class electorate was grounded in the promise of material benefits through job security, guaranteed by fiscal reform. In the predominantly working class districts of Brightside and Attercliffe, the intensive defence programme of the government, launched in 1897, proved to be a central electoral

issue since a great deal of employment in the 'heavy' industrial sector was connected with arms production. The preferred candidate for a working class constituency was a well known industrial employer or business man whose interests and activities stretched outside the workplace. A 'model employer' who lived and worked in Sheffield was thought to be the most attractive candidate.

After failing to persuade local employer George Senior* to contest the Brightside constituency in the Conservative interest in 1897, the second choice was J.F.Hope, the nephew of the Duke of Norfolk.⁸⁹ From the point of view of the Liberal Party, the choice of George Senior was much the most threatening to the Liberal held seat. Liberal leader Sir William Clegg* noted that,

"if George Senior stood, it was essential that we (the Liberal Party) should run a labour candidate."⁹⁰

It is clear from this instance that the relative strength of a socially and politically respected industrialist impinged on the electoral tactics of Lib-Labism.

The intimate relationship between workplace and electoral politics was illustrated well during the parliamentary by-election in Brightside.⁹¹ The date of the election was August 6th and in July the Engineering Employers Federation had begun to lock-out Society engineers.⁹² The E.E.F encouraged the larger Sheffield manufacturers to effect the lock-out but there was a marked delay before local employers joined in the national movement, a delay which the Liberal press labelled "an election dodge"⁹³ The local lock-out was effected only after the election was over since most of the employers concerned were Conservatives

During the 1900 general election, the anti-war Liberals

who were led by "H.J. Wilson" provided the Conservative Party with substantial material from which to promote its imperialist commitments. But the crucial ingredient in the Conservative approach to the working class electorate was the promise of material gain tied firmly to the imperialist tradition.

Prospective supporters were asked:

"If we were to have independent nations setting up their rule and shutting out our trade, it would be a very near and very real question for working men of this country to consider, and therefore it was distinctly in the interests of the working class that they should be imperialists."⁹⁴

The results of the 1900 election gave the Conservative Party in Sheffield a four to one majority in parliamentary seats.⁹⁵

The correlation between industrial prosperity and the Conservative Party's working class appeal was given greater expression after 1903 when the issue of tariff reform came to dominate Party policy. By the time of the 1906 general election, this approach had become wedded firmly to an anti-socialist propaganda campaign. Trade was good and employment full in the industrial sectors and the Conservative appeal was presented in materialistic and imperialistic terms.⁹⁶

In the Central and Ecclesall divisions, where there was a large 'light' trades interest, the argument focused on Sheffield's declining position in the world cutlery trade. Samuel Roberts, the Conservative candidate for Ecclesall, whilst delivering a speech, displayed two German-made knives to illustrate his argument that "a low scientific tariff on imports would prove the salvation of the cutlery trade, at present threatened...and a duty of 10% would enable Sheffield

cutlers to keep out such knives."⁹⁷ Thus in the 'light' industrial sector the Conservative working class appeal was substantially the same as that in the East End, that is job security guaranteed by political representation. Sir Howard Vincent*, sitting member of parliament for the Central division and national spokesman for the Protectionist movement since the 1870s, based his campaign on the guarantee that,

"the betterment of the condition of the working class could only be effected by a change in our fiscal arrangements."⁹⁸

He blamed foreign imports of cheaper manufactured goods for throwing cutlers out of work and sending them to the workhouse:

"That to the cutler was bread and butter politics."

The appeal to the working class was complimented by linking the argument to the ideology of the labour movement:

"If it was fair for trade unionists in this country to demand that in connection with contracts for different public bodies a proper rate of wages should be paid and proper trade union conditions recognised... it was equally right that they and the country at large should demand that all goods sold in this country should be made under similar conditions."⁹⁹

The 1906 general election was regarded by Tom Shaw, a Lib-Lab trade unionist, as "the most important election since 1868"¹⁰⁰ The 1868 election had witnessed a vital contest in Sheffield in establishing a basis for future Liberal-Labour co-operation, rooted in a re-alignment of industrial relations.¹⁰¹ In 1906, the Conservative Party reflected Shaw's analysis in their efforts to stem the tide of the labour and socialist advance. In the East End constituency of Attercliffe a

"Conservative and Trade Unionist" candidate was run in the person of A. Muir Wilson, a solicitor who specialised in industrial law.¹⁰² He placed social and industrial questions to the fore in his campaign.¹⁰³

In the Brightside constituency, the Conservative Party focused on the condition of local employment and stressed the important links between local industrial capacity and the government's defence programme. This concern was underlined in the work place by an employer active in Conservative politics, and in the community, by the Conservative sponsored leisure pursuits such as the Volunteer movement. Liberal Party policy on defence was criticised with particular reference to the pacifist stand taken by a section of the Party during the Boer war. It was suggested that Liberal patronage of socialist economics would result in the destruction of local industry.¹⁰⁴

J.F. Hope publicised his past record in securing work for the Sheffield area through government contracts.¹⁰⁵ He published selections from his correspondence in the Conservative press to illustrate his influence on the Admiralty in this direction. The potency of this device was reflected in the anxious reaction of the Liberal Party which sent an urgent appeal to the war minister, Haldan, in the following terms:

"Tories making headway by saying that war office policy is altered by Liberals and smaller proportion of government work will come to Brightside. Can this be contradicted?...This is a matter of vital importance."¹⁰⁶

The results of the 1906 election were a disappointment for the Conservative Party in the country as a whole but were encouraging in Sheffield.¹⁰⁷ This discrepancy in the national

and local positions was reflected in the relationship between the central and local organisations in the following years. The national organisation initiated a re-structuring of the regions in an effort to stem the labour and socialist advance. The Sheffield Party, although well aware of the local progress of the labour movement, felt itself able to cope without outside interference and rejected the offer of visiting speakers.

In 1908, The Standard expressed the anxiety of the national Party over the attitude prevailing in Sheffield, noting:

"Sheffield possesses the necessary machinery for a model organisation but the working of it is not so effective as it might be...(there is) a want of sympathy between the divisions and the Central Association...each regards itself as working for its own salvation."

A lack of political education in the form of propaganda was noted except during election campaigns.

"All the political meetings in connection with the fifty-seven branches...are held in public houses...consequently, beyond maintaining the interest of the workers, little if any result follows in the way of conversion and education." 108

This was contrasted with the tactics of both the Liberal and Labour Parties who were not above going out on the streets and drumming up support.

The Attercliffe by-election of 1909 and the general elections of January and December 1910 saw the development of unease within the ranks of local Conservatism over the overriding impact of the fiscal and tariff reform questions. A re-assessment of local policy coincided with a re-organisation of

electoral strategy. In August 1910, a new election agent was appointed to serve the city and in October an open air campaign was inaugurated, directed by the National Conservative Union. In February 1911, the Sheffield Conservative and Constitutional Association appointed a special organising committee, "to restore and reconstruct the authority of the Central Association", relieving the divisions of much of their organisational responsibility.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, in the same year both the Liberal and Labour Parties in the city reorganised their Party machine.¹¹⁰

In 1909, with trade at a low ebb and much unemployment in the city, the connection between business and industrial interest and Party politics was made even more strongly. The depression seemed to call for radical solutions and in this respect the Conservative and Labour Party initiatives appeared to have more of a cutting edge than did the Liberal.¹¹¹ On retiring, Batty Langley M.P. forced a by-election in Attercliffe where the Labour Party was most confident and best organised.

The Conservative candidate was S. King-Farlow and the choice was further complicated by the candidature of an unofficial Conservative candidate, A.Muir Wilson. King-Farlow, well aware of the nature of employment in the area, called for

"a vote against a government which has failed to utilize the skilled labour of the armour plate worker and gun mounter of Sheffield, at a time when want of work and distress were most rife, and when Germany was employing its labour in these industries to the full."¹¹²

The armament industry in Sheffield was directly linked, in Conservative electoral strategy, to government defence policy from the late 1890s. The normal trade cycle of boom and slump did not necessarily effect the armaments industry. It had its own rhythms which were related to government military planning.¹¹³ Since the return of the Liberal government in 1906, and the subsequent reduction in naval building under the direction of Campbell-Bannerman, the Sheffield armament industry had experienced a decline in orders which resulted in massive lay-offs. Local branches of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers registered thirteen per cent of their total membership unemployed in July 1908.¹¹⁴ The annual report of the Sheffield Federated Trades Council for the year 1908 to 1909 noted

"the fact that unemployment has been more general during the past year than it has been for at least ten years."¹¹⁵

A. Muir Wilson, who ran as candidate against the wishes, and to the embarrassment of the Sheffield Conservative Party, focused his campaign on the problem of unemployment. The imperialist angle was emphasised in a radical way through his suggestion of a "Work-Finding Plan" called "The All Red Route" which featured a revolution in communications between Britain and the Empire for commercial and leisure interests.¹¹⁶

In view of the substantial Conservative working class vote in 1909 and the victory of Joseph Pointer for Labour, the Conservative Party came to regard the Labour Party as the primary opposition in the East End constituencies during the general election campaigns of 1910. Renewed Lib-Lab electoral arrangements confirmed, according to Conservative

opinion, the demise of Liberalism as an effective political force. In the Central division this view point was further confirmed. The area was estimated to hold about a ninety per cent working class electorate and the Liberal Party was sponsoring Lib-Lab candidate A.J.Bailey.¹¹⁷

While the main issues of the January 1910 election focused on the questions of fiscal reform, the House of Lords and social and industrial welfare legislation, the local Conservative candidates concentrated their invective on the latest Lib-Lab pacts which they interpreted as the Liberal Party's "complete surrender to Socialism".¹¹⁸ The Conservative press emphasised what it described as the key fight between fiscal reform and socialism, "and its handmaid anarchism".¹¹⁹ This concentration on anti-socialist propaganda reflects something of the impact made locally by the labour and socialist movement.

The reduction of the election to a two sided fight in the working class constituencies encouraged a further polarisation of the issues. In contrasting "socialism" with "tariff reform" in popular debate, the two quite contrasting concepts were placed nevertheless on the same theoretical plane, in spite of the fact that one represented an over-turning of the prevailing social and economic relationships while the other represented merely ways of reforming them. This had two effects. First, Conservative fiscal policy when placed at the same theoretical level as Socialism was given added meaning as a fundamental, radical initiative. Also, and perhaps more critically, the term "Socialism" was

framed and contained within reference points defined by its direct counter position. Moreover, tariff reform was presented as a sure means of securing and fostering class harmony while, according to Conservative opinion, Socialism was rooted fundamentally in the concept of class conflict. This approach was intimately related to the dominant ideology of the mutuality of labour and capital examined below.¹²⁰

The Liberal Party Strategy

The Redistribution Act of 1885 stimulated local Liberal Party reorganisation. Liberal Party strength in Sheffield was based on the industrial and business sector which remained loyal to the Party at the time of the establishment of a Conservative Party in the city. This consisted of the Leader family, who owned and controlled the Sheffield Independent; F.T.Mappin*, Samuel Osborne* and the Wilson family, from the industrial sector; and the Clegg* family of solicitors.¹²¹ H.J.Wilson*, M.P. for Holmfirth, was made election agent and was leader of the nonconformist wing of the Party.¹²²

Divisional Associations were formed in the five parliamentary divisions with autonomous power over the selection of candidates. Representatives from each division formed the executive of the Sheffield United Liberal Committee. Local clubs were opened in each ward to rally working class electoral support. The Reform Club, opened in 1885, functioned as the social and cultural centre for middle class Liberalism.¹²³

Party organisation at polling district level was established by a decentralisation of the local Party in general which

was encouraged by the increased Party political dimension in municipal politics becoming more evident towards the end of the nineteenth century.¹²⁴ The Women's Liberal Association was formed as an exclusively female body. Its active membership came, in the main, from the nonconformist wing of the Party. Some working class women were involved; these were usually the wives and daughters of the leading Lib-Lab trade unionists in the city.¹²⁵ As well as taking an active part in propaganda and electoral work, the Women's Liberal Association advocated electoral reform and from the early 1880s campaigned for women's suffrage on the same terms as men, within the Liberal programme.¹²⁶

Before 1900 the Liberal Party's electoral appeal to the working class electorate, while taking care to address material questions, was based to a greater extent on moral persuasion. This was most clearly evident in the East End constituencies where the Wilson family influence was strongest. After 1900 a section of the Party sought to alter the basis of this appeal and direct it towards a more imperialistic stance. While it is true that the Liberal Party, as much as the Conservative Party, used the local employer strategically in its election campaigns, the Party emphasised more strongly the record of the 'model employer' in his industrial relations, and civic responsibilities rather than his political influence at a national level.

H.J. Wilson and his brother J.W. Wilson were the principal exponents of Lib-Labism in Sheffield as secured through electoral pacts and alliances with sections of the local labour movement.¹²⁷

This strategy which was adopted during the 1880s and 1890s and which secured the election of the first working class representatives to the City Council was usurped after 1902 by the ascendancy of the imperialist wing of the Party. This later became organised as the Sheffield branch of the Liberal League between the years 1902 and 1909. In 1910, once more the Wilsonian strategy became dominant as part of a general re-organisation of the Party in the city.

The first phase of Lib-Labism was based on an organisational alliance with the Sheffield Labour Electoral Association, (L.E.A.) founded in 1889. Constitutionally the L.E.A. declared itself open to offers of financial assistance from either of the two main Parties;

"so long as the controlling influence remains in the hands of the labour party."¹²⁸

One of the most prominent exponents of this tactic within the Sheffield trade union movement was Charles Hobson, president of the Sheffield Federated Trades Council and city councillor.¹²⁹ He maintained a personal and political alliance with the Wilson family throughout the pre-war period. This personal contact was an important element in the effectiveness of Lib-Labism. Its first real test came with the Attercliffe by-election of 1894.¹³⁰

The first choice of the Liberals was local 'model employer' R.A. Hadfield* who was known to be popular among sections of the labour movement.¹³¹ However, at this time and in later years Hadfield eluded the Liberals as a candidate. Other employers of similar status were considered but a local employer was favoured. In considering an approach to organised labour

the Liberals thought it better that they should be persuaded to support the Liberal candidate rather than hold any initiative. This reveals considerable anxiety and tentativeness over relations with the more 'advanced school' of labour politics. After an initial approach it was thought that financial problems would prevent the labour group from proceeding further and taking control. Thus placated the Labour group would leave the way clear for a Liberal candidate to be selected and would feel obliged to render support.¹³² There were some Liberals, namely the Wilsons, A.J.Mundella, F.P.Rawson and The Hammer, the journal of the nonconformist wing of the Party, who favoured a direct adoption of a working class candidate.¹³³ Most of the Party membership, however, adhered to the leadership of W.E.Clegg and the bank account of F.T.Mappin who strongly advised against such a move.¹³⁴

Hobson was the choice of the Labour movement both of the Lib-Lab tendency and of the independent wing and it was assumed generally that Hobson's good relations with the Liberals would secure his adoption. The Hammer believed this to be the most likely prospect and noted that there was a real danger that the Conservative Party would benefit from a split in the Liberal-Labour vote. Unity of interests was essential.¹³⁵ Reflecting this fear, Mundella confided in H.J.Wilson,

"I hear Chamberlain and co are calculating upon a Labour candidate in Attercliffe as a wedge to split us and let in a Tory."¹³⁶

The consequences of an independent labour challenge, it was thought, would be disastrous for local Liberalism.

The influence of the Clegg faction of the Liberal Party

was such that plans to approach the L.E.A. were never implimented and the Liberals nominated Batty Langley as their prospective candidate.¹³⁷ The reaction of the Wilson faction to this move was put by John W.Wilson in a letter to his brother Henry immediately after the nomination:

"I am sorry we have thrown away the opportunity of offering Attercliffe a Liberal working man, but I think you and I pushed it quite as far as was safe and wise."¹³⁸

The immediate reaction of organised labour in the constituency was angry and articulate. The mood was expressed by W.D.Dacey, a working man, who resigned his membership of the Attercliffe Liberal Association on hearing the decision. In a letter to H.J.Wilson he said:

"The action of the Attercliffe Liberal Association in selecting a candidate, when the labour party had one already in the field proves them to be so far as the workers are concerned, no better than the Tory Party, and I warn the Liberal Party of Sheffield that...(this action) will make more I.L.P.men of the workers than the propaganda of the Party for the last year has done." ¹³⁹

The Hammer saw the contest as one which defined the relative positions of Liberalism and Labour and considered the question of ownership to be a vital denominator. It commented during the campaign:

"Labour, that is to say 'socialism' must as yet fight its own battles and Radicalism must for some time pursue its own course." ¹⁴⁰

Charles Hobson was placed in a delicate position in his role as mediator between the Liberals and organised labour. His political standing in the city relied heavily on Liberal sponsorship yet he was representing the workers' challenge to

the local Liberal Party. He eventually managed to maintain his position of respect in both camps by supporting the cause of "progress". He explained shortly after the election:

"A few weeks ago in Sheffield, when a national cause was at stake I knew I had the winning in my hands. But I could say, ah, the cause is greater than mine. I can stand aside, suffer humiliation, if I can only see the cause is advanced."¹⁴¹

Tactfully Hobson maintained his position as the corner stone of Sheffield Lib-Labism.

The Independent Labour Party, formed only a few months earlier in Sheffield, fielded a candidate called Frank Smith, a Londoner.¹⁴² The I.L.P. campaign was organised by A.G. Wolfe and Andrew (Navy) Hall, secretary of the local Gas Workers and General Labourers Union.¹⁴³ Smith was a Salvationist and his Christian Socialism coloured his campaign. His election poster read;

"Christians awake. Every Sheffielder that believes that Jesus the Carpenter's son came to save the working masses, body and soul, should work and vote for Frank Smith."¹⁴⁴

It is questionable how far this kind of appeal influenced the working class electorate and how far the vote for Smith was a form of protest against local Liberalism. Commenting on the support given to Smith, the Daily Chronicle noted:

"Great numbers of trade unionists it appeared had not made up their minds which way to vote until yesterday (pollin day). They were anxious to support the Labour candidate but when they saw that to give him their vote simply meant handing over the constituency to the Tories, they voted for Langley."¹⁴⁵

A telegram from Ben Pickard, advising the miners of the

constituency to vote for Langley, published in the local Liberal press shortly before the election, may have influenced the result.¹⁴⁶

The election of Langley in the Liberal interest secured his representation of Attercliffe in parliament for the next fifteen years. The experience of the by-election strengthened independent working class political organisation and the Labour-Socialist tactic and contributed much to the temper of labour's political opposition to local Liberalism in the following years. The influence of the election on Liberal strategy during subsequent campaigns was apparent at both parliamentary and municipal levels, not least during the by-election campaign in Brightside three years later.

The strength of the Conservative challenge to the traditionally Radical seat of Brightside was noted by F.T.Mappin:

"It appears to me Brightside will be a very difficult seat to hold for the Radical Party. The very greatest care must be used in selecting its future representative."¹⁴⁷

The potential strength of Conservative opposition was increased by the prospect of a popular industrial candidate.¹⁴⁸ The apprehension felt by the Liberal Party at the strength of opposition was grounded in recent Conservative inroads made into municipal politics. Though Sheffield was once strongly Liberal, in the years following the 1892 municipal elections "there was one of the most remarkable cases of right about faces ever known."¹⁴⁹

The Liberal candidate, Fred Maddison, was securely in the Lib-Lab mould.¹⁵⁰ Firstly he was not a local man. The Liberal Party in Brightside were consistently wary of supporting a popular local working class candidate, however loyal to Liberal principles. This was so as to be able to control the

direction of labour politics in the city. Maddison also satisfied a second requirement of Lib-Labism, that the candidate should be as far as possible self-supporting. He was prepared to cope financially on the strength of his work as a free lance journalist.¹⁵¹ His electoral manifesto was firmly tied to the principles of the Newcastle Programme. On fiscal matters he supported free trade and offered the suggestion that lack of technical education and resistance to mechanisation were the root causes of Britain's industrial decline. His working class credentials came from his work within the railway trade union movement. Since Brightside Liberalism was dominated by the Radical wing, Maddison's support for undenominational education, a local veto of the licensing laws and, most significantly, his anti-imperialist stand were acceptable. He took a firm Wilsonian line in foreign policy declaring:

"Militarism is the foe of liberty and the blight of industrialism and its growth is a real danger to the nation."¹⁵²

In his attitude to Independent Labour Politics, Maddison fulfilled a further requirement, that of an intermediary. He confided his opinions on the Independent Labour Party to H.J. Wilson:

"With the I.L.P. people, I have had much to do and have fought them with some degree of success in politics and industrial questions...we occupy positions which cannot be harmonised."¹⁵³

In public, Maddison addressed the electorate on the question of Labour Representation in terms designed to mollify middle class anxiety. He reassured his adoption meeting:

"I am hopeful...I shall be able to show every true Liberal in the Brightside division that intelligent Labour representation and robust Liberalism can go hand in hand to the advancement of all classes."¹⁵⁴

The Sheffield I.L.P. did not field a candidate in the election but made their response in the form of a Manifesto which advised Labour supporters not to vote for Maddison on the grounds that,

"his programme is that of the ordinary capitalist...(and) he has proved himself an unscrupulous opponent of the socialist movement."¹⁵⁵

This document which was published in the local Tory press was signed by J.Kier Hardie, Tom Mann, Tom Shaw, president of the Sheffield I.L.P. and J.G.Booler, local secretary. The Clarion recorded this general opposition in describing Maddison as

"the nominee of the wealthy employers...a species of more or less bogus labour candidate."¹⁵⁶

The result of the election was interpreted by local Conservatives as an indication of the "Toryfication" of the large cities in the country as a whole. The reduced Liberal majority was explained away by the Sheffield Liberal Party as the result of peculiar local factors including the Lib-Lab tactic which presented for the first time a working class candidate to the electorate, the hostility of the local I.L.P. and the legacy of poor relations between Liberalism and the Trades Union Movement in the city which were the continuing result of the 1894 by-election.¹⁵⁷ It is likely that both the working class electorate and middle class electorate which traditionally voted for the Liberal candidate exercised a degree of abstention while some may have switched their preference to the popular Conservative, J.F.Hope.¹⁵⁸

The dominance of the Wilson faction within the Sheffield Liberal Party was seriously discredited by the experience

of the 1897 by-election and the 1900 general election.

Brightside, once a Liberal stronghold, was lost in 1900 to the Conservatives giving them a four to one majority in local parliamentary representation. The Wilson family and its supporters led the anti-war movement in Sheffield whereas in other parts of the country, this was led by the socialist movement.¹⁵⁹ The remainder of the Sheffield Liberal Party supported the imperialist policies of Lord Roseberry and these went on to form a local branch of the Liberal League in 1902.¹⁶⁰ The leadership of the Liberal Party in Sheffield shifted, as a result, from the Wilson faction to Sir William Clegg. With this move, control over the Party's organisation and finances passed from one section to the other. The United Liberal Committee, under the control of the Wilsons, was crippled financially and the Party entered a period of imperialist politics. The U.L.C. managed to survive however due to the moral and financial support of the Wilsons and F.T. Mappin.¹⁶¹

The 1900 general election, in effect ruptured the Sheffield Liberal Party along lines already clearly marked out through the electoral politics of the preceding decade. This local experience has been likened to the national scene as,

"a microcosm of the paralysis of the Party as a whole."¹⁶²

The crucial question was still how to attract the working class vote but now the tactics of moral and personal persuasion, through the Lib-Lab intermediary, were giving way to a more materialistic and imperialistic approach. The dominant view was that the Party should emphasise that,

"The Liberalism which created the democratic colonies

was alone fitted to build up the fabric of Liberty and equality in the lands now distracted by strife and racial hatred."¹⁶³

The marked increase in labour and socialist activity shortly before 1906 was reflected in the electoral tactics adopted by the two main Parties during the election campaign of that year.¹⁶⁴ In particular, the Sheffield Liberal League believed that defects in Liberal leadership and in its approach to the working class electorate, were encouraging workers,

"to secede from the Liberal Associations and Committees to discuss amongst themselves at I.L.P. meetings or in public houses the shortcomings of Liberalism..."¹⁶⁵

To counter this, the Liberal League decided to emphasise the national and international policies of the Liberal Party. In the meantime, the Lib-Lab tactic was retained in the working class electoral approach, combining national interest with local concerns. The Party selected Tudor Walters in 1903 as prospective Parliamentary candidate for Brightside. Walters was a Lib-Lab in the preferred mould. He was introduced to the constituency in the following terms:

"He was a Radical primarily because he believed that was the Party that could do most for the working class of the country (and)...he should like to be able to describe himself if ever he stood for Parliament as a Lib-Lab candidate."¹⁶⁶

Walters was well aware of the necessity of capturing local labour support and courted the local labour leadership. He publicised his record of close relations with the organised

labour movement in Leicester, his home town.¹⁶⁷ In Brightside, the I.L.P. organisation was relatively weak but the socialist movement was growing in influence. Walters remarked on this to H.J.Wilson in 1905:

"I certainly have noticed during my movements about the division the growing strength of the Socialist Party, which I hope will not mean mischief for us, but it certainly requires watching."¹⁶⁸

Here again, Walters fulfilled a central requirement of Lib-Labism that of providing intelligence on the state of local socialist and labour politics.

In 1906, the Liberal campaign in Brightside focused on social and industrial questions, posing Home Rule as a secondary issue and presenting fiscal reform as "the enemy of trades unionism".¹⁶⁹ Walters' pro-Labour image was enforced by the presence at his meetings of Labour representatives from Leicester. One of these, councillor Mann stated that

"in all questions touching Labour, Walters had always been in the forefront in supporting the interests of the workmen."¹⁷⁰

The Leicester I.L.P. and L.R.C. sent a public commendation of Walters. This provoked anger and resentment among members of the Sheffield I.L.P. who denounced Walters as one

"whose fate was having a rope tied around his neck-the Liberal Party."

An apology from the Leicester I.L.P. was eventually secured.¹⁷¹

The question of employment in the local steel industry was addressed by Walters who voiced his personal concern over the dangers of protectionism. To underline this, the Liberals called on the service of a sympathetic local manufacturer,

John M. Laird, chairman of Cammell Laird and Company, who strongly opposed protectionism. Once more the role of the industrial employer was thought to be an essential component in any credible political campaign.¹⁷²

After the 1906 general election, the national Liberal League movement faded in influence in the context of a Liberal government pledged to carry out domestic reforms. However, in Sheffield the League was growing in confidence due to the renewed vigour with which the anti-socialist campaign, under the direction of Sir William Clegg, was proceeding.¹⁷³

Sheffield Liberalism suffered a set back in relation to the national situation and this encouraged the non-conformist section of the Party to renew their efforts to form working alliances and agreements with organised Labour. In 1909, the election of Joseph Pointer as M.P. for Attercliffe, in the Labour interest, gave further strength to the Lib-Lab tactic.

The economic climate in which the Attercliffe by-election was contested denied the potency of Liberal Party ideology which at this time suggested no radical, uprooting formula for change. The depression in trade and high levels of unemployment seemed to demand a kind of radical solution that in their own ways, both the Labour and Conservative Parties appeared to be offering. The Labour and Conservative Parties both advocated a form of State intervention which ran contrary to any idea of class harmony and denial of conflict which underlined much Liberal Party ideology at this time.¹⁷⁴

The Liberal Party candidate, Reginald Lambert, was the choice of the Sheffield Liberal League. The League was at the

peak of its strength and confidence at this time. Lambert's lack of working class credentials or interest in local industry was overcome through an emphasis on his knowledge and experience of imperialist matters.¹⁷⁵

It was believed at the time of the Attercliffe by-election of 1894 that an informal agreement had been secured between the Liberal Party and the local Labour leadership regarding the retirement of Batty Langley from his position as member of parliament at a time suitable for an independent Labour challenge. However, once in Parliament, Langley was reluctant to step down and despite ill health was eager to continue.¹⁷⁶

From the time of the general election of 1906, the Wilsons and Langley were considering the best prospects for the succession. Both Langley and Wycliffe Wilson were agreed that

"the next candidate must be a Labour man, and that he must not be an I.L.P. candidate."¹⁷⁷

The growing strength of I.L.P. organisation and membership in the constituency had the effect of making more urgent the task of constructing a formidable Lib-Lab alliance. The idea of trading a straight fight between a Labour candidate, acceptable to the Liberal Party in Attercliffe, in return for assurance that Brightside be fought only by the Liberals, was suggested. This idea was to form the basis of a Lib-Lab pact in Sheffield during the general election campaign of January 1910.¹⁷⁸

The Liberal campaign in Attercliffe in 1909 was founded on the strength of the Budget and the government's programme of social and industrial legislation.¹⁷⁹ The campaign was injected with a popular imperialism closely related to local employment

prospects. The vital interest of Attercliffe in the government's defence programme was admitted. This was discussed in terms of the first requirement of the Budget's taxation proposals which would lay the foundations of a new naval building programme and thus the electorate was advised,

"vote for Lambert and make sure of the Dreadnoughts" and "No Budget, No Dreadnoughts".¹⁸⁰

Fuelled by its anti-socialist crusade, the Liberals described Labour's electoral challenge and its policies as "impossible Utopianism" and that while its policies might have a place sometime in the future, the immediate option for the social democrat was "the real and satisfactory advance along the path of social reform."¹⁸¹

In order to explain the defeat of Lambert, the Liberal press coupled the Labour and Liberal candidates together as the "Progressive cause" which had outweighed the electoral support for "reaction", thus reflecting the tactical direction which the Liberal Party was now once more ready to adopt.¹⁸²

The dismal performance of the Sheffield Liberal Party in the elections of 1906 and 1909 created the opportunity for a revival of the tactics and influence of the Wilsonian, non-conformist section of the Party. The position of the Liberal League in Sheffield seems to have strengthened in inverse proportion to the electoral strength of the Party. The consolidation of the League in the city coincided with and was strengthened by an anti-socialist stance which had the effect of driving some Liberals back into the Wilson section. The Liberal anti-socialism was most ably voiced by Sir William Clegg who declared:

"If the Liberal Party was to regain its position

it must declare in no uncertain manner its determined opposition to Revolutionary Socialism."¹⁸³

But the election of Joseph Pointer for the Sheffield Labour Party, to represent Attercliffe in 1909, and the collapse of the Liberal League nationally in the same year, forced the local Party to regroup and reconsider its electoral tactics. A complicating factor was that the Party needed to maintain the allegiance of the more wealthy benefactors since its financial condition was less secure than that of local Conservatism.

The non-conformist wing of the Party saw the conciliation or assimilation of Labour as the only option for the Liberal Party and that this agreement should be worked out in the industrial constituencies of Attercliffe and Brightside. The revival of Lib-Labism at this juncture was made more feasible by a move to the right which was reflected in the Labour Representation of Sheffield at this time.¹⁸⁴

The circumstances from which an agreement with Labour was forged arose from the imminence of a three cornered contest in Attercliffe. The Liberal Party calculated that "the socialist Labour Party and ourselves cannot but regard the Conservative as our common enemy and we ought to find some way of co-operating together to defeat him."¹⁸⁵ The Labour Party's hopes for parliamentary representation in Brightside were well known to the Liberals and an agreement was sought to allow for a straight contest between Labour and Conservative in Attercliffe in return for Labour's abstention in Brightside. Pointer, in his personal correspondence with H.J.Wilson, and publicly in the press, declared himself unwilling to accept financial support from either of the two main Parties in a gesture reminiscent

of the Lib-Labism of the 1890s. There was considerable opposition voiced over negotiations to form an agreement by Sir William Clegg and the remnants of the Liberal League in Sheffield. but the majority of the Attercliffe Liberal Association were in favour. The decision not to field a Liberal candidate was taken on November 24th and after some deliberation it was decided to publish Pointer's election literature and officially advise Liberals to vote for him. The Sheffield Independent commented:

"The fortunes of Liberalism and Labour are once more made identical. We are as we were, minus a great flood of socialist propoganda largely run to waste."¹⁸⁶

The resurrection of Wilsonian Liberalism was evident also in the choice of candidates for the Parliamentary divisions of Central, Ecclesall and Hallam which were all Conservative strongholds. Here, the prospective Liberal candidates were each closely associated with the Wilsons. John Derry, candidate for Ecclesall, and Arthur Neal, for Hallam, were both ex-office holders in the Sheffield branch of the Liberal League and had both resigned their membership in 1908 over the new strong line taken by the League against the socialist movement. A.J. Bailey, a trade unionist and city councillor, who was closely associated with the Lib-Lab group around the Wilsons from the early 1900s, was selected to stand for the Central division.¹⁸⁷

In Ecclesall, John Derry, ex-editor of the Sheffield Independent and a nonconformist Liberal, had been closely associated with the Wilsons since the 1890s.¹⁸⁸ His imperialist sympathies temporarily estranged him however and he took a prominent part in the Sheffield Liberal League before resigning in 1908. His

campaign stressed the importance of good Labour relations and underlined the domestic reform programme of the Liberal Party.¹⁸⁹ This was true also of the campaign conducted by Arthur Neal in Hallam and Bailey in Central divisions. Bailey was presented by the Liberal press as "the workers' champion" who was "fighting under the banner of Democracy and it was the duty of the working men not to discuss lines of demarcation but to combine to defeat the common enemy".¹⁹⁰ Just as Pointer had been presented after his success in 1909 as allied to the forces of "progress", so Bailey represented the triumph of the "People's Party" against "reaction".¹⁹¹

In December 1910, the second general election of the year saw the question of fiscal reform at the peak of its influence. Unlike past election campaigns in the East End this one saw the question of fiscal reform take priority over other issues. Once more, the influence of a Parliamentary representative on the government's naval building programme was emphasised. Tudor Walters declared his ability to influence this area:

"You will notice...one of the Sheffield firms had a share in the past lot of battle ships. Well, I had more than a little to do with it."¹⁹²

To underline this influence, letters were published in the local press from employers thanking Walters for his efforts. The industrial-political axis of control was in such a way reaffirmed.¹⁹

The support of the working man in employment as a result of Walters' representation was presented through the Liberal press.

"A Socialist" asked how could anyone not support Walters,

"after he got Cammells off the Government Black List ...for without government work it would mean that many of the Brightside workers would be now out of employment."¹⁹⁴

Walters was presented to the working class electorate as a Lib-Lab, as he had been previously, but this time he was said to represent the united forces of "progress" based on the achievements of the Budget which he called "the foundation of a superstructure of reform." The interests of the working class relied on this united front. In such terms was the new Lib-Lab relationship of the post-1909 period in Sheffield's politics described.¹⁹⁵

Between 1914 and 1920 there, was constructed an organisational political alliance between the Liberal and Conservative Parties. Since much of the approach to the working class electorate relied as far as both Parties were concerned on their interpretation of the connection between industry, politics and the community, in the crisis of war, an electoral truce appeared to be the logical arrangement. It has been said of Sheffield's Party politics that

"The war...strengthened already formulated arguments for a coalition and gave its creation some legitimacy ...the war-time political truce arranged by Clegg and Cattell, the new Conservative leader in August 1914, represented a sigh of relief, an unlooked for, but happy contingency."¹⁹⁶

After the death of H.J.Wilson in 1914, the nonconformist, Lib-Lab tendency of Sheffield Liberalism was much weakened. The Party under the leadership of Sir William Clegg had recognised the benefits of a common front against socialism before the war. The rise in the scale and temper of socialist activity and industrial militancy between 1910 and 1913 strengthened his resolve.¹⁹⁷ In 1913, the Conservative and Liberal Parties in the city formed an electoral alliance against the

Labour and Socialist Parties at the Board of Guardians Elections. George Franklin*, of the Conservative Party, voiced an opinion as to the nature and origins of the Labour challenge, over which the Liberal and Conservative Parties could unite in common agreement:

"It was the callous disregard of manufacturers (to social conditions etc) especially the Radicals, which had brought about the present day discontent and forced the workers to seek a remedy in socialism...to rise and look with suspicion on any Party, and determine to fight for themselves."¹⁹⁸

Interestingly, Franklin pointed out the crucial role of the industrial employer, especially in his civic activity and interest, as the key to a successful electoral approach to the working class, almost regardless of Party.¹⁹⁹

The Municipal elections of 1913 resulted in a Conservative majority on the City Council and the recent reorganisation of the Party was considered to have contributed to this result. During the war-time political truce at local and national levels, prominent members of the two major Parties co-operated together on the many statutory bodies which were set up to control the war effort.²⁰⁰

The substantial defeats suffered by both the Liberal and Conservative Parties at the Municipal elections of 1919 turned the war-time truce into a more permanent alliance.²⁰¹ The Sheffield Citizens Association, a "non-political" body, was formed in July 1920.²⁰² Led by Sir William Clegg, the Association, and its Constitutional Vigilance Committee, was primarily concerned to strengthen the city's anti-socialist crusade. With the more permanent nature of Labour's electoral

presence, the dual perspective in political debate was challenged forcing the Liberal and Conservative Parties to officially recognise their own common ground. This common ground was forged in the years of crisis and adjustment leading up to the outbreak of war. It was based on a re-definition of the relations of power in society, grounded in experience in the workplace, the community and the political arena.

2 (iii) The Social and Cultural Organisation of Control

In order to understand how it was that the capitalist system of organisation was maintained at all levels of society whilst the challenge of Labour and Socialist politics was accommodated, it is necessary to examine one of the key areas of antagonism at this time; the social and cultural sphere.. The construction and maintenance of a social and cultural frame of reference, which dictated to modes of behaviour, belief and reasoning, while allowing for adequate flexibility to accommodate change under the guise of 'progress', was a pivotal mechanism of control. Its means of operation was through definition, especially through the definition of the relations between the spheres of work, community and politics.

The challenge of the organised working class movement carried with it a challenge to the frame of reference of the dominant social and cultural ideology. This challenge was diverse in content according to the political perspective of the various organisations of labour and socialist politics but the precise areas of interest were similar. These were the areas of antagonism identified by the exponents of the

dominant ideology voiced through the comment of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, the press and the churches.

The extent to which organised labour was able to contest the dominant social and cultural ideology is in some way related to the nature of working class politics at this time as reflected in the local clubs, press, educational institutions, and recreational facilities which were created. This essential supportive network both maintained activists and posed a challenge to orthodox society. The measure of this challenge can be examined through the attempts made by the ruling classes in local society to bridge the gap in the social and cultural sphere, for it was recognised as a crucial area of control in linking the relationships between the areas of work, politics and society. Lib-Labism was, in this context, the mechanism constructed to facilitate the communication of Liberalism in response to what was perceived as an increasingly distinct, remote and therefore threatening political working class movement. Similarly, the Conservative Party constructed its own means of communication in the social and cultural sphere; the Volunteer Movement was one such mechanism.

Both Conservatism and Liberalism contributed to the maintenance of the separation of the sexes in the social and cultural sphere, establishing acceptable male leisure pursuits and defining accepted female interests and activities. The incorporation of women into the working class political movement at this time, especially those who challenged the patriarchal basis of organising power in society, contested directly this dominant ideology. The reaffirmation of the separate spheres for the sexes by the upholders of the dominant ideology reflects this challenge.

The examination of the social and cultural organisation of control will focus on the three major areas of antagonism identified at this time; imperialism, class and patriarchy. These areas will be considered as they operated in defining the nature of work, politics and social and community life. In the following section the challenge of organised working class politics at these points of antagonism will be examined.²⁰²

George Franklin* once described work as "the greatest responsibility of manhood" which succinctly expressed the dominant ideology of his time.²⁰³ Accepted notions of work and employment were grounded in the sexual division of labour which categorised work only in terms of the employment contract. The individual relationship between employer and employee underlined the terms of that contract, notably that a 'fair day's pay' should be earned by a 'fair day's work'. This individual responsibility involved the practice of socially recognised standards of efficiency, sobriety, respectability and economy which in theory impinged on the freedom of both employer and employee. These same standards of behaviour were accepted currency in political and community life. In effect the three spheres of activity, the workplace, the home and the political arena, were linked by the definition of these standards and values.

The late nineteenth century intensification of industrial capitalism was grounded in a greater social and cultural separation between the workplace and the home. This process of separation has been referred to in recent work. Patrick Joyce has argued that the post mid-nineteenth century "new" division of labour in the family served to underpin

the cohesion of community feeling, "directing it to an acceptance of the routines and authority of work."²⁰⁴ The 'family' and the 'household' were eulogised in popular discourse as the shelter of values conducive to social stability. In particular, the role of the mother became increasingly subject to social and political evaluation in the years following the Boer War.²⁰⁵ This was the result of a general fear on the part of the government that the ill-health and poor education of potential mothers was contributing to the decline of the race.²⁰⁶ The first world war re-kindled these fears and in 1917, a National Baby Week was staged which in Sheffield featured a "Purity Campaign" whose object was;

"raising the standard of personal morality and quickening the sense of personal responsibility amongst women and girls in view of the sacred responsibilities of motherhood and the future being of the race."²⁰⁷

Central to this view of the family and the role of the mother was the sexual division of labour. In general, trade union structure and comment was rooted in the acceptance of this division. Only at the level of socialist-syndicalist political theory did this ideology ever become questioned and positioned as a central tenet of working class politics.²⁰⁸

The sexual division of labour in the Sheffield 'light' trades was evident from the time of handicraft manufacture when although women assisted men in the work process, the organisation and protection of the trades was developed through the restriction of output based on apprentice regulation.²⁰⁹ The impact of industrial capitalism on the 'light' trades effected a sub-division of labour which further limited the potential scope for the employment of women and girls. As a result,

female employment was increasingly restricted to unmarried women and young girls on semi-skilled work which did not compete with better paid, male skilled work.²¹⁰ The subordination of women's work, especially in terms of employment, was endorsed by the trade union movement. At the same time, the social and cultural ideology of womanhood re-emphasised these restrictions. Women were denied a public voice for which the male head of the family, the 'bread winner' sufficed.²¹¹ It was against this definition of womanhood, constructed by the upholders of the dominant ideology and maintained by the labour movement as a whole, that the challenge of feminist politics was forced to operate.

The construction and operation of the concept of the 'family wage' and of the secondary or casual nature of women's employment was presented as a natural and a-political phenomenon. In this sense, any questioning of the condition of women's work and employment was faced with the first task of bringing the issue into the arena of political debate. One central impediment to this politicisation was the division of labour according to skill, respectability and the ability to provide a family wage. The 'labour aristocrat' was one who needed not to rely on a second wage provided by his wife's work. It was therefore necessarily the poorest families whose female members were forced to work usually in the lowest class, dangerous and uncomfortable occupations in conditions which further reinforced the social stigma associated with such work.²¹²

From their first years girls were brought up to expect a confined existence in the home as a natural condition of their sex. This was reinforced throughout their education. The

Sheffield Union for the Care and Help of Girls and Young Women, a middle class philanthropic institution set up in 1881 received:

"Homeless girls, or girls who are unfortunate in their homes...or who, from various causes would scarcely have a chance of doing well in life unless they could by some means obtain some training in habits of cleanliness and industry, and in the rudiments of household work."²¹³

The main source of employment for girls and women in Sheffield throughout the period under study was domestic service. This occupation obviously underlined what was regarded as the principal role of women, that of wife and mother. At the Girls Industrial School, it was ensured that;

"nothing that can be of use to them, either as domestic servants or in their own homes should they become wives, is neglected. They are taught washing, cooking, baking, sewing, home cleaning - in fact everything that can be required."²¹⁴

The ideology of the domestic sphere of women's work was taken up vehemently by Lib-Lab trade unionism which was well represented by Charles Hobson who wrote in the journal, The Metal Worker on 'Woman: Her Place and Power.':

"Speaking generally, and outside special cases and persons of exceptional ability, gifts and callings, a woman's duty is purely domestic...She is not, nor should she be, the law maker, but she makes the mind of man who is both the law maker and the one who makes the House of Legislation...Her great forte is in the school and the home of the children...It is hers to correct the irregularities of home life so that home may become the nursery of the nation and the church."²¹⁵

The second largest area of women's employment was in the local cutlery industry.²¹⁶ Here much out-work was contracted

and home work fitted conveniently around domestic chores for many married women. An example of this is well illustrated in the case of a female file cutter quoted in The Equipment of the Workers, a social survey of the working classes of Sheffield, carried out during the war years. It was found:

"The living room is neat and comfortable, linoleum and rugs on the floor...the order and cleanliness compare favourably with that of many houses in which no industrial work is carried on. The cutlery work is kept together on the board under the window."²¹⁷

The double burden of industrial and domestic work, which was a direct correlation of the dominant ideology of work for married working women, was often referred to in terms of the respectability of certain sections of the working class:

"A married woman working from Monday until Friday, and looking after the house meanwhile...was able to earn the sum of five shillings...to do this she has to be industrious. It is not often that a woman who resumes her occupation of file cutting after marriage goes back to the 'shop'... she would have to share the rent of the 'shop' and...would not be able to exercise any supervision of her home. Instead she sets up a 'stock' in front of the living room window, and there works until Friday nights, when the evidences of her occupation are taken down into the cellar, or else packed out of sight beneath the family sofa, so that the husband may enjoy his weekend free from the too obtrusive signs of toil."²¹⁸

Women and girls employed in the factories, warehouses, workshops, shops and restaurants of Sheffield were confined to specific un-skilled tasks and earned on average half that men could receive in the same occupation. This was legitimated and re-produced by social comment which emphasised the primary role of women as wives and mothers. One means of

maintaining this in terms of popular debate was by discussing women's work as it affected personal appearance. The Sheffield Independent commented in 1906:

"In our midst there are hundreds of girls and women (apart from those who earn their livelihood as shop-assistants waitresses and barmaids, or in any other admittedly feminine occupations like millinery and dressmaking) ... employed in the cutlery industry ... the trade of etching - unskilled labour for which women and girls are particularly well suited...and in the silver trade are the burnishers, girls who are known for the smoothness of their hands."²¹⁹

Even in any discussion of the hazards of women's work, the impact of dangerous conditions was considered in terms of its affecting the moral and physical attraction of women as potential marriage partners:

"In personal appearance, etchers compare favourably with tailoresses and shirt makers, with whom they share a tendency to wear hair curlers during working hours, though the acids used in etching prevent them having very nice hands."²²⁰

One area of work, traditionally carried out by women, was health care.²²¹ At this time, the expansion of women's employment into certain areas of the medical profession was evident. At the same time there was an increasing professionalisation of health care and an onslaught by medical men on the work of un-qualified midwives.²²² The number of female sick-nurses and invalid attendants including midwives, enumerated in the Census for Yorkshire in 1901 was 5,014; this was an increase of 40.4% on the previous figure (1891).²²³ But the scope for training and employment was limited by the dominant ideology which saw women's role as servicing and caring rather than directing medical treatment. The areas of work in the medical profession which were the most powerful and highly paid were

considered too intellectually taxing for women. Midwifery was increasingly undermined by medical men and in Sheffield the Medical Officer of Health spearheaded a campaign against unqualified midwives. In 1885, he reported:

"A large number of women are attended exclusively by midwives during their confinement...it is hoped that some legislation will result calculated to restrain the pernicious practices of this class of women, who seem able to scatter broadcast the seeds of terrible disease with perfect impunity under the existing laws."²²⁴

Further contention that male attendance at birth was preferable to female was repeated in the following years in the context of a general fear over the physical capacity of the next generation. Legislation was introduced designed to curtail the practise of untrained midwives or 'handy women' and consequently to bring the profession more directly under the control of the medical men.²²⁵

In the dominant ideology of work and the 'family wage', the importance of individual responsibility, efficiency, respectability and deference has been outlined as such values impinged on industrial relations in the workplace.²²⁶ In social and cultural life generally, and in family life in particular, these same values were stressed as conducive to good citizenship. Often it was these same employers who expounded on standards of behaviour in the social sphere.²²⁷ Obviously these standards of behaviour were useful to working class life in terms of sheer survival, however, when taken up in a moral crusade through the mediation of an official representative of labour the result was divisive of working class unity and complimentary to the definitive power of the local industrial and commercial bourgeoisie.

The Lib-Lab trade union official and/or labour representative was in a key position in communicating and maintaining the dominant ideology of social class. Councillor Stuart Uttley, secretary of the File Cutters Union, fulfilled this role precisely in remarking on the shortcomings of his own class. He considered:

"It is quite true we have our weaknesses as a class. The curses of betting and drinking are in strong evidence, the loose system of working into which we have drifted tending to loss of work and wages, and the undue love of sport, are all matters which must be overcome."²²⁸

Likewise, Robert Holmshaw, secretary of the Scissor Makers Society, on returning from a study tour of the United States, offered his comments on the comparisons in the two Countries' systems of production:

"The Sheffield workman works harder than the American and of course, is in many cases equally as sober; but it cannot be denied that there are many instances where the fatal drinking habits result in great waste of time, and consequent annoyance to the employer."²²⁹

Working class temperance and tee-totalism often went hand-in-hand with political activity particularly, but not exclusively, within Lib-Labism.²³⁰

One means of institutionalising working class deference to dominant ideology was through the benefit or friendly societies. These were eulogised by local employers of all political persuasions as underlining the mutuality of the classes. Through thrift and economy, the working class might rise into the position of employer which, it was suggested, was how the most wealthy industrialists had realised their potential.²³¹

The Friendly Society was presented as the 'natural' source

of welfare provision. Speaking as a guest of the Independent Druids, George Franklin* noted:

"the absolute usefulness of voluntary thrift as practiced by the working class themselves, and the great value of service which friendly societies were able to secure for their management."²³²

The industrial worker was encouraged to register with a friendly society to ensure against injury at work. In this way the employer was enabled to 'contract out' of the financial commitment demanded of him under the Workmen's Compensation Act.²³³ At the same time, the welfare benefits of the trade unions and their important social functions were undermined.

The notion of the mutuality of capital and labour was an essential component of the general ideology of class at this time. It was expressed in popular terms to counter the class politics of some sections of the labour movement. In 1894, the editor of The Hammer, the newspaper of the Radical wing of the Sheffield Liberal Party, recalled a time when:

"Men were taught that work was a necessity, and thrift was a duty. Men were to work as needs be, but they were to conserve the fruits of their labour so as to become Capitalists...The founders and leaders of the older classes of trade unions were freely impressed with an appreciation of the value of thrift."²³⁴

The popular communication of notions of thrift, respectability and individual responsibility in industrial relations was such as to deny any concept of class conflict as inherent under the capitalist system. This found expression under the wider canopy of imperialism. As one commentator has put it recently:

"Social imperialism was designed to draw all classes

together in defence of the nation and empire and aimed to prove to the least well-to-do that its interests were inseparable from those of the nation. It aimed at undermining the argument of the socialists in demonstrating that, contrary to the Marxist allegation, the workers had more to loose than their chains."²³⁵

In this sense, the workers had to be 'above class' in order to be able to communicate to their fellows a higher social morality.²³⁶

In practical terms, attempts were made during these years to construct Unions of Capital and Labour. In 1894, a preliminary conference was organised at a national level to form an Industrial Union of Employers and Employed. Robert Hadfield* was elected first president of the organisation and Fred Maddison and Stuart Uttley of Sheffield were among the vice presidents. Charles Hobson, president of the Sheffield Federated Trades Council, hoped that all trades councils would support the initiative.²³⁷ Although this body failed to take root, the principle remained a consistent element in popular debate. Robert Hadfield* continued to advocate mutual agreement between capital and labour as a solution to industrial strife. Addressing his shareholders in 1907, at the time of an impending pay dispute with local engineers, Hadfield noted:

" (the) very good conditions of trade but that employers and employees had to pull together for if strikes and lock-outs were started it was pretty certain, the general tone of the body politic would be lowered with disadvantages to capitalists, shareholders and workmen" and he hoped for "a very careful handling of the labour question."²³⁸

In March 1912, Hadfield* called for the formation of a

Ministry of Labour to settle disputes.²³⁹ And in 1913, speaking to a local friendly society gathering, W.L.Hitchens*, chairman of Cammell Lairds, spoke on the subject of private enterprise in industry and suggested that industry could only operate on private lines, recognising the "joint interests" of labour and capital.²⁴⁰

During the first world war, the notion of the mutuality of the classes was employed with vigour and the idea of constituting an organisational alliance of Employers and Employed was considered as an essential and urgent part of post-war reconstruction. At a meeting held to consider a three year truce in local industrial relations in the immediate aftermath of the war, "ninety trade unionists and one-hundred-and-twenty employers attended."²⁴¹ Douglas Vickers* spoke on behalf of the Brightside Conservative Party on the need for "neutral" parties to aid a better understanding between labour and capital. He believed:

"No two bodies in the Country should be closer allied than labour and capital. They had got to get away from the influence of the street corner speakers who expressed some of the wildest things often from ulterior motives. Any help in this matter would be of the greatest assistance to the Country" and "as one of the persons interested he would do all he could to help the matter on."²⁴²

Robert Hadfield* continued to talk of the mutuality of capital and labour in the context of growing industrial unrest during the war. He begged:

"the workmen of Sheffield seriously to consider before taking action which is a danger to the State for in endangering the State, they were endangering themselves." ²⁴³

The strikes in the local steel and engineering industries during May 1917 prompted comment from local employers which again emphasised the mutuality of capital and labour.

W.L.Hitchens^{*}, chairman of Cammell Lairds, suggested that:

"The workers have not been properly treated in the past -their houses are a disgrace...conditions generally deplorable...But there must be mutual trust and co-operation between the workers and leaders."²⁴⁴

He considered, finally, that Sheffield might lead the way in a national campaign to re-unite capital and labour.²⁴⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the war, local employers continued to emphasise the same mutuality of interests between themselves and their employees, with greater urgency.

Robert Hadfield spoke of:

"The long strain of the war, the community of suffering, the close association in the field, trench, camp, oft-times of master and man, the common danger to civilisation, the colossal effort of defence both at the front and in the workshops, have produced a new conception of inter-dependence."²⁴⁶

Attempts were made by some local firms to provide internal mutual welfare schemes to improve industrial relations. At Brown Bayley's Steel Works, the "Ferrets Society" was one such scheme; an organisation for workers and management to meet in leisure time. The Society met monthly from 1919, heard lectures and discussed together the running of the firm. In the summer, the meetings took the form of excursions to the country. William Shelton, chairman of the Company, thought that:

"This co-operation and kindly relations between employer and employed has had a lot to do with our

increased tonnage...Let employers and employed learn that it is in their united interests to pull together at this time, for the good of industry...and thus workers and masters will have a bright and happy future."²⁴⁷

The 'model employer' was in this period one who stressed the mutuality of labour and capital, both in the workplace and in the community. Several local employers in Sheffield were noted in this respect. They were able to influence public opinion in industrial, social and political fields. It has been noted that such reputations were not won by members of particular Parties, but spanned the political, industrial and religious sectors.²⁴⁸

Sir Charles Skelton* of Sheaf Bank Works, Heeley, was a Radical. He had among his workforce several with over forty years service. It was said of him that:

"He took an almost patriarchal interest in the welfare of the people he employed, always recognising the human bond that existed between himself and them."²⁴⁹

W.F.Beardshaw* of J.Beardshaw and Sons Ltd. of Baltic Steel Works was respected for his living directly above his factory for fifteen years. He was noted for the particularly good relations he enjoyed with his employees, with whom he was on first name terms.²⁵⁰

One means of influencing the relationship between labour and capital in the workplace and in the community was through promoting the popular acceptance of imperialism and militarism. The Volunteer Movement was established in Sheffield by leading Conservative manufacturers in the 1860s.²⁵¹ With the general re-assertion of imperialism around the turn of the century by both the Conservative Party and the imperialist wing of the

Liberal Party, the Volunteer Movement was given new strength and political and industrial significance. It served several needs. It usefully filled the leisure time of male industrial workers, continuing the relationship between employer and employee after working hours; it coupled together deference and patriotism, local and national sentiment and in so doing, linked the security of employment with military discipline. Not least, the Volunteers trained "the manhood of the country to repel the invader."²⁵² But perhaps more immediately, the forces provided for a greater degree of discipline in the workplace.

Several leading industrialists in Sheffield were associated with the Imperial Industries Club. In 1906, the annual meeting of the Club was held in Sheffield and the subject of discussion was "Voluntary versus Compulsory Military Service". While Colonel H. Hughes*, a leading figure in the local Volunteer Movement, advocated a system of "Compulsory Volunteering", believing:

"The Country was not yet prepared for conscription", Joseph Dixon*, president of the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, believed that:

"nothing could do the workmen of this Country more good than a year's service with the colours. When they returned...they would be altogether better men.(cheers)"²⁵³

In 1907, at the beginning of a period of trade depression and wide-spread unemployment, the government sought to effect a change in the system of service in the Volunteer forces. A Royal Commission of Enquiry on the Auxiliary forces recommended:

"As far as possible, the whole able-bodied male

population shall be trained to arms".²⁵⁴

In the following spring a changed system of service was introduced for the territorial Volunteers which was aimed at tightening up discipline and reducing the possibility of opting-out. The change in the wording of attestation caused alarm among those suspecting the introduction of conscription but such fears were allayed by Colonel Hughes,^{*} who was recently appointed to the National Advisory Council for the Territorial Forces, who described the changes as "a matter of convenience".²⁵⁵ He agreed, however, "there was a trend to make the camp more obligatory." Colonel Allen, of Edgar Allen's Steel, said there were volunteers who were,

"apathetic (who) just put in the required number of drills and strutted about in uniform. The new scheme would weed the service of such material."²⁵⁶

It was suggested by leading Liberal imperialists in the government that employers should be able to stipulate participation in the Volunteers as a condition of employment.²⁵⁷ One local employer, T.E. Vickers^{*}, declared his support for such obligation, saying:

"Speaking for my Company, we should not make any outcry against compulsory service."²⁵⁸

The most significant aspect of this debate, however, was its a-political nature. The question was declared to be "above Party politics" and therefore a matter of "common sense", removed from the normal channels of democratic processes. In this sense, militarism, along with other aspects of imperialism were a central element of social and cultural control.

J.E.Bingham, speaking at the first annual conference of the Sheffield and District National Service League, said that the movement was:

"absolutely free from Party politics" ²⁵⁹

Both Liberal and Conservative imperialists united in the organisation.

In 1908, Colonel H.Hughes* saw the debate over the new regulations effecting the Volunteer movement as "Party political nonsense" and that the whole issue was "a national question which should be far above Party politics."²⁶⁰

This cross-Party consent did two things. It asserted the hegemonic control which underpinned and reproduced capitalist relations at all levels, connecting the separate spheres of work, community and politics through social and cultural definitions of respectable behaviour. And as a consequence, it provided the ground upon which the organised socialist and labour movement was forced to operate in its challenge to imperialism, militarism and preparations for war.²⁶¹

In 1909, at the annual meeting of the Associated Chambers, the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce tabled a motion in favour of compulsory military service. The president of the Sheffield Chamber, A.H.Hobson*, declared there were:

"signs of failure of discipline in their works" and to counter this, he saw,

"no better system than this...in order that we might reap the by-products of better physical, mental and moral capacity for the work that would have to be done thereafter."²⁶²

In the following year, the Sheffield Chamber heard Lord

Newton of the National Service League speak of,

"the immense physical and moral benefit to the young men of the Country"

that military training could provide, increasing the "men's efficiency as a wealth producing machine."²⁶³

With such favourable effects predicted, it appeared to employers that investment of time and money into such social pursuits as the Volunteers was of interest in industrial and political terms.

The Volunteer movement was in the main a Conservative controlled organisation. Other tactics were adopted by local employers, however, to instil military discipline and patriotism into their workforce. In 1913, a worker noted the increasing practice in large works of posters displayed in support of militarism:

"Posters of an attractive character confront you as you pass to and from work. This silent attempt to influence the men and boys into becoming machines of destruction is alarming especially when it is to buttress up a system that will assuredly rebound upon themselves, cutting most acutely the whole working class."²⁶⁴

He noted also that invitations to military displays in the locality were posted up inside workplaces.²⁶⁵

During the first world war when, as already has been mentioned, the local industrial and commercial bourgeoisie took directive control of the local legislature and judiciary, the influence which they wielded in peace time was made more extreme. With it, the pervading influence of militarism in social and cultural life was brought into play in a more immediate fashion. H.Hughes* declared:

"The munitions workers had got to put themselves

into the hands of the Government", or else, "there would be chaos".²⁶⁶

This opinion was supported by the local press in a tone of highly charged rhetoric. The direct link between domestic industrial production and the fate of the "men in the trenches" was repeatedly emphasised, thus linking the ideology of domestic and military service. The dangers of a break-down in labour relations due to the influx of workers from outside Sheffield, who were unfamiliar with the key figures in industrial social and political affairs, was realised. Robert Hadfield* pointed out:

"Many new men have come into our service, and we want them too to rise to the occasion and prove to the Empire that the men of Sheffield are putting forward their best efforts...just as much as if they were fighting in the trenches."²⁶⁷

The all pervasive nature of militarism, within the dominant ideology at this time, is illustrated in the form and content of politics adopted by the Women's Social and Political Union during the war years. The middle class leadership of this organisation channeled its membership into support for the war effort as it took on the appearance of a para-military force.²⁶⁸

The concern of the middle classes with the nature of the social and cultural environment of the working classes has been well illustrated in a study of "Middle Class Values and Working Class Culture in Nineteenth Century Sheffield" by Caroline Reid.²⁶⁹ This concern continued into the twentieth century but showed slightly different emphases. Reid concludes that the creation of the ethic of 'respectability', and the

network of institutions which supported it, was not so much a statement of middle class consciousness, but more a prescription by the middle classes for the working classes. Fundamental was the idea that working class culture, left to its own devices, was detrimental to the continued progress of society.

In the opening decade of the twentieth century, the idea that middle class education of the working classes was an urgent requirement was pervasive. The consequences ranged from the treatment of mothers as inadequates by sanitary inspectors, regardless of the material deprivations they suffered, to the provision of technical and language schools at University and evening class levels.

Educational classes and free popular lectures were continued in the tradition of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Societies of the late nineteenth century.²⁷⁰ Middle class women were particularly active in this area. The Neighbour Guilds Association was established in Sheffield in 1897, "to bring together the richer and poorer citizens of Sheffield and to provide the latter with fresh opportunities of education and enjoyment".²⁷¹ A similar venture, the Croft House Settlement, founded in 1902, was attempting:

"to raise the people of the district to a higher standard of life and citizenship, not so much by alms giving but by the power of direct personal influence and service."²⁷²

The encouragement of social and cultural behaviour conducive to the dominant ideology was achieved through the personal supervision and patronage of leading figures in the local industrial and commercial bourgeoisie of clubs and societies.²⁷³ The Young Men's Christian Association branch in Sheffield

worked for,

"the improvement of the spiritual, mental, social and physical condition of young men."²⁷⁴

Its president was the leader of the Sheffield Conservative Party after 1902, George Franklin.* On the same lines was the Boys Brigade which, with a local membership of over one thousand in 1902, provided educational and recreational facilities with the declared intention of, keeping,

"boys connected with Sunday Schools after the age of twelve, until ready for young men's organisations"

and meanwhile, to

"inculcate habits of reverence, discipline, self respect, and all that tends towards true Christian manliness."²⁷⁵

It is evident that what was hoped for was a continual social and cultural influence from the school to the workplace and the home whereby the components of the dominant ideology would, by continual exposure, become recognised and embraced as normality.

Several of the employers active in areas of social and political life were influential in the city's educational provisions at University level. In the context of developing fears with regard to increased over-seas trade competition, the instruction of particular languages was encouraged. Colonel H. Hughes*, in his capacity as treasurer of the University, was particularly keen for Spanish to be taught and a fund was set up for this purpose after his death.²⁷⁶ With similar objectives in mind, D. Vickers* gave financial assistance to the University for the instruction of the Russian language.²⁷⁷

Traditional means of encouraging social and political deference, realised through the Victorian era, were maintained after the turn of the century, again hinging on the industrial-political nexus of control. Philanthropic benefaction outside

the workplace helped to fix more firmly claims to authority and power in the wider community. Many of the employers recognised here as prominent in upholding the dominant ideology, and their wives, were active in local charities. Several gave large plots of land to the city which became public parks.²⁷⁸ Frederick Mappin* donated his art collection to the city and funded several local charities. George Senior* built a block of almshouses at Hoylandswaine. J.E.Bingham*, who donated a large plot of land to the city, and was a noted 'model employer' continued his encouragement of loyalty and deference to authority outside his works in his capacity as president of several local committees, including the Sheffield Society for the Encouragement of Bravery.

Through these interests and activities, the local industrial and commercial bourgeoisie was able to assert and execute its authority in public, and private life, after working hours. The key areas of control in this respect were the interrelated notions of class, imperialism and patriarchy, as defined by these city fathers.

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230. H.Mathers, op cit. pp. 160-161.
231. S.I. 27.11.97.
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233. see above, p. 137; 149; 150-152.
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235. B.Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (London) 1960
p. 24.
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"by far the greatest problem before us today" and demanded
"the solid union of all moderate men" S.D.T. 17.10.07.

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256. S.I. 29.2.08.
257. The Metal Worker, op cit. May 1909.
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262. Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, op cit. Annual Meeting, 1909.
263. *ibid.* 1910.
264. S.G. 2.5.13: J. Gillam, member of Sheffield I.L.P.

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273. see below, app. biogs.
274. Sheffield Red Book,(Sheffield) 1902. p.52.
275. ibid. For Franklin, see app. biog, p. ii.
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CHAPTER THREE

WORKING CLASS POLITICAL ORGANISATION AND THE NATURE OF SOCIALISM

The economic and political crisis of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in British capitalism, which found its climax and relief in the debacle of the first world war consisted, in part, of a struggle between contesting interests around areas of authority and power. The socialist and labour movement was, at this time, one product of this process; it piloted resistance to the encroachments of Monopoly Capitalism in industrial, social and personal life, and recaptured the tradition established by Owenite and Chartist Socialism that:

"the working class through its own collective efforts could build a culture which allowed for active participation and control in social, as well as economic life."¹

The organisation of power and control in local society, examined above, was based on an authorisation and legitimation of certain experience and procedure.² A working class challenge to the basis of authority in the workplace, in local and national government, in the home and community, was essentially limited by the extent to which it was able to re-evaluate and re-define experience according to a different understanding of the relations between work, community and political life. For a confident and convincing challenge to be created, out of and against the existing order, the labour and socialist movement had to struggle with the issues and debates around key areas

of antagonism outlined in this study. The extent to which the politically organised working class in Sheffield was able to first perceive, and secondly, act upon its understanding of the relations of power in economic, political and social life was diverse. It has been possible, for the purposes of this study, to recognise three distinct, but closely related, kinds of perceptions and tactics which have been described as Lib-Lab; Labour-Socialist; and Socialist-Syndicalist.

Many factors were involved in this diversification. These included occupation; tradition of industrial organisation; influence of leadership; experience of conciliation and arbitration; consciousness of environmental and community politics; and attitude to the nature and quality of life.

One key to the differentiation of the modes of resistance and challenge expressed by the local labour and socialist movement at this time, lies in the perceived relationship between the 'economic' and 'political' spheres. The separation of economics from politics has been related directly to "gradations within class consciousness of workers of the same strata." George Lukacs has employed the concept of "totality" as a necessary feature of that kind of socialist theory and practice which is characterised by a revolutionary class consciousness. He remarks:

"In the absence of a real understanding of the interaction between politics and economics, a war against the whole economic system, to say nothing of its reorganisation, is quite out of the question."³

As we have seen in a discussion of the dominant ideology constructed and maintained by a local industrial bourgeoisie,

it was the purpose of this group to fragment any working class appreciation of the relationship between politics and economics other than that defined and authorised by itself. Maintaining the illusion of the separate spheres, this group's activities, as individuals and collectively, in spanning the industrial, political, social and cultural spheres, was crucial for their authority. In examining the organisation of working class politics in this period and in assessing the nature of that diverse challenge, one means of differentiation will rely upon the expressed understanding, of the various groupings, of the relationships between the spheres of work, politics and culture. It will be argued that each mode of socialist or labour theory and practice relied for its realisation on a particular interpretation of this relationship. The differences were understood not so much over the key issues of debate, Class, Imperialism and Patriarchy, as over their definition and interrelationship.

A central concept which structured working class theory and strategy during this period was State Socialism. The concept, which in itself contained two essentially conflicting terms, was developed from the context of increased government involvement in national and local industrial and social life, evident in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁴ In Sheffield, as elsewhere, the concepts of State Socialism and Parliamentary Democracy, and associated strategies, were adopted by the most 'successful' elements of the working class political organisations. They were successful in the sense that their theory and strategy conformed most nearly to that

favoured by the industrial and political bourgeoisie. Alternative proposals which were based on a critique of the reformist nature of the State Socialist tactic, foundered or were eclipsed, except within the extraordinary context of the war. During 'normal' times, the theory and strategy of the working class political movement which embraced the tactic of independent Labour Representation to bring about gradual reform, conformed sufficiently to common custom as defined by the political authorities to become successful at least in electoral terms. This was indeed a real advance for working class political representation. However, it relied on a particular understanding of the concept of class; a theoretical understanding of the relationship between industrial and political experience which only partially accepted an interrelationship; and an Evangelical-Utopian perception of the future requirements of strategy. In terms of analysis, this most 'successful' grouping learned much of the theory and tactics of State Socialism and Parliamentary Democracy from Lib-Labism and Fabian political theory. It is distinguished in this study as the Labour-Socialist strategy.

At a special meeting in January 1894, around the time of the formation of an Independent Labour Party in Sheffield, the Sheffield Federated Trades Council discussed an ammended resolution that:

"No satisfactory solution of trade difficulties, and no adequate provision for our aged workmen can be effected except by State Socialism"⁵

The motion was proposed by Tom Shaw, secretary of the Sheffield Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.). In the context of a

national and local debate on the need for State Pensions, and the consequences of such a provision, the local discussion illustrates the merely responsive nature of the Labour-Socialist contribution. It was suggested:

"The State...should work in the interests of everybody and...it required no revolution to arrive at State Socialism. It could be obtained by combining to make the Government take the matter up."⁶

Through penetration of the political sphere, based on industrial organisation and strength, reform could be effected. This strategy contained within it no fundamental questioning of the bases of power and authority in society; it accepted the definition of political experience as defined by the authors of the dominant ideology.

By adhering to the organisational tactic of "combining to make the Government take the matter up", the Labour-Socialist tactic was able to override the different interests of Socialism and Trade Unionism which was a matter of debate at the time of the formation of the Labour Representation Committee and the return of the first Labour Representatives to Parliament in 1906.

Representatives from Sheffield were present at the Inaugural Conference of the Advocates of Industrial Unionism held in Birmingham in October 1907 where the following question was debated:

"Should socialists work with trade unionists on the lines of the present Labour Party, (or) start with Victor Grayson, and form a distinct Socialist Party in the House of Commons"⁷

The Sheffield I.L.P., contributing to this debate, expressed

its preference for:

"a right understanding between all sections of the progressive army ... obtained by full and fair discussion on all points."⁸

This comment displayed an overriding confidence in the reformist strategy which was expressed through terms which reflected an uncritical acceptance of dominant ideological concepts.

The Sheffield Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.), which was wedded to the Labour - Socialist tactic, took up the issue of the relationship between trade unionism and socialism in its policy statement in August 1907. It explained:

"Affiliation to the L.R.C. does not mean that your society is comprised of socialist members, agreeing to socialism as your only practical salvation,...it does mean that you are prepared to work with the socialist and the socialist with you, for political reform and efficient municipal services; that you agree to independent Labour representation as the only way to speedily secure a healthy city and a happy home..."⁹

This compromise was justified by a belief in the inevitability of Socialism, a faith which characterised the Labour-Socialist tactic at this time.¹⁰

J.Ramsay MacDonald, as a theorist of the Labour movement, expressed the basic philosophy of State Socialism when he declared at the I.L.P. annual conference in 1908:

"The Labour Party has come in the fullness of time to carry on the work of evolution."¹¹

Keir Hardie, in his From Serfdom to Socialism, published in 1907, warned:

"To dogmatise about the form which the Socialist State will take is to play the fool. That is a matter with which we have nothing whatever to do. It belongs

to the future, and is a matter which posterity alone can decide...as for progress and development under State Socialism - these may be safely left to care for themselves."¹²

With such assurances from the leadership of the national labour movement, the local advocates of the Labour-Socialist strategy could do little better than to adopt a similar form of political rhetoric.

The stage-by-stage character of the Labour-Socialist tactic was able to avoid consideration of the structure of power in society while it concentrated on constructing a mass movement. In underlining its policy, the Sheffield L.R.C. in 1907 commented:

"Trade Unionists in the majority are not socialists but are linked on with them to serve present day practical measures of reform...This the trade unionist regards as practical politics, this the socialist looks on as the first easy 'shoulder' in his ascent towards the 'cairn' on Mount Ideal...Labour will continue to grow... the seed sown, tended and watered in the present, will, swelled by the radiant sun of hope and effort, ripen to be gathered to golden harvest by the smiling children of tomorrow."¹³

3 (i) The Organisation of the Labour-Socialist Tactic

The realisation of a strategy identified here as Labour-Socialist, and associated primarily with the Labour Party, was achieved within the context of a working class political movement which spanned the alternative strategies of Lib-Labism to Revolutionary Socialism. Two outstanding features of the creation of a Labour-Socialist strategy in Sheffield at this time were the formation of a rival Trades Council after

1908 and the increasing influence of Fabian political theory which came to dominate Labour politics between 1909 and the outbreak of war.

After its failure to secure Liberal Party patronage during the Parliamentary election campaigns of the 1890s, the Sheffield Federated Trades Council (S.F.T.C.) was reluctant to express its political bias.¹⁴ In spite of the growing support for independent labour politics in the delegate body of the Council, the elderly, Lib-Lab executive was able to stem the tide. The financial constraints of the Taff Vale judgement, revealed in 1902, encouraged the leadership towards a more cautious political stance.¹⁵ It was against this background that the Sheffield branch of the Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.) was formed in 1903.¹⁶ Its membership was drawn from a local trade union membership who saw in the politics of the S.F.T.C. no assurance of advance. The L.R.C. annual report for the year 1902-3 stimulated the local organisation into action. It spoke of:

"The imperative necessity of a speedy and determined attempt on the part of the workers to secure a speedy and effective alteration in the labour laws which can only be accomplished by strengthening materially the hands of the Labour Party in Parliament."¹⁷

The machinery to set up the new organisation and constitution was arrived at after considerable struggle between the local Lib-Lab contingent and the Labour-Socialist tendency. As G.H.B.Ward explained:

"The conferences of June and July 1903, were the outcome of a partial victory over the Liberal-Labour section of the S.F.T.C. by the socialist wing of that body, after a long and not harmonious agitation for an L.R.C. ... say about a year of push and debate."¹⁸

Those represented at these initial meetings included representatives of twenty-nine local trades, the S.F.T.C., Brightside and Carbrook Co-operative Society, Sheffield I.L.P., the Clarion Fellowship, and the District Committee of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. It was agreed that:

"No delegate shall be allowed to sit upon the Executive Committee who is officially connected with the Liberal or Tory Party."¹⁹

To make the point firmer, the next meeting of the Sheffield L.R.C. added the proviso:

"Members of the Executive Committee shall strictly abstain from identifying themselves with, or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative Parties."²⁰

The constitution provided the basis of an efficient electoral machine, based on the structure already laid out by the I.L.P. district committees in the city:

"The Executive Committee have power to form committees in the various Parliamentary Divisions and Municipal Wards, of sympathisers and workers, with a view to more effective action in and preparing for elections; also to take such measures as may be deemed advisable for the promotion of Labour principles among the people."²¹

The composition of the Executive Committee of the newly formed L.R.C. reflected the occupational character of the delegated body of the S.F.T.C. The Trades Council was represented on the Executive Committee by prominent Lib-Labs, Holmshaw, Hobson and Wardley but only Hobson persevered for any length of time to effect a working relationship between the two bodies.²²

H.H.Diver, of the Operative Bricklayers Union and the Clarion Fellowship, was elected president and H.A.Stone, also a trade unionist representative from the building trade, was elected treasurer.²³

The political 'split' within the trade union movement in Sheffield, as reflected in the setting up of the L.R.C in 1903 and of an alternative Trades Council affiliated to the Labour Party in 1908, was a central aspect of the wider political movement until 1920. The Labour-Socialist revolt against the "old gang" of the Lib-Lab trade union leadership, erupted at a time of rapidly increasing membership and confidence of the Sheffield I.L.P.²⁴ It was also a time of debate about the relationship between trade unionism and socialism²⁵ and of the re-constitution of the Fabian Society in the city.²⁶

At the political level, this developing 'split' was reflected at the Municipal elections in November 1907. The L.R.C. ran Alf Barton, secretary of Sheffield I.L.P., against Lib-Lab Tom Shaw.²⁷ Shaw, one time secretary of the Sheffield I.L.P., was defeated and Lib-Labism was pronounced to be dead. A jubilant Labour Party proceeded to initiate action to replace the S.F.T.C. with a Trades Council with both political and industrial functions.²⁸ The resulting body, the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council (T.&.L.C.) thereafter steered the electoral politics of the Sheffield Labour Party at local and Parliamentary levels until the two Trades Councils were re-united in 1920

The formation of the L.R.C in 1903 encouraged the re-grouping of of the local I.L.P. and Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.). The S.D.F. had been established in the city in the late 1880s, its most prominent members taking an active part in the organisation of General Unionism in the district.²⁹ Branches were formed at Heeley, Darnal, Brightside, Park and Central electoral wards.³⁰ The S.D.F. in Sheffield was led by

an energetic, paid organiser, A.G. Woolfe, who built up, reputedly, "one of the most powerful centres in the north for the S.D.F."³¹ Woolfe was dismissed, allegedly for personal misconduct, in June 1894. He promptly transferred his energies to the organisation of a Sheffield I.L.P.³² His success in doing so, based on the original S.D.F. structure, points to the lack of clear differentiation between the politics of the two organisations at this stage. Indeed, the S.D.F. worked alongside the I.L.P., used the I.L.P. journal to advertise its meetings, only fought municipal elections where the I.L.P. was not contesting and was only mildly critical of Labour politics before 1910.³³

The activity of the Sheffield I.L.P. in the Municipal and Parliamentary elections during the 1890s effectively eclipsed the S.D.F. membership.³⁴ However, there were "a great many unattached socialists in Sheffield" who may have formed the backbone of the revival of the S.D.F. in 1904.³⁵ The first branch to re-group was Brightside whose secretary was George Henry Fletcher.³⁶ J. Williams, of Brightside S.D.F. reported in the summer of 1905 that:

"There is every symptom of a great and continued success for this comparatively young branch, especially when one considers the somewhat diversified character of socialism professed in this city. We have been in existence barely sixteen months; our membership is increasing by leaps and bounds...meetings are well attended."³⁷

All efforts were directed in support of the candidature of G.H. Fletcher at the Brightside Municipal Election of November 1905. This contest established a long lasting association of the S.D.F. with the Brightside constituency. Although not

affiliated to the L.R.C. at this stage, the S.D.F. clearly expected the support of the Labour Party with whom they shared an interest in highlighting Lib-Labism in Municipal politics. The Sheffield S.D.F. commented in July:

"There are a number of Lib-Lab Fakirs on our City Council, who continually protest that they are trade unionists first and Liberals afterwards, and it will be interesting to see to whom their support will be given next November."³⁸

Branches of the S.D.F. were formed at Crookes and Walkley; Walkley had eight paid up members in March 1905.³⁹ Although the branches were small, considerable optimism was expressed⁴⁰ The Sheffield Socialist Society, first formed in 1886, a grouping inspired by the politics of Edward Carpenter, began to consider taking a more active part in electoral politics at this time.⁴¹ The Society amalgamated for this purpose with the S.D.F. in 1908 and the new body came to be known as the Social Democratic Party⁴²

The increased interest and activity shown in labour and socialist politics in 1906 was reflected most strikingly in the Sheffield I.L.P. The election to Parliament of a Labour group stimulated confidence and energy. The I.L.P. launched its own weekly newspaper, The Sheffield Guardian, to coincide with the general election.⁴³ The paper captured and expanded initial support. Membership increased from 189 in December 1905 to 768 one year later. The Brightside branch held the largest membership in spite of the presense of the S.D.F.⁴⁴ For electoral purposes there was a central co-ordinating body and local branches were constituted ward committees. These in turn were sub-divided into polling districts, each with

its own secretary or "captain" who directed propaganda. At election times, street level activity was organised and directed. Regular meetings were held indoors and outdoors. In 1906, a total of five-hundred meetings were held by the Sheffield I.L.P. and a rota was devised organising twenty-nine regular local speakers.⁴⁵

The I.L.P. concentrated its Parliamentary ambitions in the Attercliffe Division, having contested already in 1894. The choice of candidate, officially recognised by the National Executive, was George Dew, a Londoner.⁴⁶ However, the legacy of the past contests with the local Liberal Party encouraged I.L.P. members to question the choice of a stranger to the city. This was one of the qualifications for a successful Lib-Lab candidate according to the Liberal Party.⁴⁷ By 1908, the Sheffield I.L.P. was pressing the L.R.C. to select a more suitable candidate, a local man. At a time of rising confidence in the Party, and in the midst of moves to segregate Lib-Labism, Dew was considered to be dangerously moderate. Alf Barton, secretary of the I.L.P. and editor of The Sheffield Guardian commented:

"He (Dew) tried to please everybody and failed completely...one might just as well support Councillor Uttley and the local Lib-Lab Councillors."⁴⁸

Reluctantly, the Labour Party surrendered to local pressure and in November 1908, Joseph Pointer, an unemployed patternmaker from Attercliffe, was adopted by a show of hands, at a meeting of about 250 workers, in the open-air near Attercliffe Baths.⁴⁹ Pointer received official support from the S.D.F. who, like the I.L.P., considered Pointer a suitably 'socialist' candidate.

Pointer was presented to the electorate as a working man, a trade unionist, and a socialist, opposed to the forces of reaction and property interest as represented by the alternative candidates. The choice was presented in simple terms:

"The issue is Capitalism versus Labour; the rich versus the poor; private monopoly versus national co-operation."⁵⁰

In the context of widespread unemployment, the question of jobs was a central issue of the campaign. The Labour Party's Right to Work Bill, which had been a central feature of local propaganda work since early in the year, was defeated in the House of Commons just five days before the date of the by-election.⁵¹

The campaign really only got underway after the rejection of the Bill and the official recognition of Pointer as the Labour Party candidate. Once endorsed by the National Executive, Sheffield became a focal point for Labour propaganda. The Sheffield Independent noted what seemed to be half the total number of Labour M.P.s visiting the constituency during the campaign.⁵² There was an active presence of women's suffrage campaigners led by the local branch of the W.S.P.U. and Emmeline Pankhurst.⁵³

The area had a well established I.L.P. branch and Labour Party ward including a club and institute. There was a good record of labour support in municipal contests.⁵⁴ An estimated four-thousand trade unionists affiliated to the L.R.C. lived in Attercliffe, mainly steel and engineering workers. There were also an estimated two-thousand miners among the electorate.⁵⁵ Well attended meetings were held in-doors and out-doors. The annual Labour Day was held in the first week of May at

Attercliffe Recreation Ground where Richard Jones, of the Sheffield I.L.P. called on the meeting to pledge its belief:

"in the international solidarity of Labour" and to affirm "the necessity of political organisation of Labour on industrial lines to secure its ultimate and complete emancipation from Capitalist oppression."⁵⁶

The success of Pointer's candidature was largely the result of a split opposition yet the victory was greeted with enormous enthusiasm. A crowd of thirty thousand received the result with jubilation outside the Town Hall, singing The Red Flag and Edward Carpenter's England Arise. Solomon Elsbury, of the Sheffield Socialist Democratic Party (S.D.P.), described the result as a "victory for socialism".⁵⁷

After Pointer's election to Parliament there was a marked change in the temper of labour politics in Sheffield. There was considerably less toleration shown on the part of the groupings making up the Labour-Socialist strategy to alternative positions. All efforts were directed to securing Pointer's Parliamentary Seat in view of an impending general election. This resulted in a consolidation of the Labour-Socialist strategy under the banner of 'unity'.⁵⁸ It is possible to locate at this point the predominance of Fabian politics in the local labour movement. This is noticed both in terms of preferred tactics and in the influence of individual members of the Sheffield Fabian Society.⁵⁹

"The Governmental form of Labourism is State Capitalism ... the proletarian masses being forced to accept this arrangement by means of deception and force ... The struggle against the present form of Trade Unionism is an inseparable phase of the struggle against Labourism."⁶⁰

The principal organisations of Socialist-Syndicalism in Sheffield at this time were the Socialist Labour Party (S.L.P.) and the Advocates of Industrial Unionism (A.I.U.).⁶¹ These groups were sharply critical of the reformism of the Labour-Socialist tactic and maintained an invective against the local I.L.P. and S.D.F. throughout the period. The links formed between the industrial and political wings of Socialist-Syndicalism, before the war, were influential in the development of the theory and practice of the Shop Stewards' Movement.⁶²

The Socialist Labour Party was founded in 1904 as a left wing break-away from the S.D.F. at the national level.⁶³ The grounds for the split were a growing dissatisfaction among members of the S.D.F. with the electoral policy of the executive and of the general relationship between the S.D.F. and the Labour Party. Frank Hedley, the principal exponent of the politics of the S.L.P. in Sheffield, explained during the first year of local propaganda:

"We of the S.L.P. take our stand as class-conscious, uncompromising Revolutionary Socialists ... when the S.D.F. has joined the I.L.P. and the L.R.C. we can then get along ... half our work will be done."⁶⁴

During 1905, a branch of the S.L.P. was in the process of formation in Sheffield. It realised its political perspective in relation to the wider labour movement in the city through a series of debates and propaganda meetings, held sometimes in the open air at traditional sites for political and religious reform, with representatives of the I.L.P. and S.D.F.⁶⁵ S.L.P. meetings were held alongside I.L.P. gatherings at street corner venues. It was reported:

"Crowds who were hostile, are now attentive, and are thirsting for information. An S.L.P. meeting never fails to draw attention from a pure and simple Labour meeting ...and there is a growing impression that the S.L.P. is a fighting Party, and the growing arm of the S.L.P. is still dealing destruction on the Capitalist class, and their natural ally, the Labour Fakir."⁶⁶

A branch was formally established in Sheffield in July 1906.⁶⁷ The organiser, Frank Hedley, resigned his position as secretary of the local branch at this point. The branch survived the loss of an "enthusiastic worker" and a replacement was found in R.Rollings.⁶⁸ In the latter part of 1906, the new branch was extremely active in the city. Forty S.L.P. propaganda meetings were held as well as attendance and participation at about twenty "opponents'" meetings. These included eight debates two of which were with the I.L.P., three with "individualists", two with the Liberal Party and one with a temperance reformer. Sheffield University students received an S.L.P. speaker in their Economics class and five-hundred-and-fifty copies of the Party's paper, The Socialist, were sold in November 1906.⁶⁹

There was a close organisational and political relationship between the Sheffield branches of the S.L.P. and Advocates of

Industrial Unionism (A.I.U.). J.W.Mann, who became branch secretary of the S.L.P. in February 1908, attended the inaugural conference of the A.I.U. held in Birmingham in October 1907.⁷⁰ Throughout the period before the war, the two local organisations experienced similar fluctuations in membership and relative strength.⁷¹

The S.L.P. was founded in the opinion that no social and political revolution could ever be achieved through the Parliamentary system of politics or the existing structure of Trade Unionism. It recognised what it considered as the intimate, essential relationship between political and industrial organised struggle and looked to the rank and file who, after a period of education, would recognise the political incorporation of Labour leadership. In this sense, it existed and functioned in relation to the political perspective and tactic preferred by the more 'successful' organisations of Labour, those adhering to the Labour-Socialist tactic. It encouraged the further demarcation of class divisions in society and used the political electoral platform and the trade union organisation to propagate its own perspective.⁷²

The S.D.F. in Sheffield, while declaring itself committed to the idea and practice of class conflict, nevertheless regarded the existing structures of political and industrial representation as the best means of achieving the overthrowal of Capitalism. In seeming contadiction to its electoral ambitions, it declared in 1906:

"We are of the opinion that ... the power of Capitalism has encircled the workers with a cordon as tyrannical as it is degrading, and ... that the only solution to the

pressing industrial problems is the complete overthrow of the present Capitalist system and the installation of the Co-operative Commonwealth based on the common ownership of all the means of life."⁷³

It was the tactic through which this vision might be achieved which the S.L.P. found unacceptable and fundamentally unworkable. It would only take part in electoral politics for propaganda purposes; any successful candidate was obliged to refuse to take up office. When, in the 1906 Municipal Election campaign, S.L.P. member L.Jeffries supported the S.D.F. candidate, G.H.Fletcher, he was expelled by the organisation's national executive.⁷⁴

The differences in perspective and tactics between the Socialist-Syndicalist S.L.P. and the reformist strategy of Labour-Socialism were clearly recognised by Hedley in an invective against the Sheffield I.L.P. In an accusing tone he remarked:

"You are all engaged in trying to harmonise the interests of the exploited working class with the antagonistic interests of the capitalist class who are engaged in extending and maintaining their opportunities for exploiting us of the wage working class."⁷⁵

The issue of Class, and its interpretation, was a key area of distinction between the organisations, their theory and practice:

"The class struggle to you is either a mere phase, a highly doubtful theory, or a shibboleth with which you catch revolutionary votes...We make of it a basic principle."⁷⁶

Hedley quoted Labour Party advice to the Brightside electorate during the 1906 general election campaign to support the Liberal candidate, Tudor Walters, in the absence of a socialist,⁷⁷

Local S.L.P. activists received a boost to morale in April 1908 when the annual conference of the Party was held in Sheffield.⁷⁸ Later in the same year a national organiser visited the city and reported the local Party to be,

"handicapped through lack of speakers.", but in spite of this, he concluded:

"The town is highly capitalised and a grand field for propaganda...Sheffield will be one of our strongholds."⁷⁹

Since so much of the Socialist-Syndicalist position was realised in relation to the Labour-Socialist tactic, it is not surprising that the election of Joseph Pointer as Parliamentary Representative affected the appeal of the S.L.P. and therefore its relative standing in the local labour movement. In May 1909, at the time of the by-election, four S.L.P. members resigned, one of whom was the branch secretary. Although individual sympathisers remained, the local branch organisation broke down at this point.⁸⁰

The success of the Labour-Socialist tactic in undermining the approach of the S.L.P. in the industrial and political spheres was clearly expressed by W.D.Wood, secretary of the local branch of the Advocates of Industrial Unionism when in 1908 he explained:

"In Sheffield, the comrade who was the means of forming the S.L.P. branch here got himself so thoroughly detested by the Fakirs gang (T.U.Officials) that they succeeded in getting him put out of every job he got, and ultimately made it impossible for him to get one at all... another comrade here who would be one of the best speakers in the movement if he could take the platform but it would at once cost him a decent job."⁸¹

With so few members, it was relatively simple for attacks on individuals to completely undermine the organisation. But it is clear that these methods encouraged further action. Wood concluded that this vendetta directed against the organisations of a Socialist-Syndicalist character merely served to emphasise what these were describing in their propaganda and this could work to their advantage.⁸² The industrial campaign was continued throughout the period of disbandment by Tom Ring, secretary of the Cabinet Makers Union and A.E.Chandler of the Railway Clerks.⁸³

There was an organisational consensus among advocates of Industrial Unionism although all exponents were from the left of the working class political spectrum. The central focus was the distrust and growing disillusionment with official labour representation. This carried with it a more total understanding of the corporate nature of Capitalism than the organisations and activists of the Labour-Socialist strategy were able, or willing, to recognise and incorporate into their perspective. In an article entitled 'The Industrial Workers Union: Its Work and its Mission', Frank Hedley pointed out the intimate relation he recognised between the economic or industrial and the political fields of action:

"The Industrial Workers Union will educate the working class that wages are not paid according to skill and because of that, but are determined in the last analysis by the cost of living, and raised above or forced below that in different trades and at different times by the supply in relation to demand, and are the market price for labour power as merchandise, and not payment for work done, as the capitalist tells you... it is the purpose of the I.W.U. to unite for its

emancipation because of its common interest, the Workers of the World, independent of colour, race, trade or creed."⁸⁴

The development of Monopoly Capitalism, and the increasing incidence of employers uniting within a particular industry to combat industrial militancy, was cited by the organisations of a Socialist-Syndicalist character in order to point out the inadequacies of State Socialism. Tom Ring, addressing a delegate meeting of the Trades and Labour Council noted the balance of power in industrial relations; the Employers' Federations appearing as "a massed army against a ragged regiment."⁸⁵ Viewed from this position, conciliation schemes at the industrial level and Labour Representation at the political level, served only to disguise the imbalance of power and authority which was heavily weighted in favour of the capitalist class.

A.E.Chandler (Railway Clerks Association) was particularly scathing towards Pointer, the M.P. for Attercliffe, and consistently criticised his reformism. The record of Pointer's representation showed a distinct move to the right and this pointed to the dangers of relying on the Labour-Socialist tactic alone. Chandler considered that the General Strike would alone effect change and he urged the local working class to become more self-reliant in combatting the "concerted action" of the employing classes. To this end he advocated the creation of a local worker's army to meet the violence of the State.⁸⁶

In December 1911, The Socialist advised its readers:

"A branch of the S.L.P. is in the course of formation in Sheffield, and comrade Wardle of 246 Rockingham Street

would be obliged if all sympathisers in the district would contact him." ⁸⁷

The importance of individual commitment within the organisations of a Socialist-Syndicalist character is clear; Wardle had been branch secretary of the Sheffield A.I.U. for a time during 1909 and Frank Hedley, the first S.L.P. organiser in Sheffield was recently returned to the city. Indeed, those who re-organised the Sheffield S.L.P. were old activists.⁸⁸

The issue of reformism in the Labour Party as the principal exponent of the Labour-Socialist tactic was still a prime target of the S.L.P. as it re-emerged in 1912. In August the Party's annual conference met at Manchester and debated whether there should be some relaxation in the firm line taken with regard to electoral politics. This provoked a split with some regional branches resigning. The Sheffield branch remained firmly committed to the existing policy and declared:

"The policy committs the Party to the support of reforms, which is inconsistant with the attitude of a true Revolutionary Party of Socialism. It is a mis-statement of the S.L.P. position which should be one of opposition to all capitalist measures, the S.L.P. casting no vote at all. To do so would be to participate in capitalist administration, making the difference between the S.L.P. and other Parties, one of degree only, and could only result in compromise and confusion."⁸⁹

Although some local members resigned over the issue, the branch remained in tact. In November 1913, a visiting official organiser of the Party attended four meetings and was optimistic that further systematic propaganda could make Sheffield "a force for the S.L.P."⁹⁰

Upon the immediate outbreak of war in August 1914, the S.L.P.

was one of the few organisations within the socialist and labour movement which uncompromisingly opposed the war.

The Sheffield branch suggested that,

"The S.L.P. does not and can not advocate support for foreign or home service any military organisation maintained or supervised by the Capitalists or their representatives."⁹¹

Within the crisis of war it was possible for the S.L.P. to forge links with pacifists in the I.L.P. and B.S.P. In the industrial sphere, the S.L.P. recognised the potential within the organised engineering trades especially in view of the activity within the Trades and Labour Council of a Socialist-Syndicalist representation.⁹² A local S.L.P. member described the inadequacies of the three year agreement arrived at between the Joint Board of Engineering Trades and Employers and in September 1916, the S.L.P. was presenting its political analysis at meetings of local A.S.E. branches.⁹³ J.T.Murphy, who was active before the war in the local Amalgamation Committee of the Engineering Trades, joined the S.L.P. in the late summer of 1917.⁹⁴

3 (iii) The Influence of Fabian Socialism 1909-1920

"The close of 1910 saw the whole socialist movement in Sheffield in turmoil, but there were signs of improvement in which we have to see to it that we are not hesitant to take advantage."⁹⁵

The disarray referred to in the above statement of the Sheffield Fabian Society consisted of a polarisation in the local labour movement between the Labour-Socialist and Socialist-Syndicalist tactics. It will be suggested here that the influence of the politics of the Fabian Society was an important element in the ultimate success of the Labour-Socialist tactic and the supersession of Socialist-Syndicalism.

The Sheffield Guardian commented in January 1907:

"No one can deny that the extraordinary record of the last year in Parliament in the interests of the working people, is almost entirely due to the presence in Parliament of Labour men."⁹⁶

At the same time, a section of the local Labour Party organised within the I.L.P. were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the performance of their elected representatives. Alf Barton, secretary of the Sheffield I.L.P., referring to the Lib-Lab alliance in Parliament, warned:

"The I.L.P. had shown its superiority to other socialist parties by its flexibility and adaptability to circumstances... The Labour alliance was exceedingly useful to the proposed socialism, but only on condition that their hands were not tied by it. There was a tendency to respect caution and statesmanship too much, and to be obsessed by the idea of 'loyalty', but it was the agitators who had made the Party and..."

while we support the alliance, we appeal for scope for enthusiasm and opportunity for independent socialist action."⁹⁷

The election of Joseph Pointer to Parliament in the Labour interest initiated a general tightening up of Labour Party organisation in the city. The National Party Parliamentary agent, Arthur Peters, visited the Trades and Labour Council in the immediate aftermath of the election and told the executive committee:

"He was glad the necessity for a permanent organisation was recognised among the workers." and he suggested that it was vital to establish "a strong working committee in each of the four wards, each with its own officers ... to obtain and register the name of every trade unionist...(and) to meet regularly. A central Election Committee ... ought to look for and obtain financial assistance ... to pay, at least for a time, a whole or part-time agent for the Attercliffe division."⁹⁸

Pointer himself endorsed this strategy in view of the forthcoming general election. He declared:

"Our organisation must now be perfected for the Armageddon."⁹⁹

The Sheffield Fabian Society was re-established in the city in 1907.¹⁰⁰ Initial membership was forty rising to ninety-six in 1909. After this, numerical strength of membership was in decline. In spite of this, and perhaps as a consequence of this, the Fabians sought decisive influence in the direction of the local labour movement.¹⁰¹

In March 1908, the Sheffield Fabian Society, as an affiliate to the L.R.C., nominated one of its members, Joseph Pointer, as prospective Parliamentary candidate for the Attercliffe

division.¹⁰² Thus, the Fabian Society had an interest in the representation of the labour movement in Parliament which was reinforced after Pointer's death in 1914 when the then president of the Society, Daniel Evans, was nominated.¹⁰³ In Pointer's campaign, both in 1909 and 1910, two prominent Fabians acted as election agent and meetings organiser.¹⁰⁴

The demand for 'socialist unity' after Pointer's election was not only endorsed, but to an extent directed by local Fabian Society members. An I.L.P. Federation was established in June 1910 with the object of forwarding the co-ordination of Labour's electoral strategy.¹⁰⁵ The chairman of this body was Joseph Pointer; vice-chairman was Richard Hawkin of the Fabian Society and I.L.P.¹⁰⁶ One of the first moves of this body was to promote the discussion between the two Trades Councils with a view to bringing about their unification.¹⁰⁷

The I.L.P. Federation was for a time able to accommodate the dissent emanating from the left wing of the I.L.P. and S.D.P.. The cry for 'unity' was the means of minimising debate within the Labour Party. In this context, the decision of the S.D.P. to field a candidate in the January 1910 general election, regardless of L.R.C. authorisation, directly threatened this 'unity' of action. The Fabian Society considered:

"The tactics of the S.D.P. are likely to cause disunion" and should be deplored.¹⁰⁸

Later in the same year the issue of independent socialist action re-emerged in Alf Barton's candidature for Brightside at the Municipal elections. This, and Barton's later attempt to contest the division at the general election in December,

was denounced by the Fabian Society and John Rothnie, Fabian executive officer, led the attack on Barton in the Trades and Labour Council.¹⁰⁹ The incident convinced Barton that he should sever his links with the I.L.P. and the Labour Party. On resigning his membership, he commented:

"Although the I.L.P. has concluded a chapter, the socialist movement in Sheffield is not ended."¹¹⁰

Barton continued his political activity as one of the founder members of the British Socialist Party in Sheffield and joined the Workers Union.¹¹¹ His resignation led to his replacement as editor of The Sheffield Guardian by Richard Hawkin of the I.L.P. and Fabian Society.¹¹²

Disillusionment was registered elsewhere. Local I.L.P. member, L. Norman, abandoned the organisation saying:

"The present I.L.P. has carried us a certain distance but dissatisfaction across the Country showed the necessity of taking a further step."¹¹³

The Sheffield Guardian, under new management and editorship, noted the deteriorating circumstances in terms of membership and morale. Through the paper, S.J. Sears of the Socialist Society described a decline in membership of the Central branch of the Sheffield I.L.P. which almost threatened to close the branch. He considered that even better administration and centralisation was needed.¹¹⁴

The I.L.P. Federal Council carried unanimously the motion that there should be one central body concerned wholly with propaganda while local branches should have social functions only at a meeting in January 1912.¹¹⁵ The centralisation was completed with the appointment of a paid organiser, A.J. Thatcher, who was a stranger to the city.¹¹⁶ One of Thatcher's first

public appearances was to propose a resolution condemning the action of the Government in imprisoning political activists including Tom Mann and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence.¹¹⁷ At an open-air meeting in Pool Square, the resolution was seconded by G.A. Hall of the I.L.P. and Fabian Society and speeches in support were made by other Fabian Society activists.¹¹⁸

The Fabian Society's commitment to unity in the labour movement for the promotion of social and political reform accepted the principle of class collaboration rather than inherent conflict. This perspective was representative of the most 'successful' strategy within organised working class politics at this time. It conformed to a large extent to the dominant ideology which stressed the mutuality of class interests and it accepted the procedures for political and industrial challenge constructed and maintained by the political and industrial elite.

Local Fabians were among the principal protagonists in the movement to unite the two Trades Councils. The argument in favour of the reconciliation was that of 'unity' at all costs. The Trade Union Congress met in Sheffield for its annual conference in June 1910. The official host of the T.U.C. was the Lib-Lab Sheffield Federated Trades Council which politely invited the Trades and Labour Council to attend. Arrangements had been under way since September 1909 and the T.&.L.C. was embittered by its exclusion from the planning of such a prestigious event.¹¹⁹

Joseph Pointer, in his speech to the Congress, took the opportunity of "holding out the Olive Branch" to the estranged elements of organised labour in the city, without authorisation

of the Trades and Labour Council. He proposed a three month period during which the possibility of re-unification should be considered.¹²⁰ Pointer's counterpart on the S.F.T.C executive was A.J.Bailey, a prominent Lib-Lab.¹²¹ The move was criticised by that section of organised labour which felt increasing disillusionment with Pointer's representation of their interests through the Labour-Socialist tactic. Alf Barton led the condemnation of Pointer's speech and of his appearance on the same platform with the Earl Fitzwilliam who was at the time in dispute with the miners in his employ.¹²²

In September 1910, Pointer, acting as a spokesman for those who favoured reunion, made his position clear and revealed his long-standing disapproval of the political split. He admitted:

"He was tired of the worker's quarrells whilst employers were laughing at them, and he wanted the opportunity to settle local differences. This Council (T.&.L.C.) made a tremendous mistake in forming itself into a Trades and Labour Council...and he wished to remedy the mistake made and that was the time to begin to try. He and Mr Bailey had been negotiating for some time with a view to his (Bailey's) coming over to us... Bailey was a man of influence on the other side, and at present a source of weakness to us."¹²³

Bailey had written to confirm that he was willing to sever his links with the Liberal Party after the Municipal elections to be held in November 1910.¹²⁴

The initial response to this move towards reunion was diverse but the Fabian Society encouraged the action in view of what it considered to be the overriding necessity of unity.

The local branch membership resolved: that;

"The Trades and Labour Council be requested to take steps towards the development of a conscious unity between the various societies affiliated...encourage the idea of an interchange of speakers, or visitors ...with the hope that the unity of the organisation spreads."¹²⁵

On the other hand, the Sheffield I.L.P. Federal Council stated its objection to the proposed discussions between the Trades Councils and supported Alf Barton in his independent electoral challenge at the general election in December 1910.¹²⁶

However, this support was overturned through the intervention of Pointer, supported by a letter from Kier Hardie. At a special Federal Council meeting, Pointer declared that;

"This meeting having regard to all the circumstances can not see its way clear to adopt Barton as candidate for the Brightside division, believing that this candidature at the present juncture would be a fiasco and would be attended with disastrous results, not only to the labour movement in general, but to the Sheffield I.L.P. in particular."¹²⁷

In January 1911, with Pointer firmly returned to Parliament with the aid of a local Lib-Lab pact, a renewed effort was made to unite the Trades Councils.¹²⁸ A negotiating body was formed with representatives from the executive committees of the two bodies. Pointer proposed that the T.&.L.C. "had not justified (its) industrial work, but had hindered such work in both Councils".¹²⁹ A.E.Chandler, opposing the reunion, thought that the move was part of an organised effort to "whittle the forward movement in Sheffield."¹³⁰ Thus, the perspectives of Labour-Socialism and Socialist-Syndicalism were presented.

The agreement foundered at this stage over the issue

which had forced the initial split. It was suggested that the S.F.T.C. should take on industrial functions only and that its official leadership should desist from appearing on Liberal or Conservative Party platforms. Charles Hobson, representing the S.F.T.C. executive, commented:

"We offer no opinion as to the wisdom of this, but simply consider it in the light of things as they exist; the secretary of our Council is a Liberal of conviction and acts with the Liberals. Other officials in like manner work with and speak for the Liberal Party. The effect would be the dismemberment of some of our oldest and most capable men."

Clearly, Lib-Labism was still a strong and influential force within the Sheffield Labour Movement. The report of the S.F.T.C. concluded:

"We are fully convinced that there exists a considerable amount of jealousy betwixt the extreme section of your Council and the more moderate section of our Council which forbids unity of action."¹³¹

In the context of widespread industrial and political militancy both at the national and local level, the Socialist-Syndicalist element within the Trades Council was able to at once defeat and denounce the move towards the reconciliation of the Trades Councils. In February 1912, A.E.Chandler, spelled out his objections to the reunion in a minority report of the Trades and Labour Council:

"It appears to me... that instead of adopting such a proposal, it would be much better and more to the advantage of the Trades and Labour Council if a more militant attitude were taken up, not only in the political but also in the trade unionist sphere and the T.&.L.C. will be well advised to leave the question

of co-operation with the other body alone until such a time when...the reasons against co-operation will cease to operate, and devote itself to such work as lies in hand, watching all moves of employers and bringing the forces of all organised labour in the city to bear on the side of the workers in any dispute, making the concern of each affiliated union, the concern of all."¹³²

Chandler was underlining what, from his Socialist-Syndicalist perspective, appeared to be fundamental to social and political change; the joint action of the labour movement in the political and economic spheres.

It was the separation of action between the political and economic which underlay the moves towards reconstituting a single Trades Council at this time. The political truce at local and national elections established for the duration of the war prompted further attempts to unite the Trades Councils; the first in October 1914.¹³³ Negotiations centred around the disputed area of previous formulars, regarding the freedom of individuals to associate themselves with political Parties other than the Labour Party. A proposed solution entailed the division of the Trades Council into two sections, one dealing with political and the other, industrial matters, with the provision that;

"No delegate or official of the political section shall give or accept support from any unaffiliated organisation. The political section however, shall not reflect in any way upon the position or action of an official or representative of a society associated with the industrial section who may become a candidate for any public body, under the auspices of any political Party, not affiliated to the political section, provided such candidature has received support of the candidates' organisation."¹³⁴

This represented a considerable change in the perspective of the Trades and Labour Council from its position in 1908.¹³⁵ The priorities of the Labour Party at this point were clear; a capitalisation in electoral terms of local industrial militancy and community unrest and increased efficiency in organisation.

In the final months of the war, the prospect of the extension of the Parliamentary Franchise and impending local and national elections proved to be the grounds upon which a formular was found to unite the Trades Councils. In April 1917, the Trades and Labour Council decided to contest the Municipal elections at the earliest possible opportunity. The divisions of Brightside, Park, Attercliffe and Hillsborough would be fought at the general election.¹³⁶ The Municipal elections of 1918 in which the Sheffield Labour vote increased dramatically, enabling Labour to take seven seats and keep one, was considered, by those in favour of uniting the Councils, to be the result of the combined efforts of both bodies.; the S.F.T.C. rendering "valuable assistance" to the Labour challenge.¹³⁷ Meanwhile, A.J.Bailey was selected as the official Labour Party candidate for the Central Parliamentary division.¹³⁸

In December 1919, Moses Humberstone,¹³⁹ secretary of the S.F.T.C. initiated the final moves towards union in a speech in which he declared:

"The most effective way of furthering the industrial and political interests of the workers of this city is by the workers being banded together in one organisation."¹⁴⁰

In the context of renewed industrial militancy, those adhering to the Labour-Socialist strategy were anxious to capitalise in electoral terms on the politicisation which the war had effected among many working class people.¹⁴¹ There was a new determination in the negotiations between the representatives of the Trades Councils. It was ensured that;

"Nothing (would be allowed) to enter into the negotiations that would tend to prevent the desired result being attained." ¹⁴²

Indeed now the only difficulties seemed to revolve around deciding appropriate meeting places and frequency of meetings.¹⁴³

The newly constituted body was to be named the Sheffield Federated Trades and Labour Council and was to have separate political and industrial functions, each with its own executive committee. Both sections were to work together as harmoniously as possible. To accommodate the political freedom of expression of the industrial section, it was stipulated that any federated society could decide to earmark the whole of its financial contribution for industrial purposes, though in general funds were to be divided between the two sections. Finally, it was agreed that;

"the representative positions on our various public bodies now occupied by members of our Council shall be respected so long as they perform their duties satisfactorily."¹⁴⁴

The chairman of the Committee set up to finalise negotiations was Charles Hobson and of the six S.F.T.C. representatives at the negotiations, three had been executive members of the Council since the 1890s.¹⁴⁵ Such was the enduring influence of Lib-Labism in the Sheffield labour movement.

3 (iv) The Political Organisation of Working Class Women

"The home was the heart of the nation and there could be no home where the mother went to the factory."¹⁴⁶

The political organisation of working class women in Sheffield at the time of the founding of the independent challenge of Labour can be understood first, in relation to the form and content of working class politics as a whole, and secondly, in relation to the dominant ideology. Like the organisations which spanned the Lib-Lab, Labour-Socialist and Socialist-Syndicalist perspectives, the organisation of women can be understood in these terms. The key issues of differentiation were Class, Imperialism and Patriarchy.

At the same time, the organisation of women was effected in the main, as adjuncts to the male dominated organisations. Therefore the form, and to an extent, the content of their associations was subject to this relationship. While the separate women's associations contained an over-lapping membership and co-operated closely on certain campaigns, differences of political perspective are discernable and are located around the interpretation of the key areas of struggle.

The dominant form of organised women's politics in Sheffield at this time was rooted in the Labour-Socialist mould. The most common motivation for participation in politics was through family relationships. Many women were introduced to politics by an active father or mother, or by their husbands. As Eleanor Barton, herself the wife of I.L.P. secretary Alf Barton, explained in 1910, the membership of the Sheffield

Women's Co-operative Guild were;

"the wives of the better class artisan...the women we have are thinking women, who mix with others and take an intelligent interest in their neighbours. They are members of other organisations, and represent a very large opinion."¹⁴⁷

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century there were several political organisations in Sheffield which specifically encouraged women members. Socialist Sunday Schools provided for the education of the children of active campaigners and were run, in the main, by women. Recreational and social clubs within the socialist tradition, such as the Clarion Society, provided the means through which many women and girls could enter into political life.¹⁴⁸ Public meetings held in local halls and out-doors were particularly valuable for the political education of women who were, for the most part, excluded from the public world of work and trade unionism.¹⁴⁹ Voluntary work in the local community was an important route towards organised working class politics for women and girls.¹⁵⁰

After the formation of the Sheffield Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.) in 1903, election committees were set up in the districts. One of these, the Darnall and Attercliffe Women's Election Committee became a branch of the Women's Labour League in 1908.¹⁵¹ The W.L.L. was formed nationally in 1906 as the women's section of the Labour Party. It was formed out of a previous organisation, the Railway Women's Guild.¹⁵²

Several prominent campaigners from the National Labour Party visited Sheffield during 1907 to encourage more active participation of women in the local Party; these included Emmeline and Adela Pankhurst and Mrs MacDonal.¹⁵³ In the same year

a Central Women's Committee of the Sheffield I.L.P. was formed.¹⁵⁴ The main function of the women's committees was to support the Labour Party's electoral campaigns, to raise funds and to bring to the local Party's attention some of the particular issues effecting women and children. The beginning of the local Women's Social and Political Union campaign in 1907 stimulated a discussion of women's politics within the labour movement.¹⁵⁵ The question of the separate organisation of women within the Labour Party was raised in the women's column of The Sheffield Guardian where the commentator explained:

"Women are not insisting on being the same as men. It is because they know they are very different that they wish to see their point of view represented in all departments of public life that effect women."¹⁵⁶

The secretary of the Sheffield Women's Labour League(W.L.L.) was Jenny Pointer, the wife of Joseph Pointer, the first elected Labour M.P. for a Sheffield constituency.¹⁵⁷ The political perspective of the W.L.L. was firmly rooted in the Labour-Socialist tactic. They were:

"an organisation of women to work for independent Labour Representation in connection with the Labour Party and to obtain direct representation of women in Parliament and on all local bodies."¹⁵⁸

The Co-operative Women's Guild was formed in 1883 as an organisation for women within the Co-operative movement.¹⁵⁹ A Sheffield branch was formed by the turn of the century; there were four branches from the city represented at the annual conference of the Guild held in Sheffield in 1905.¹⁶⁰ The politics of the Guild were wedded to the Labour - Socialist tactic but its membership was larger than that of the W.L.L. and its relationship with the labour movement was more flexible.¹⁶¹

There was a Sheffield Guild organisation already established in 1902 when the general secretary, Margaret Llewelyn Davies, visited the city.¹⁶² Membership had grown to number two-hundred and-twenty by 1905 and the number of branches stood at five in 1906.¹⁶³ The principal spokeswomen for the Guild before 1920 were Eleanor Barton and Edna Penny.¹⁶⁴ Both women led their membership into campaigns with other organisations of labour women; Edna Penny helped to form the Women's Labour League.¹⁶⁵

Several local women were elected to the executives of the I.L.P. and the Trades and Labour Council. The first was Mrs Stockton, the wife of the secretary of the tram workers union, who was elected to the executive committee of the Sheffield I.L.P. in 1906.¹⁶⁶ Mrs Storr of the I.L.P. was chairwoman of the Sheffield W.S.P.U. and contested the Brightside Board of Guardians election in 1907 in the Labour interest. She was elected to the executive of the Trades and Labour Council in March 1907.¹⁶⁷ Gertrude Wilkinson was secretary of the Sheffield Fabian Society from 1907 until 1909. She was elected to the industrial committee of the Trades and Labour Council in 1913 on the strength of her organising work among women workers. She became the first female president of the Trades and Labour Council in 1919.¹⁶⁸

The first woman to be selected as candidate at the Municipal elections was Maud Maxfield who contested the Hallam division in 1912 as a Liberal.¹⁶⁹ It was not until after the first world war that women organised within the Sheffield labour movement fought elections in the city. The first to do so was Eleanor Barton in 1919 and Gertrude Wilkinson in 1920.¹⁷⁰

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48. Trades and Labour Council, delegate meeting, op cit. 26.5.08.
49. S.I.28.5.09. For Pointer, see J.Bellamy and Saville, op cit. Vol II, pp.300-303; obit. notice, S.I.20.11.14.
50. 'The Attercliffe Elector' published by S.G. in M.P. 105.L.
51. S.I.3.5.09.
52. *ibid.*
53. Wilson Papers, op cit. 5965-5968; see below, pp.
54. Labour Representation Committee, executive mins, op cit. 18.4.09: 3,683 votes for Labour were cast at the previous Municipal election for candidates at Attercliffe, Darnall and Heeley.
55. *ibid.*
56. S.I. 3.5.09.
57. S.G. 7.5.09; S.I. 5.5.09.
58. Trades and Labour Council, op cit. L.D.1629. 12.5.09.
59. Fabian Society minutes, op cit.
60. Firth Worker April 1920.
61. see R.Challinor, op cit. and B.Holton, op cit.
62. J. Hinton, op cit., points out the importance of the presence of a Socialist-Syndicalist perspective in the development of regional labour politics, p.172

63. R.Challinor, op cit.
64. This formed the basis of an S.L.P. branch in Sheffield. Hinton believes no such branch existed before the first world war, op cit. p. 172. The Socialist, op cit. August 1905.
65. For a discussion of the importance of these sites, see below, p.303-308.
66. The Socialist, November 1906.
67. ibid, July 1906.
68. Frank Hedley. Joined S.L.P. in Whitehaven. Moved to Sheffield in February 1906 as a full time organiser for the Party. December 1906, dismissed from S.L.P. due to his relationship with a married women. Between 1906 and 1912, served in the Royal Navy. Returned to Sheffield to help re-establish S.L.P. Was arrested just after the war in Ireland where he was serving in the army, for attempting to insight mutiny. Imprisoned in Belfast, he went on hunger strike as a political prisoner.
see Executive Committee S.L.P. Minutes, (British Library) August 1905; Feb 1906; August 1906; April 1912; March 1913; November 1913. R.Challinor, op cit. p.268
69. The Socialist, Nov. 1906.
70. ibid. Aug 1907; Feb 1908..
71. Membership of Sheffield branch was probably around 15-20 before 1909. S.I.12.10.06; The Socialist Aug. 1907.
72. R.Challinor, op cit. p.120
73. G.H.Fletcher, during 1906 general election campaign. S.D.T. 12.1.06. For Fletcher, see above, p. 267.
74. Exec Comm. S.L.P. op cit. 7.12.06.
75. The Socialist, April 1906.
76. ibid.
77. For 1906 election, see above, p. 182-184.
78. The Socialist, June 1908. S.G.24.4.1908. The conference was held at the Wentworth Cafe, Holly St. 18-19 April.

79. The Socialist, Oct. 1908.
80. *ibid.* May 1908.
81. *ibid.*
82. *ibid.*
83. The Industrial Unionist (London), monthly paper of the British Advocates of Industrial Unionism. June 1. 1908. Sheffield Trades and Labour Council, 21.5.09: S.F.T.C. Annual Report 1910. S.G.9.9.10, T.Ring 'The Failure of Sectional Unionism' For Chandler, see T.&.L.C. 21.5.12.
84. The Socialist June, 1906.
85. T.&.L.C. 21.5.09.
86. *ibid.* 28.11.11.
87. The Socialist, Dec. 1911.
88. Active members in both phases included F.Hedley, A.E.Worrall, H.Crabtree, F.Williamson.
89. Exec. Comm. S.L.P. *op cit.* 6.7.12; 9.9.12. The Socialist Aug. 1912.
90. The Socialist, Nov. 1913.
91. *ibid.* Aug. 1914.
92. see p.
93. The Socialist, Sept. 1916.
94. Hinton, *op cit.* p. 172.
95. Sheffield Fabian Soc. *op cit.* Annual Report, 1911.
96. S.G. 18.1.07.
97. *ibid.* 16.4.09.
98. *ibid.* 7.5.09.
99. *ibid.*
100. Sheffield Fabian Society, *op cit.*

101. Fabian Society, Sheffield. Annual Rept. 1910: the branch reported a loss of female membership to the women's suffrage campaign.
102. J.Pointer (1875-1914) Bellamy and Saville, op cit. Vol 2.pp. 300-303. City Councillor, Brightside, 1908-11. Member of Sheffield I.L.P and Fabian Society. Pattern Maker. Collected papers, M.P. 6134-6137.
103. D.Evans. Newspaper cuttings relating to Sheffield, Vol 22. (S.F.) Obit. Notice, S.I. 9.7.44.
104. J.Penny. S.G.9.8.07. Sec. National I.L.P. 1898-1903; sec. Sheffield I.L.P. 1905-07. Teacher and journalist. Fabian. Pointer's election agent 1909 and 1910.
J.Rothnie, draper from Aberdeen. I.L.P. exec. from 1906. Helped form Sheff. Fabian Soc. 1907. Sec. Sheffield I.L.P. 1911-13. Sec Trades and Labour Council 1912-1919. Pointer's meetings organiser.
105. Sheffield I.L.P. Federal Council. M.D. 3467, June 1910 ff. Only Attercliffe branch remained outside the federation.
106. ibid.
107. ibid. 18.1.11.
108. Fabian Soc exec. comm. 7.7.09. The S.D.P. finally ran Charles Lapworth, a journalist and later editor of the Herald as Socialist candidate. For Lapworth's campaign, see Claude Moore, op cit. p. 87; S.G 7.1.10; 14.1.10. Lapworth focused on the question of de-skilling pointing to the Americanisation of the crafts, declaring that work will come,"only when human flesh and blood is cheaper than machines. Our salvation lies in getting hold of these machines, we must own our own jobs."
109. T.&.L.C. mins. 20.12.10.
110. S.G. 27.1.11. For Barton, see above, p. 267.
111. ibid. 1.11.12. H.Mathers, op cit. p. 181.
112. Richard Hawkin. Sheffield I.L.P and Fabian Soc. Editor, S.G 1911-16.
113. I.L.P. Federal Council, 5.1.12.
114. A.J.Thatcher, S.G. 19.4.12

117. T.&.L.C. op cit. 1.6.15.
118. ibid.
119. T.&.L.C. op cit. 31.5.10.
120. ibid. 20.9.10.
121. For Bailey, see above p.115.
122. T.&.L.C. op. cit. 13.9.10.
123. ibid. 20.9.10.
124. ibid.
125. Fabian Society, executive committee. op cit. 21.6.10.
126. I.L.P. Federal Council, op cit. 21.11.10.
127. ibid. 25.11.10.
128. ibid. 4.1.11; for Pointer's election, 1910, see above, p184.
129. T.&.L.C. delegate meeting, op cit. 29.1.11.
130. ibid. 24.1.11.
131. ibid. 30.11.11.
132. ibid. 27.2.12.
133. I.L.P. Fed Council. op cit. 28.9.14.
134. T.&.L.C. op cit. 1.6.15.
135. see above, pp. 105-106; 234-236.
136. T.&.L.C. op cit. 24.4.17; 23.10.17.
137. ibid. 9.6.20.
138. see above, p.115; 118.
139. For M.Humberstone, see Who's Who in Sheffield, 1902, op cit.
S.G.18.4.13.
140. T.&.L.C. exec. comm. op cit. 22.12.19.
141. see pp.47-53; 60; 102-105.
142. T.&.L.C. Feb 1920.
143. ibid.

144. *ibid.* 20.2.20.
145. *ibid.*
146. Women's Labour League, Annual Report 1909-1910, quoted in C.Rowan, 'Women in the Labour Party, 1906-1920.' in Feminist Review Vol 12, 1982.
147. Royal Commission of Enquiry on Divorce Law Reform, 1912-13 Evidence of Eleanor Barton, Q. 37087-165.
148. Other areas of activity which attracted women members included the Women's Sewing Committee; the Cinderalla Clubs; Ramblers Club and Music group. For these, see S.G.24.8.06.
Several women were among regular speakers for the S.D.F. and I.L. Mrs Elsbury and Mrs Penny.
149. see above, p195-197.
150. Interview with Grace Tebbutt, authors' possession, May 1982.
151. S.G.22.5.08.
152. C.Rowan, *op cit.* p.75; the Sheffield branch met fortnightly. 1 del. T.&L.C. S.G.18.10.12; for R.W.G. see S.G.4.10.07.
153. S.G.25.9.08; 15.11.07
154. S.G. 7.6.07. Debating classes were held once weekly.
155. *ibid.* 4.1.07;
156. *ibid.* 20.3.08.
157. For Jenny Pointer, see S.G. 4.7.13.
158. *ibid.* 25.9.08.
159. J.Gaffin and D.Thoms, Caring and Sharing (Co-operative Union) 1983.
160. S.I.27.6.05.
161. see below, p. 292,
162. Sheffield Social Enquiry, W.C.G. *op cit.* 4-10.1.1902.
163. Sheffield Co-operator Oct. 1923.
164. Eleanor Barton (1872-1960) Saville and Bellamy, *op cit.* Vol 1. p. 38-40.
- For Edna Penny, see The Sheffield Co-operator, Oct. 1923.

165. S.G.26.7.12; 20.6.13; 5.10.13; 5.1.15
166. ibid. 20.7.06.
167. ibid. 15.3.07; 28.8.08.
2.8.07.
168. G.Wilkinson. Sec. Fabian Soc and Women's Trade Union League
City Councillor, Walkley, 1919-1923. President Sheffield
Federated Trades and Labour Council 1920. Obit. notice,
Sheffield Forward August 1961.
169. Maud Maxfield, S.I.1.11.12. Result, Con - 1,540. Lib - 933.
170. Sheffield Year Book, 1920. pp. 64-67

CHAPTER FOUR

CLASS, IMPERIALISM AND PATRIARCHY: ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS

"In order to maintain (his) position, the capitalist must fashion social institutions, control education, the press and politics so as to ensure their interests, laws, customs and ethics are harmonised with his interests. In fact, the whole set of institutions, social, economic and political, and the social mind is fashioned by the present ruling class."¹

Thus did Tom Ring of the Sheffield branch of the British Socialist Party (B.S.P.) summarise a political understanding of Capitalism which recognised a fundamental ideological control through popular culture. One of the most essential areas of working class resistance and challenge to the dominant ideology was through a political re-definition and evaluation of the relationship between life in the workplace, the community and in the home.

The recognition of the penetration of a dominant ideology was diverse among the various political groupings within the wider labour movement at this time. However, a re-assessment of working class tradition and culture was a common feature of each mode of theory and practice. The construction of a supportive social and cultural framework was a vital element in the socialist and labour movement. It not only fundamentally challenged the control of Capitalism outside of the workplace but also maintained a vitality and communal energy through which confidence and vision was realised.

The language and imagery employed by the socialist and labour movement was common to all sections and political perspectives. This underlines the function of such language in effecting more than the communication of ideas. At a time when the open-air street-corner orator was the principal propagandist agent, the power and energy of socialist rhetoric was a useful tool. Thus, the Lib-Lab spokesman might adopt the language and imagery of class conflict at a moment convenient to such use. Charles Hobson, president of the S.F.T.C. was a prominent orator during the engineering trade lock-out in 1897. At a meeting held in support of the workers, he urged the men;

"to be true to the union, and show how the action of the employers had created such a bond of union among all sections of labour, organised and unorganised, as would become in the near future a phalanx of power as would help the workers emancipate themselves from the oppression of Capital."²

Such comment, which was received with "loud cheers" by the meeting did not indicate Hobson's political perspective; rather it created the illusion of solidarity and invincibility that, in the immediate context of common experience, could wield the power of reality.

According to the belief that;

"the new social edifice is, and will be, a natural, spontaneous product of human evolution, which is already in the process of formation",³

the language and imagery which characterised the political perspective of Labour-Socialist groupings was often deterministic, utopian and evangelical. The Sheffield Guardian, in 1909, stated

that it was wrong to assume that socialism was merely a class movement; rather, it was:

"the expression of the sense of racial solidarity that is making itself felt throughout the world... a spiritual awakening... a fusing of common interests - common ends."⁴

In response to Liberal and Conservative Party jibes that the socialist and labour movement was immoral in supporting free love and the destruction of the family, the I.L.P. retorted that it represented;

"the only really religious Party today."⁵

In this sense, the language and imagery of response was defensive and conceded much to established values through which the authority of the ruling class was enmeshed.

At the annual May Day celebrations in 1907, it was announced that the event demonstrated that;

"Labour is International in federation, not race bound in solidarity; that labourer and mechanic are equal in dignity, that union is strength, solidarity is power, and that the cause of Labour is ten-times-ten the mechanic's cause."⁶

Such language and identity was effective in concealing much of what fragmented organised labour at this time and provided energy and commitment. The use of such descriptive language therefore, reveals much of the inner contradictions of the socialist and labour movement at this time. Socialism was, it was believed, a fixed principle, rather than an expediency which Liberalism embodied. Contradictions within socialist theory could therefore be neutralised by an overriding conviction in the inevitability of its implementation and

moral superiority.

An essentially moral tone is evident in the following statement of the Sheffield I.L.P., heralding the election of a Labour group in Parliament:

"This meeting recognises that the social evils of poverty, unemployment and physical and moral deterioration are brought about by the private ownership of the means of livelihood and the competitive struggle for existence engendered thereby; it declares that the remedy for these evils is to be found in the establishment of a co-operative commonwealth, based on the public ownership of the land and the means of production; it calls upon the workers to organise politically and industrially, to work for the speedy realisation of the Socialist Commonwealth."⁷

The polarity of good and evil, righteousness and corruption, accompanied by a deterministic assumption of the imminent demise of Capitalism by way of its own intrinsic disintegration and decay is understandable only with reference to a wider political tradition.

Something of the nature of socialism as a "living, pulsating religion" can be captured in the comment of a local activist reminiscing of a time,

"When the I.L.P. stood for something more than vote catching, when its advocates were not afraid to preach the gospel of pure unadulterated socialism... what it meant to be a socialist in those days... it came as an inspiration, as a new crusade... Let us renew our faith in the justice of the cause and go forth with the assurance that victory will attend our efforts."⁸

The 'Religious Crusade' is a concept which embraces something of the quality of activism within the general movement at this time. The committed were united by a common culture, language,

identity and society. Many labour and socialist agitators learned their oratorical skills in the Free Churches and Sunday Schools.⁹ The language of 'fellowship' and 'brotherhood' conferred dignity and respect as well as indicating a certain mystery of association through which only the initiated might penetrate.¹⁰ Such a protective culture sustained and reproduced the movement.

The protecting and nurturing effect of a common cultural frame of reference is reflected in the following account of a Sheffield railway worker on hearing Edward Carpenter speak:

"As one listened to the man, one mentally sloughed off the conventional husks which seemed to encase one's spirit, and one's outlook as a result of modern industrial conditions... One lost the sense of the grimy city with its jostling thousands living under a pall of smoke ... one lost the sense of those small worries and oft-time ridiculous conventions which oppress the soul and make of life a weariness."¹¹

The same visionary language and imagery characterised the political comment of G.H.B.Ward, secretary of the Sheffield Labour Party:

"Politics! There's politics, and there's fresh air... When the factory gates shut, I go to the hills and I find my Utopia... my Earth Heaven."¹²

The inspiration of this type of comment is found within the tradition of British Socialism from the Owenite movement of the early nineteenth century. Its function was to provide emotional energy, to focus a disparate ideology and to some extent, to neutralise debate and disagreement over theory and tactics. It promoted self-confidence and self-sufficiency by means of connecting the present struggles with the future

achievements, continuously challenging the working class to act out its part:

"History moves along relentlessly. It thrusts responsibility even upon those who do not ask for it. The working class do not escape their responsibilities. They can anticipate them, prepare for them, but never escape them."¹³

In the same spirit, the labour and socialist movement was understood as a willing to fulfilment of an inevitable longing for an improved quality of life in all areas of experience. In this sense, the spheres of work, politics and community were united and related in a total vision.

"Labour unrest is no mere matter of money and wages. It is a growing demand in men and women, an uprising of their spirit against the poverty of life's necessities, which shuts from so many, great avenues of human happiness."¹⁴

Increased attacks on the trade union movement by employers and the State and the decreasing demand for skilled labour in many industries and trades, because of the introduction of mechanisation, encouraged the labour and socialist movement as a whole to reconsider its need to understand the social and political system. This meant a working class education, controlled and conducted by the community, was an urgent requirement. For the adherent to a Lib-Lab philosophy and tactic, this might mean the encouragement of self-confidence and respectability through education, so as to enable the working class to partake more easily in the existing system. For the Labour-Socialist activist, the cultivation of the intellect might be considered useful for a future situation in which leisure time was lengthened and working hours reduced.

For women in the socialist and labour movement, education was a crucial issue since women were at a social and political disadvantage through the sexual division of labour.

The Workers Educational Association was established in the city in 1906.¹⁵ This was a non-sectarian and non-political organisation for the education of working class men and women in their leisure time. Its leadership and ideology was firmly rooted in the nineteenth century tradition of the Mechanics Institute.¹⁶ The Association held weekly classes in history, economics and literature in conjunction with the staff of the University College with the objective:

"To develop among the manual workers of the Country an intellectual grasp of economic, historical and political problems bearing on their duties as responsible members of a democratic community."¹⁷

Twenty-nine local trade union branches affiliated to the W.E.A. from the Lib-Lab and Labour-Socialist groupings.¹⁸

However, after several months experience certain groups decided to secede from the Association for political reasons.

Local branches of the Associated Society of Railway Servants (A.S.R.S.) were among the first unions to register dissatisfaction with the kind of education offered by the W.E.A.¹⁹ The All Grades Movement, between 1906 and 1907, increased and fuelled suspicion of official leadership. The Plebs League was an organisation devoted to the education of the working class by the workers and was supported by many railway workers.²⁰

At a meeting of Grimesthorpe A.S.R.S., where general secretary Richard Bell was speaking in support of the conciliation process, local railway worker C.T.Cramp requested that;

"the young men rouse from their apathy and join forces with that greater movement for the uplifting of their fellows, the socialisation of the means of life."²¹

During the war, Cramp expanded on his attitude towards workers' education. His first concern was to show the intimate relationship between industrial, political and social change. He explained:

"To abolish fear, it was necessary that education, real education, should be much widely diffused among the people... No such knowledge however, could ever be attained without leisure, and a short working day would always rank as one of the most urgent reforms from the workers' point of view."²²

The point was to change the system of education which created its own elite and subjected to ignorance and apathy the mass of the people. An alternative system was required based on a redefinition and evaluation of the requirements of life, changing at one and the same time, the form and content of education:

"The end in view should not be the production of a few great men but rather the diffusion of a higher level of education and culture amongst the mass of the people."²³

The Labour Party, pledged as it was to the Labour-Socialist tactic of achieving change through local and national legislation, saw the physical environment as an immediate target for effecting educational reform. It declared:

"Men, women, yes and even children, do not live by bread alone, but by their civic institutions, their schools, their churches, their museums and art galleries, built amid pleasant and, if possible, beautiful surroundings."²⁴

Charles Watkins of Sheffield National Union of Railway-workers, allied himself with the Socialist-Syndicalist line established by Cramp.²⁵ He called for the establishment of an alternative workers educational association which took as its central perspective, the class struggle. Watkins was later involved with other local activists in founding a joint committee of working class education, in 1917.²⁶

The impact of the war revealed to a section of the socialist and labour movement, the nature and scope of State power and control in both military and civilian life. From such a perspective, the critique of working class educational provision was sharply worded. The Sheffield Workers' Committee described the W.E.A. as an organisation subsidised by the master class whose function was to produce,

"rebels ... conspicuous by their flannel trousers and general middle class smell, accompanied with eye glasses and general ponderosity in their laboured use of the aspirate."²⁷

After the war, several local trade union branches registered a distinct preference for a certain kind of working class education by switching affiliation from the W.E.A. to the newly formed Sheffield Labour College. Such a decision was taken by Sheffield Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. A Mason, organising secretary, called attention to the need for unity at such a critical time and pointed out the necessity for better education, hoping that "all members would join the classes about to be formed."²⁸

The Firth Worker, organ of the Sheffield Workers' Committee, carried an article in support of the Labour College which

was highly critical of State education. It considered:

"The workers are doped at school, falsley educated, taught monarchical instead of industrial history ... to create and perpetuate a crop of docile mugs, whose chief object is work and to be content to exist and reproduce their species. ... After school, the press takes the reigns and continues the dope ... and by continuous installation of opinion manages to render the victims devoid of imagination, but left with the ability to repeat as their own judgment what has been given through the paper."²⁹

The Sheffield Labour College was born out of this protracted debate over the nature of working class education, with its roots in the Socialist-Syndicalist strategy within the local labour movement. It was a college in the sense of its work only; it had no physical presence in the city. The leaders of the Labour College movement in Sheffield were Joseph Madin, of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and Charles Watkins, of the National Union of Railwaymen.³⁰ These and others in London and Manchester, formed the Central Labour College in 1919 whose object was to equip the workers,

"with the knowledge adequate for the accomplishment of their industrial and political tasks ...(and) to teach trade unionists the sciences which afford a penetrating insight into the deepest foundations of society, which disclose the processes by means of which social structures rise and function."³¹

Tutors in Sheffield included Alf Barton, Mr and Mrs Rollings, Joseph Madin and Gertrude Wilkinson. The subjects taught were Industrial History, Economics, the Science of Understanding, and Industrial Syndicalism. Fourtnightly discussion classes were held at the Trades Council offices for members of the Plebs League. Other classes were held in Chesterfield,

At the level of primary education, a Socialist perspective which recognised and criticised the system of education which accepted the sexual division of labour, and institutionalised militarism through school discipline, was maintained by sections of the organised women's political movement. In particular, it was the more left-wing activists who, following the tradition of Edward Carpenter, discussed the issue of patriarchy.³³ The encouragement of sexual education in schools was one concern of both the Women's Labour League and Co-operative Women's Guild. The Guild was represented by Eleanor Barton in 1910 who gave evidence from Sheffield Guildswomen to the Royal Commission of Enquiry into Divorce Law Reform.³⁴ She was convinced of the wider implications of a change in the system of morals taught in schools and declared:

"Our children should be taught the uses of their own bodies, both boys and girls. I hold strong opinions on that subject."³⁵

In criticising the present law, she considered sexual discrimination in industrial and domestic life to be intimately related. Expressing the views of the Sheffield Guild, she explained to the Commissioners:

"There is a great amount of suffering that never sees daylight ... I think it is really because of the idea of morality. A married working woman in the home has no money of her own and that makes it hard for women to escape from any amount of cruelty ... One has the idea, if they are married, that they have to submit

to their husbands ... it makes it especially hard for working women because they are not able to get away the same as people in a better class of life. It means a great amount of suffering is caused by say a lustful husband, by bearing children unwillingly. It is not talked about."³⁶

The subject of sexual education in schools was discussed by the Sheffield Women's Labour League in 1912, and was included as part of the Co-operative Women's Guild's speakers class in 1914.³⁷ These campaigns won support from the National Federation of Women Teachers among whose members was a teacher in a school at Dronfield who was reprimanded for including the subject in the school curriculum.³⁸

It was recognised, at the same time, by sections of the local socialist and labour movement who tended towards the Socialist-Syndicalist perspective, that content alone was an insufficient target for challenge. The form of instruction and the definition of education should also be challenged. It was suggested:

"Our object should not only be one of instruction, but of entertainment and culture. Poverty stricken areas should be visited by our choirs and the people first regaled with simple songs of freedom to be followed by a short speech and the distribution of literature. Music should be made more use of for the emancipation of the people... Our message must be embroidered in song, in speech and in literature."³⁹

A redefinition of good health and welfare was an important element in the general movement to improve the quality of life organised in campaigns weilded by the socialist and labour movement in Sheffield at this time. It has been noted by an historian of the Trades Councils in Britain that between

the years 1890 to 1900, a distinct change of emphasis occurred in their policy and activity.⁴⁰ The primary function of the Trades Council changed from one of protecting and enlarging the right to organise to one focusing on social welfare. In Sheffield, the Trades Councils both took an active part in debating issues of working class health, sanitation, housing and diet. Most activity focused on the local authority as the immediate provider of amenities; this underlined the strength of the Labour-Socialist strategy which was concerned with effecting more Labour Representation on all public bodies.

The perils of working class life in this period were multiple, closely related and often of fatal proportions. In the industrial sphere the cutlery trade was notoriously hazardous.⁴¹ In spite of the numerous Factory Acts available, very little regulation was enforced and the system of work operating in the trade tended to hamper their application. Out work was particularly dangerous and difficult to control.⁴² In the 'heavy' trades the main hazards stemmed from accidents, furnace heat and dust and gas inhalations.⁴³ During the war the dangerous occupation of shell-filling was expanded especially effecting young girls and women.⁴⁴ The local lead factories were very hazardous sources of employment for women and girls. Between the years 1888 and 1892 twelve deaths occurred among employees at a Sheffield lead factory of whom no less than eleven were women.⁴⁵

Poor housing, sanitation and the smoke menace contributed to mortality rates which ranked among the highest in all

manufacturing cities. In 1900, the annual rate of deaths per thousand in Sheffield was reported to be rising relatively and absolutely, amounting to 21 per thousand against a national figure of 17.7 per thousand.⁴⁶ Mortality rates measured in different districts in the city reflected marked class differences. In 1906, the average death rate in the poorest and most densely populated, inner-city districts, were 31 per thousand, while the average for the city as a whole was 22 per thousand.⁴⁷ Infantile death rates showed class differences more starkly; in the industrial areas of north Sheffield, annual rates were 234 per thousand while in the residential, middle class district of Hallam, the figure was 80 per thousand.⁴⁸

This discrepancy in the general standard of health among the population in different areas of the city was still apparent in 1920 when Eleanor Barton declared in her Municipal Election Address:

"I want to see Attercliffe brought up to the standard of Ranmoor and Norton in regard to health, instead of being the Cinderella Ward of the city with the blackest sky and the highest death rate."⁴⁹

The municipal programmes, initiated by a Conservative controlled Council in the 1890s, were the starting point from which labour organisations could argue for expansion, to cover housing, sanitation and general public health.⁵⁰ Jonathan Taylor, a member of the Social Democratic Federation, was one of the most strident advocates of the public ownership of the necessities of life.⁵¹ As a founder of the Sheffield Association for the Better Housing of the Poor, Taylor recognised a direct relationship between the private ownership of land and property and working class oppression.⁵² In giving evidence

to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1892, Taylor explained the difficulties encountered by Sheffield workers who were evicted, along with their families, from Company owned property, as a result of their participation in strike action.⁵³

The Housing of the Working Classes Act, passed at the time when the Liberal Party was in control of the City Council, made it possible for the Corporation to acquire land for residential property development.⁵⁴ As such, participation in municipal politics around the issue of slum clearance and working class housing encouraged the adoption of the Lib-Lab strategy. Sanitary and housing reform was part of the programme on which the first working class representatives on the City Council were elected.⁵⁵ Later, the Labour Representation Committee, which sought to distinguish its politics from the Lib-Lab strategy, nevertheless, accepting the structure of political change available, presented its municipal policy as one designed;

"to secure present day practical measures of reform, to relieve the worries and uncertainties of every day existence, to ameliorate conditions of life, of employment, to obtain comfort in old age, to wrest privileges from the monopolist and gain a greater degree of security and happiness than can ever be expected by adherence to orthodox politics."⁵⁶

The Fair Contacts Clause, introduced for Council employees in 1907, embodied some of the demands of the first Labour Councilors in the direction of an expanded Municipal service. This went hand in hand with a critique of private contract work on Council property, with no adequate protection of employee security. The Sheffield Guardian sought to press Labour

Councillors to adopt a more strident position. It commented:

"The fact is, contractors cannot be trusted... what a great deal simpler and better it is for the Council to dispense with the contractor whenever possible and do the work that requires to be done by Direct Labour."⁵⁷

At the municipal level, those groups adhering to the Labour-Socialist strategy, mainly the I.L.P. and S.D.F., wished to distinguish their approach from fellow Labour Representatives on the City Council, elected as Lib-Labs. The propaganda of the former underlined its understanding of the capitalist system as the fundamental source of poverty and ill-health. A meeting of the Sheffield I.L.P. in 1906, at which Kier Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald spoke, declared its recognition,

"that the social evils of poverty, unemployment and physical and moral deterioration are brought about by the private ownership of the means of livelihood and the competitive struggle for existence engendered thereby."⁵⁸

This commitment was developed by elected members of the City Council, in the Labour interest, into a strategic attack on the use of private builders on Council owned land. Councillor Padley believed the Council should build for itself and he noted:

"The real objections to municipal dwellings were let out in a statement that it would ultimately stamp out the private builder entirely. I say, the sooner the scoundrels who rush up street after street of jerry, cramped and unhealthy dwellings ... find their progress checked, the better."⁵⁹

On the question of infant mortality, the Labour Representation Committee published a Report in 1905, compiled by its local secretary, G.H.B.Ward.⁶⁰ After presenting the

local statistics, Ward presented a case for a municipal milk depot on the lines already established in other British cities and on the Continent. The report, although courageous in its demand for municipal expansion, was politically cautious. Ward signed himself firmly to the dominant view which saw the health problem as one resulting from a "lack of knowledge" among mothers. He believed working mothers were at best ignorant and at worst immoral:

"The mother who goes to the factory must leave (her child) to the 'care' or 'carelessness' of a day-time foster mother, 'creches' not being common in England."⁶¹

Ward's political perspective drew no connection between the social and economic exploitation of working class women and the problem of infantile mortality. The solution, as he saw it, was not create conditions in which women would be further confined to the domestic environment, confident that "the mother's place is in the home".⁶²

In support of this, Ward advocated the increased emphasis in education provision for girls of the duty of motherhood. He considered that compulsory attendance at continuation classes would:

"do much towards dispelling 'old wives' tales and fads' towards the making of - in the words of the (Physical Deterioration) Committee's report, that 'generation of competent housewives' who would 'create a family tradition which would contribute to preserve higher ideals of domestic comfort and better standards of life'."⁶³

Throughout the report, Ward's basic concern was with the life of the infant and less of the mother, and in this sense he conformed very closely with a dominant ideology which viewed with dismay the decline of an imperial race.⁶⁴

In contrast to the conclusion of the L.R.C. Report, the contribution of the Women's Co-operative Guild and Women's Labour League to the debate on maternity and child welfare underlined what it perceived as the direct relationships between the economic, political and social position of women.⁶⁵ Gertrude Clarke of the Sheffield National Federation of Women Workers (N.F.W.W.) illustrated this point of view when she declared:

"The complete emancipation of women must be threefold; political, economic and social and sexual ... many a woman is driven by her low wages into an unsuitable marriage and in addition to bearing and rearing children becomes the unpaid cook and housekeeper of her husband..."⁶⁶

In their campaigns for better provision for maternity and child welfare, the organisations of working class women were careful to point out the need to resist middle class interference both at the ideological and practical level.⁶⁷ While campaigning to expand municipal health care for infants under school age the women answered directly those who viewed poverty and ill-health as the result of the ignorance of mothers. They noted:

"There has been a conspiracy of silence on the part of the medical profession with regard to the vice of men. When as much publicity is given to this fact as one great reason for infantile mortality as is now given to the ignorance of mothers, we shall see what will happen... where we have the majority of our people struggling for existence, bringing up their children in insanitary and overcrowded houses, on insufficient food, medical men will do well to turn their attention away from fault finding to the means of helping mothers in their very difficult task."⁶⁸

Again, recognising and resisting philanthropic and charitable middle class interest in working class family life and careful to note the eugenicist implications of that interest, the Women's Co-operative Guild stressed the need for working class women to take an active part in the shaping of maternity and child welfare provision. This involved a campaign to have maternity benefit paid directly to the woman and in support of a ministry of health.⁶⁹ South Yorkshire district speakers for the Guild for the year 1917-18 included in their list of topics, the National Care of Maternity.⁷⁰ A memorandum published by the Guild in 1917 called for the immediate formation of a ministry of health "with a strong and active maternity department."⁷¹ Midwives were to be awarded greater security and status; supported by the local authority, and clinics providing pre-natal and ante-natal care should be established. Of the clinics, the Guild observed:

"We wish to lay special stress on the importance of working women taking a responsible part in the work ... they know and are in close touch with the lives and feelings of the people... members of the Guild feel strongly that 'ladies' who have sat on charitable committees may be out of touch with the point of view of the independent working women."⁷²

The important link, recognised by the Women's Co-operative Guild, between community well-being and the quality of life with the economic, social and political status of women, was emphasised during the war. In demanding creche facilities for working mothers they were faced with the dominant view that any such provision would be "a confession of failure by the community in not insisting on mothers looking after their babies at home."⁷³ Once more, the neglect of children by working

mothers was condemned not as the result of inadequate facilities, but as due to mothers "who had acquired drinking habits before the war."⁷⁴ In challenging the dominant ideology in the specific area of women's health such campaigns drew very clear conclusions from the relationship between economic and political power.

In 'Married Women and Paid Positions: a Plea for Solidarity amongst the Workers', Eleanor Barton warned that the advances made by Sheffield women during the war would be torn from them should they not act in defence.⁷⁵ Dealing with all the arguments levelled against women as workers, based largely on their reproductive capacity, she stressed a direct link between adequate social and industrial welfare and the personal and political freedom of women. She declared:

"It is especially important to have married women in paid positions because of the necessity of married women being represented by married women in Parliament, on public bodies and such bodies as Trade Union Executives, Co-operative Boards and Committees. Experience teaches us that there is great difficulty in getting women elected to these positions; that unless women stand loyally together in support of a competent woman candidate there is little chance of success."⁷⁶

The right of the individual to publicly comment on or question political authority and control has been a central concern of the British socialist and labour movement since its early origins. The struggle for the expansion of free speech as a basis from which an effective challenge to authority and power might be developed has an important place in working class politics at this time. The campaigns around the issue relate

directly to the creation of an alternative, socialist culture and improved quality of life. However, the points of antagonism with the dominant ideology concerning freedom of expression, differed according to political perspective. For the present purposes, three areas of struggle have been identified as representative of differing political perspectives expressed by sections of the Sheffield socialist and labour movement. First, the issue of electoral reform and the extension of the franchise to include either a limited female or full adult suffrage. Secondly, the challenge to prohibited parks and public places as sites for the proliferation of propaganda and thirdly, the resistance of the individual to State encroachments in social and industrial life, especially during the war.

The campaign to extend the franchise in Parliamentary and Municipal elections and to alter the law governing the political participation of women, flourished in Sheffield between 1906 and 1914. Its membership and organisation can be seen to span the political spectrum of Lib-Lab to Socialist-Syndicalist identified in this study. Ever since the late 1860s, a middle class, Liberal, women's suffrage campaign was active in the city.⁷⁷ The campaign renewed around the time of the formation of the Labour Party was much more working class in composition and distinguished itself in its propaganda from Liberal or Lib-Lab organisations. The organisations making up this campaign were the Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.), formed nationally in 1903 and in Sheffield in January 1907; the Women's Freedom League (W.F.L.), formed in 1908 as a break-away from the W.S.P.U.; and the organisations of women who

included women's suffrage as one of several campaigns designed to improve the political status of women.⁷⁸

The Sheffield Women's Suffrage Society, which was a Lib-Lab body in constitution and membership, adhered to educational, constitutional methods "to obtain for women the Parliamentary franchise on the same conditions as it is, or may be, granted to men."⁷⁹ The franchise based on property right was to be maintained through any extension. The membership was composed of the wives and daughters of Liberal Party members and Lib-Lab trade unionists. The president of the Society was Dr. Helen Wilson, the daughter of H.J. Wilson, M.P. for Holmfirth.⁸⁰

The first signs of a more direct approach to the government, on the issue of women's suffrage, came in 1904 when ^{two} local women were arrested for their part in a raid on the House of Commons.⁸¹ But the real boost to the local movement came late in 1907 when Adela Pankhurst, the youngest of the Pankhurst family, came to live and work in Sheffield as district organiser for the W.S.P.U.⁸² She led several large meetings on Women's Suffrage in the following three years, boosting the membership of the W.S.P.U. and encouraging the women's political organisations in the city to take up the campaign. Her commitment was socialist in temper and feminist in perspective. In this way, one of the "black sheep" of the family fuelled movement away from the Lib-Lab perspective already established in the city.⁸³

Adela Pankhurst was especially keen that the campaign for Women's Suffrage should be carried forward in relationship with campaigns to improve the working conditions of women.

This perspective was reflected among the membership of the Sheffield W.S.P.U. who were active in other parts of the women's labour movement. Mrs Storr, who was chairwoman of the W.S.P.U., was also on the executive committee of the Trades and Labour Council. She served a short prison sentence as a result of her part in the unconstitutional campaign.⁸⁴

Soon after her arrival in Sheffield, Adela Pankhurst, reflecting on the wider aspects of the suffrage question at a local demonstration, suggested:

"If women had the vote, men would have to discuss politics with women.", and that when a man married a woman, it was wrong to assume that he bought his wife's "soul and conscience."⁸⁵

The law as it stood upheld the notion that women had no rights in marriage, or without.⁸⁶

At a meeting of mainly middle class women held in November 1907, Adela Pankhurst explained that the question of the vote should be viewed as one of human rights, as a means of self-expression and free speech. She added that it was futile to rely on male political parties and leaders for reform to be effected and declared:

"If the condition of women was to be improved, they would have to do it themselves."⁸⁷

During the same month, the W.S.P.U. began to disrupt political meetings in the city. A demonstration was organised to greet the war minister, Mr Haldane, when he attended a Liberal Rally. Women's Suffrage campaigners from the north and representatives from the national organisation were among the demonstrators who were prevented from entering the

Albert Hall where Haldane was speaking. Repeated attempts to raid the hall were resisted violently by a police cordon which led the contingent of women to chant slogans about "the brutality of men" in the street outside. An impromptu meeting was organised in near-by Barkers Pool where the women spoke of their being silenced by the authorities. Women were allowed into the meeting who were "guaranteed to be safe and harmless and ...undertake not to kick up a disturbance", they declared.⁸⁸

Similar protests were made in the following two years when government representatives spoke in the city. In 1908, at a time of massive local unemployment, Adela Pankhurst led a demonstration of the unemployed to the Cutler's Hall where the annual Feast was being held. The police prevented her entering the hall, disguised as a servant, and a pitched battle occurred in the street outside.⁸⁹

The Attercliffe by-election of May 1909 provided a welcome opportunity for the W.S.P.U. to mount a full propaganda campaign. Emmerline and Sylvia Pankhurst both visited the city and each candidate was asked to publicly state his views on the question of women's suffrage. The electorate was advised to vote only for those who supported the campaign of the W.S.P.U.. All political Parties were subject to attack and criticism. Women stormed a meeting where First Lord of the Admiralty, McKenna was speaking.⁹⁰

The election of Joseph Pointer to represent Attercliffe in the Labour interest proved to be a turning point for the local Women's Suffrage campaign, as it was for the labour movement as a whole. The Women's Freedom League, which locally had

some links with the Fabian Society, in December 1908 broke from the W.S.P.U. strategy, on the grounds of Party allegiance; the W.F.L. sought to campaign for women's suffrage more closely with the Labour Party.⁹¹ But within the local membership of the W.S.P.U. there was registered the same tone of disillusionment with the politics of Labour's representative in Parliament that was reflected by sections of the local socialist and labour movement which adopted a Socialist-Syndicalist strategy.⁹² It is clear that this criticism voiced against Pointer was based on a clear political preference by the means which it was displayed. At a meeting in February 1913, where Pointer was speaking, several women began to chant and sing verses of The Red Flag before making an exit.⁹³ This coincided with the adoption of more militant direct action by sections of the women's suffrage campaign in the city. In December 1912 and in the early months of 1913 there were several raids on pillar boxes in the city's commercial and middle class residential districts⁹⁴

The Free Press, its maintenance and extension, has been a central tenet of the British socialist and labour movement since its early origins. The creation of an alternative media owned and controlled by the organisations of labour was important in communicating ideas, information and fraternity. But perhaps most importantly, the socialist and labour press was considered vital to counter the perspective of the capitalist press. At a meeting held to protest against the government's detention and prosecution of socialists, in March 1912, Richard Hawkin,⁹⁵ editor of The Sheffield Guardian, commented:

"For an adequate report of the meeting, readers will

search the daily newspapers in vain. In their anxiety to obtain local news the editors overlooked the largest meeting that has been held in Sheffield since the great Ferrer demonstration. There is no reason for complaint however, these papers are standing by the people who finance them... and so a protest made by working people is almost completely ignored."⁹⁶

An independent, working class, political press had strong traditional roots in Sheffield.⁹⁷ It was no mere coincidence that 1906, the year when both the I.L.P. and S.D.F. launched their local organs, proved to be a year of large increases in popular support and interest in socialist and labour politics.⁹⁸ The Sheffield Guardian was produced weekly from 1906 until 1916, when under financial pressures, it folded. The S.D.F. paper, The Sheffield Pioneer was published for a few months only in 1906.⁹⁹ It was succeeded in 1911 by The Vanguard which was distributed freely to a boasted ten thousand local residents.¹⁰⁰ With the exception of The Sheffield Anarchist, the journal of the local Anarchist Party which was published in the early 1890s, the Socialist-Syndicalist relied, before the war, on nationally circulated material.¹⁰¹ During the war, however, this tendency came to supersede the Labour-Socialist perspective in terms of press publication. The journal of the Work's Shop Committee at Firth's Steel Works, came to be the medium through which the Sheffield Workers' Committee communicated.¹⁰² With the demise of the Labour-Socialist Sheffield Guardian, this paper, and its successor, The Sheffield Worker came to be the only alternative press in the city.¹⁰³

The war-time judicial powers effected under the government's Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A.) enabled prosecution to

brought against those;

"attempting to cause mutiny, sedition or disaffection among the civilian population and to impede, delay or restrict the production of war material by producing, printing and circulating amongst workers..."¹⁰⁴

The Sheffield Guardian, from the start, steered a perilous course in its pronouncements on the war effort. However, in August 1914, its editor declared:

"We have no quarrel with any German, Russian or Austrian ... we refuse to fight against them... It is becoming most painfully clear that Socialism is quite impossible as long as war is possible. We have got to have as a preliminary to any socialist state, a general disarmament right throughout the world."¹⁰⁵

And in order that such a perspective might find an outlet, the paper called for the creation of a local civilian police force, not to defend property, but "for the protection of the right of free speech."¹⁰⁶

During the period of two years during the war, when the Sheffield Guardian was able to continue, it provided a valuable medium through which the developing theory and practice of Socialist-Syndicalist politics could communicate. The collapse of the paper, in 1916, may have added impetus to the Shop Stewards' Movement locally, in forcing it to create for itself a new avenue of communication. In June 1917, the Shop Committee at Firth's produced its own journal, The Firth Worker as an alternative to the paper produced by the works' management. The Sheffield Workers' Committee used this paper for its propaganda purposes until December 1917, when it established the Sheffield Worker.¹⁰⁷ The purpose of this paper was;

"to keep in touch with the various shop committees that were already in existence, and be a means of educating the rank and file to take a much wider outlook on industrial matters than the four walls of the firm at which they were employed."¹⁰⁸

The Sheffield Worker was suppressed by the government soon after its first issue and the Workers' Committee once more used the Firth Worker for propaganda until that too was suppressed in March 1918.¹⁰⁹

The journalism of the Sheffield Socialist-Syndicalist movement during the war was rooted firmly in an acceptance of the political reality of class struggle. It supported action against the war effort and highlighted the censorship and propaganda of the government operating at national and local levels. It advised readers:

"Always get to know who and what are the proprietors of whatever you read... then don your class spectacles, and you will then be prepared with a very wary mind... Never forget to patronise the literature of your class."¹¹⁰

The suppression of the Socialist-Syndicalist press under D.O.R.A. proved to be a means of amassing trade union support for its efforts, and so have a politicising effect. Local Shop Committees protested that restrictions be removed so that;

"The workers of this district may have an organ in which to continue to freely express their views and desires."¹¹¹

And number 12 branch, Amalgamated Society of Engineers denounced;

"the coercive policy adopted by the Government regarding freedom of speech and the press."¹¹²

During 1919, the police raided the local offices of the British Socialist Party, destroying their press and equipment.¹¹³

One of the most important and least expensive forms of communication used by the socialist and labour movement at this time was the public meeting. The sites traditionally associated with local popular dissent were long established and their use enhanced the popular appeal of organised political groups.¹¹⁴ The areas patronised by political orators, in public squares, around distinctive monuments and on street corners had, by the turn of the century, acquired an added value as the last vestiges of common land. When, in 1873, it was suggested that one of these sites, Paradise Square, should be closed, one observer remarked:

"Is Paradise Square to be closed ? ... The place where so many hard fought battles have been won for civil and religious liberty, the place where noble men have advocated the abolition of slavery, the Poor Law Amendment Act, Free Trade principles and Manhood Suffrage ... all men of Sheffield will look upon Paradise Square as belonging to them."¹¹⁵

The emotive appeal of land and access to space against the property requirements of the capitalist classes was a central part of the working class political appeal at this time.¹¹⁶ More specifically, this challenge came to focus on the repeal of certain by-laws which were designed to prevent political meetings being held in the city's parks. The City Council tried to prevent William Morris from speaking at the Monument, Fargate, when he visited the city in 1885. But, it was said, Morris, "having knowledge of the common law of England... was able to establish the right of freedom of speech on that particular spot."¹¹⁸

The local labour movement was anxious to challenge the right of religious groups to meet and campaign in the parks on Sundays, while the propagation of their own creed was forbidden.

In 1895, the annual Labour Day parade and celebrations were held on a Sunday in defiance of the Council's opposition. The cause of the working classes was declared to be "as sacred as much coming from the pulpit."¹¹⁷

A city by-law which prohibited public meetings held for political propaganda in the parks was vigorously challenged by the Sheffield I.L.P. and S.D.F. from the summer of 1908.¹¹⁹ The campaign was useful in providing valuable publicity for the socialist and labour candidates at the Municipal elections later in the year. It was also based on an emotive appeal of freedom of speech and congregation. In terms of preferred tactics, there was a political differentiation. The Sheffield L.R.C. and sections of the I.L.P. were reluctant to advance the protest further than an official condemnation. The Sheffield Guardian and the S.D.F., however, supported an illegal protest action involving trespass. The trespasses which took place, in the form of large meetings in the parks, resulted in the arrest of members of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. Supporters of the campaign included John Maclean from Glasgow and Daisy Halling from London; these were both arrested and fined. Those who refused to pay the fines imposed on them by the stipendiary magistrate were imprisoned for seven days; these included Richard Hawkin and Alf Barton of the I.L.P. and George Fletcher and Samuel Elsbury of the S.D.F. The arrests and convictions led one observer to suggest the setting up of a Socialists' Home Defence League.¹²⁰

John Maclean took the opportunity of injecting a Socialist-Syndicalist analysis of the campaign when he spoke to a

meeting at Endcliffe park, shortly before his arrest. He explained; referring to the heavy police contingent present;

"the soldiers and the police were only wage slaves like themselves and their quarrel was not with the tool of the Capitalist class but with the Capitalists themselves and it was the latter they must attack."¹²¹

In recognition of the potential of the action for encouraging support for labour and socialist politics in general, the campaign was presented in broader terms. The reluctance of the City Council to yield on the issue was, it was suggested:

" a gross violation of the most primary right of any community, namely the right to hold a public meeting in a public place to discuss matters of public interest."¹²²

And it was made clear that;

"Sheffield socialists have set out to fight not merely for the use of the parks but for the right of free speech at all times."¹²³

Public sympathy with the action appears to have been considerable. An estimated ten-to-fifteen thousand people attended the mass meeting in High Hazels park. Only the speakers were arrested but in a gesture of solidarity the crowd "amassed around Elsbury (S.D.F.) to protect him" as he was about to speak.¹²⁴ About three-thousand people gathered at Endcliffe park in May 1908 to hear John Maclean who spoke "near the old monolith" which in its former place, in Fargate, had been a traditional site for popular protest.¹²⁵ A Free Speech Defence Committee was formed to encourage and organise moral and financial support. Collections were made at each trespass "to defray the coming fight with the authorities" and the collectors' names were recorded by the police.¹²⁶

The women's political organisations allied to the Labour Party organised their own illegal trespass at High Hazels Park in July 1908. A crowd estimated at between four and ten thousand gathered to hear local speakers and Daisy Halling, a socialist music hall entertainer from London. Halling was arrested and fined.¹²⁷

The campaign provided the ground for united action among the politically and industrially organised. The trade unions who voiced their support through the Sheffield Guardian tended to the left of the Labour-Socialist perspective. Attercliffe branch of the Gas Workers and General Labourers Union passed a motion of protest;

"against the arbitrary action of the Sheffield City Council in not allowing the use of the parks for demonstrations, public speaking, etc on Sundays, the worker's rest day and wishes the various bodies fighting for free speech every success."¹²⁸

Branches one and two of the Sheffield Friendly Society of Ironfounders protested against the position of opposition taken by the City Council;

"believing that the refusal is due to a bias against labour principles."¹²⁹

The Railway Clerks and District Council of the Associated Society of Railway Servants expressed their disgust at;

"the atrocious manner in which men are incarcerated in prison for persisting in holding these meetings and demanding the right of free speech."¹³⁰

In defiance of the City by-law, the annual demonstration of the local branches of the railway unions was held on a Sunday in one of the parks, where fifteen thousand people gathered and

were addressed by Daisy Halling and Victor Grayson.¹³¹

The issue of free speech and access to public meeting places was raised again in 1914 when the City Council tried to prevent the socialist and labour movement from using a traditional site at the monument in Fargate. In answer to the alleged traffic congestion which such meetings caused, E.G. Rowlinson, president of the Trades and Labour Council, said the action was directed entirely against the trade unionist and socialist speakers. He suggested:

"if on the occasion of the Cutler's Feast, Church Street was closed to allow two-hundred guests to get inside the Cutler's Hall, they as workers had the equal right to demand a diversion of traffic when they wanted to demonstrate at the monument upon matters affecting a matter of thirty-thousand people."¹³²

Once more, the emotive appeal of common land was brought to bear on the issue. A mass demonstration of socialists, trade unionists, and women's suffrage societies marched through the city to the monument, "to bear witness to a public right". After three separate meetings held around the immediate area, the following resolution was passed unanimously:

"That in view of the vital need of a central open space for the public ventilation of grievances, and the discussion of questions of general interest... this mass meeting of Sheffield citizens protests against the prohibition of public meetings at the Queen's monument and calls upon the City Council not to be influenced by the prejudices of a class, but by the interests and welfare of a community."¹³³

The protest committee regarded this campaign as the first stage in a long struggle for socialism. The past and future

struggles of generations were linked under the banner of human rights and free speech. Sympathisers were encouraged to resist the action of the City Council;

"in order that (they) might hand on unimpaired to their sons and daughters those rights and privileges which had been won often in blood and death by their fathers and mothers."¹³⁴

The outbreak of the war some months later, shifted the fight for free speech on to a different axis.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 saw the major part of the socialist and trade union movement, in this country and in Europe, shift from its prior pledge to resist armed conflict at all costs. This collapse was rooted in a political diversification around the issue of Nationhood, Internationalism and Imperialism. It is necessary, therefore, to examine an internationalist, anti-imperialist perspective, opposed to a dominant ideology within which imperialism acted as a cornerstone, through which sections of the local socialist and labour movement operated prior to the war.

For the Lib-Lab, the Lab-Socialist and the Socialist-Syndicalist, internationalism meant very different things. For Charles Hobson, an exponent of the Lib-Lab perspective, international relations were vital for the future progress of the British worker since such close relations would qualify commercial competition through trade agreements. The International Metal Workers Federation, of which Hobson was president, sought to encourage mutual support of workers in similar trades in order that one section might not undercut the other in accepting low prices. As such, this view of internationalism was rooted in the continuation of the Capitalist system.¹³⁵

Hobson linked his support for international trade unionism with an imperialist stand which reflected very nearly the dominant ideology. In 'The Territorial Forces Vindicated' published in the International Metal Workers' Federation journal, The Metal Worker, in May 1909, Hobson joined the current debate on National Service.¹³⁶ Presenting himself as the sensible working class opponent to disarmers in the socialist and labour movement, he declared:

"It is the imperfection of society which calls for an efficient, defensive force...a police force, and industrially, a trade union."¹³⁷

From the Labour-Socialist perspective, the strength of Internationalism could be brought to bear on local campaigns such as that for free speech. In 1912, the Sheffield I.L.P. Federal Council declared its disgust at the government's repression of political expression in Ireland in general, class terms. It was:

"Solely directed against the right of free speech and free expression of opinion by the ruling classes."¹³⁸

The Sheffield I.L.P. further declared its allegiance;

"to those principles of freedom for which our fathers fought and died and (pledged) to proclaim them once again whatever the consequences may be."¹³⁹

The same question of free speech and basic human rights motivated support for socialist and labour movements in Spain and Russia. In July 1906, news of the dissolution of the Russian Duma was greeted by the Sheffield I.L.P. with the observation:

"autocratic attempts to smother the popular will, will do more for the cause of socialism in Russia than ten years of propaganda work. We shall not be surprised to see

Russia beat us yet in the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth." ¹⁴⁰

An organised campaign around the question of disarmament was launched in response to the government's arms build up after 1908.¹⁴¹ In Sheffield, where so much of the city's 'heavy' industry was tied to armaments manufacture and where past periods of unemployment had resulted from changes in government defence policy, it was an unpopular message.¹⁴² Nevertheless, in October 1910, a local disarmament crusade was launched under the local leadership of W.C. Anderson, later M.P. for Attercliffe.¹⁴³ Anderson drew the direct relationship between arms manufacture and social deprivation. After pointing to the profits made on each Dreadnought battleship produced, estimated at around two-hundred-thousand pounds, he declared:

"A Dreadnought costs two million pounds... more than sufficient to feed, clothe and house one-hundred-and-fifty thousand destitute children for twelve months."

He believed it was time to spend for society, "to grapple with unemployment, sweating, destitution...".¹⁴⁴ This, he believed, could be brought about through increased labour representation in government.

While the Socialist Labour Party was among the few working class political organisations to oppose the war from the start as an imperialist war, and a capitalist conflict, based on a Socialist-Syndicalist perspective, organisations and individuals who could agree with this analysis might also support the war effort.¹⁴⁵ Alf Barton, who throughout his political career in Sheffield was organised in the left wing of the Labour-Socialist camp, believed the war was being fought "for Capitalist interests". He nevertheless concluded that the workers should

support the war "where there was something to fight for"¹⁴⁶
Accepting the strength of British Imperialism, Barton drew the following distinction between that displayed by the German and British nations:

"The British Empire is Capitalism tempered by Democracy; the German Empire is Capitalism hardened by Militarism."¹⁴⁷

Adhering firmly to the Labour-Socialist perspective which regarded the Coming of Socialism as an inevitability, Barton asked:

"What then should be the attitude of the worker who is conscious of the position and destiny of his class?"

The possibility of disarmament "seems remote from the facts of life" and pacifism "cuts no ice".¹⁴⁸ This perspective matched that of the national Labour Party leadership which upheld the imperialist, patriarchal ideology and called for the united efforts of all classes. As Kier Hardie declared:

"A nation must be united ... with the boom of the enemy's guns within earshot the lads who have gone forth to fight their country's battles must not be disheartened by any discordant note at home."¹⁴⁹

The organisation which co-ordinated action against conscription both in the domestic industries and the services was the Non-Conscription Fellowship. The first meeting of the Sheffield branch was held at the Heeley I.L.P. club in February 1915.¹⁵⁰ The Sheffield I.L.P. formally opposed Conscription in a statement published in the Sheffield Guardian in July 1915.¹⁵¹ The Sheffield Women's Labour League and Women's Co-operative Guild were very active in the Fellowship declaring their opposition in the belief that it was "contrary to right and justice, to force a man to enlist."¹⁵²

The Fellowship set up local maintenance committees to support conscientious objectors and their families. The women within the Fellowship campaigned against the exploitation of women workers in the munitions industry. They protested vigorously against the Women's Patrol Group which was a middle class organisation designed to guard and control the morals of young working women.¹⁵³

The Trades and Labour Council, led by a Socialist-Syndicalist component for the duration of the war, expressed support for the resistance to military and industrial conscription. The secretary of the Sheffield I.L.P., Alphonso Samms, was imprisoned in 1915 on charges of inciting mutiny among servicemen stationed at Sheffield workhouse. His activities in prison were reported to the Trades and Labour Council.¹⁵⁴ The Council resolved to disassociate itself from Samms' sentence.¹⁵⁵

A.E.Chandler, a principal exponent of the Socialist-Syndicalist perspective within the Trades and Labour Council, voiced the opposition of the local socialist and labour movement to Conscription. In September 1915, the delegate meeting of the Trades and Labour Council passed a resolution moved by Chandler which condemned;

"the mean action of many employers of labour in debarring men of military age from obtaining and continuing in employment with a view to compelling them to join the colours."¹⁵⁶

While this was carried unanimously, only narrowly passed was a resolution not to take part in the recruiting campaign.¹⁵⁷

The Trades Council as a body declined to take responsibility for organising peace meetings during the war. This was left for the N.C.F., the B.S.P. and the left wing of the I.L.P.

At one such meeting, the relationship between the campaign against Conscription in war time, and human rights at times of so-called peace, was expressed.

"Conscription would rob us of freedom of the press, freedom of thought ... if compulsion were forced on this country, it would be the grave of all the hopes of democracy."¹⁵⁸

The demand for no annexations without national plebisites was among the recommendations made by a conference of labour women held in Sheffield in January 1915. Later in the same year, the Sheffield Women's Labour League distinguished its political perspective from that of the Women's Social and Political Union, which supported the war effort, declaring:

"We protest against the attempts now being made to foist conscription on the Country and pledge ourselves to resist these to the utmost."¹⁵⁹

The war-time No Conscription campaign was, in the latter part of the war, closely associated with the Socialist-Syndicalist section of the local labour movement which supported Soviet Russia. Charles Watkins of the National Union of Railwayworkers and Plebs League voiced the fears of this section at a delegate meeting of the Trades and Labour Council in December 1917. He suggested that in order to gain,

"a democratic and enduring peace....brought about by the working classes of all countries and based on the common ownership and social exploitation of the material resources of the earth" workers everywhere must demand from their respective governments facilities and passports for "an international meeting" of workers' representatives to allow free and open discussion on the conditions of a lasting peace.¹⁶⁰

The meeting rejected Watkins' motion, reflecting its support for the dominant form of politics, the negotiated settlement.

After the experience of the war years when militarism in the services and domestic industries became much more familiar and immediate, the campaign against a renewed war against Soviet Russia was able to unite the issues of internationalism and anti-imperialism into one political perspective. The Sheffield branch of the Hands Off Russia Committee was one of the strongest in the country and had considerable trade union support.¹⁶¹ Through this perspective, the military threat to the Russian Revolution was related directly to more immediate struggles. Charles Watkins moved the following resolution in the Trades and Labour Council:

"We view with horror and indignation the attempt of our Government to suppress the workers' Soviet Governments of Russia and Hungary, by sending troops, munitions and money ... Further, we point out to British workers that this new war means the continuance of Conscription and war taxation for a number of years, and that the Government which is attacking Russia is also responsible for the sending of tanks and troops to Glasgow, and for the recent circular to Commanding Officers asking for information as to whether their men are willing to act as strike breakers."¹⁶²

Through such a perspective, the imperialism which underpinned the British system was no different to that of any nation under Capitalism.

The Stop This New War Campaign, launched by the Sheffield Labour Party in 1919, was supported officially by the Women's Labour League and Women's Co-operative Guild who together declared:

"We are no longer prepared to see our men sacrificed

any longer to the ambitions and jealousies of the Government. We are not prepared to tolerate a policy which means starvation and misery for our children. We are not prepared to assist in the crushing of the workers of Russia in their efforts to keep the freedom they have won."¹⁶³

Eleanor Barton, of the Women's Co-operative Guild, related this internationalist commitment to the local environment when in her election address in 1920 she referred to the "militarisation of the police" as "one of the grave dangers of the present time"¹⁶⁴

The commitment to oppose a war against Soviet Russia had widespread trade union support in Sheffield; the Amalgamated Society of Engineers pledged themselves to refuse to work on munitions contracts should war be declared.¹⁶⁵ The Trades and Labour Council called for the support of the triple alliance in industrial action to prevent hostilities.¹⁶⁶ The crucial point over which sections of the labour movement differed with regard to the war and conscription was that of the relationship between imperialism as part of the dominant ideology, governing all aspects of life, and the overt features of imperialist conflict.

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2. S.I. 5.10.97.
3. S.G.23.11.06.
4. ibid. 10.9.09.
5. ibid. 16.10.08; for general refs to Religion of Socialism, see V.Grayson, at Sheffield Corn Exchange: "Socialism is a living pulsating religion that makes us consecrate our lives for it", S.G.18.10.07.
also, S.G. 22.2.07;22.3.07;24.4.08. and The Hammer op cit.6.1.94.
S.G. 5.4.07
6. S.G.19.4.07.
7. ibid. 27.7.06.
8. ibid. 6.1.11.
9. see biog. Richard Jones, Sheffield I.L.P., S.G. 25.10.07: became Wesleyan, aged 18, "owes much of his early training and inspiration for effort in religious and social questions."

see biog,Pointer, S.G.1.11.07.
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17.9.09. see below, p.281-282.
21. S.G.2.10.08.
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23. S.G.1.1.15: 'The Intellect versus the Emotions.'
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25. For Charles Watkins, see Bob Holton, *op cit.* p.106; 109.
Bagwell, *op cit.*p. 327 and 372. Watkins played a large part
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Steward, Hadfield's. Joined Socialist Labour Party, 1914.
Helped establish Sheffield Labour College, 1917; acted as
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32. *ibid.* Central Labour College prospectus.
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37. S.G.29.5.14.
38. ibid.
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'House to House Sanitary Inspection' ibid. 1.11.06.
'The Ethics of the Slums' 30.11.06.
'A Plea for Municipal Housing' 28.4.06. S.G.16.1.14.

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S.G.2.7.08.
51. for Taylor, see above, p.120.
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Conclusion

The period which saw the rise of the British Labour Party as the dominant form of working class political expression was one of crisis and adjustment in British Capitalism. This crisis, involving the loss of traditional markets and increased foreign commercial competition, promoted changes in the work-process through mechanisation and de-skilling across the range of established industrial capacity. The degree of alteration and the capital expenditure involved differed according to industry or trade, but the overriding and commonly expressed requirement of the industrial bourgeoisie at this juncture was to maintain overall control in the changes effected. The most urgent requirement was to effect adequate adjustments in the pattern of industrial relations operating in industries subject to radical alteration. This could be achieved only with the consent and support of institutions outside the immediate work environment. Thus, the control of the form and content of political expression and the maintenance of social and cultural authority in changing circumstances, was crucial for the development of capitalism. In a local context, in this case, in Sheffield, it has been seen that this process of adjustment and accommodation was achieved through the action and reaction of an industrial and political elite.

While on the one hand, this crisis generated a political response from among the working class, and at certain points effected a class consciousness, at the same time it encouraged an ideological re-affirmation by the bourgeoisie at specific points of rupture. Whilst the working class was forced to create and put into practise a political theory adequate in

the circumstances, the bourgeoisie had to readjust its own perspective and effect new forms of relationships to ensure that its communication was achieved.

One of the points of antagonism which has been examined in this study was that of social class and its definition. The local industrial bourgeoisie was anxious to communicate a definition of class which denied any concept of conflict of interests. In this sense, it presented the employing classes and working classes as related in symbiosis, each using the resources of the other to its own advantage. However, it was keen to exploit any divergence of interest within the working class and sought to increase the fragmentation of class consciousness around ideological, occupational and social differences in experience.

In itself, the industrial bourgeoisie was divided along industrial, political and social lines but its underlying homogeneity was revealed in the deepening crisis of the first world war. Here too, the class divisions in industrial political and social life were revealed to wider sections of the working class around the axis of power and control. Outside the crisis of war, in times of so-called peace, such a perception, based as it was on an understanding of the power of capitalist relations as rooted in the interconnected spheres of work, politics and culture, found only marginal expression. Such was the ability of the exponents of the dominant ideology to deny this definition in their presentation of the three spheres as related according to their own values and judgements.

It has been the purpose of this study to examine the

nature of a diverse working class challenge and response within a period of crisis and in a local context. The forms of political organisation and variations in theory have been considered, ranging from a form of working class Liberalism to one of Revolutionary Socialism. The strategy adopted by the Labour Party, an amalgam of Liberalism and Socialism, described here as the Labour-Socialist tactic, proved to be the dominant form of working class politics and the most successful of the alternative definitions expressed.

Those organisations which questioned the accepted form of Party politics, the nature of Parliamentary Democracy, the sexual division of labour and the bases of power and authority in the community, were ostracised, not only by exponents of the dominant ideology within the bourgeoisie, but by sections of the labour movement. Their presence and invective, however, was an essential element in the construction of an independent working class politics at this time. It has been seen how in one local context the debate within and between sections of the socialist and labour movement created, at certain moments of increased social tension, the capacity for a shift in political perspective. The consistent challenge to the Labour-Socialist strategy, both from the right and the left of local working class politics, was a constructive influence in these years.

It was the purpose of the local industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, the upholders of the dominant ideology, to re-affirm in a changing social and economic climate, popular notions of power and authority. One area of differentiation

between sections of the organised working class which has been identified in this study was that of acceptance of authority. This difference in degree of acceptance might focus on the state, the employer or the trade union official. Those political perspectives and strategies which reflected most closely the acceptance of authority as upheld by the dominant ideology were eclipsed at this time by sections of the working class which questioned the sources of political power. There existed within the labour and socialist movement not only differences in the degree of acceptance of authority but also in the understanding of how that power was enmeshed in industrial, political and cultural forms of experience. Also, a developing consciousness of the bases of authority in one area of life might develop awareness in other areas. As this study has shown, those trade union organisations which experienced at first hand the often remote and officious machinery of negotiation and conciliation were found to contribute to a local Socialist-Syndicalist critique in the political, social as well as industrial spheres.

The areas of differentiation around which the socialist and labour movement realised itself in relation to the dominant ideology were the interrelated concepts of class, imperialism and patriarchy. A re-definition of these concepts as operating in changed economic and social conditions was an urgent requirement for both bourgeoisie and working class politics. the organised working class was forced to address the question of class in the context of popular notions of mutuality, class harmony and social mobility. In the context of early twentieth

century capitalism, imperialism was related within the dominant ideology to immediate social conditions and economic prospects. For those anxious to effect a popular acceptance of this perspective, the operation of patriarchal relations at all levels of society was a crucial requirement in cementing these levels in a whole world view.

It was within this terrain of debate and redefinition that the socialist and labour movement struggled to achieve material change. Those organisations whose political perspective was able to challenge directly all three areas of antagonism in the industrial, political and social spheres, were most threatening to the maintenance of power and authority as favouring the bourgeoisie. Outside of the crisis of war, when normal relations between industrial, political and social life were revealed as intimately connected, to wider sections of the working classes, the dominant political perspective was characterised by a marginal appreciation of this relationship and a concentration on certain areas of antagonism at the expense of others.

The Social and Political Interests of Sheffield's Industrial and Commercial Bourgeoisie: 1900-1920.

W.F.Beardshaw (1857-1936). J.Beardshaw and Sons, Baltic Steel Works. Joint Managing Director, family firm. Pres. Chamber of Commerce, 1902-3. Helped form Sheffield Jnr. Ch.ofC. Sponsor Sheff. Untd. Football Club. 'Model Employer'. Conservative.

H.H.Bedford (1848-1930). John Bedford and Son, Lion Steel Works. Chairman and Managing Director. Pres. Ch of C, Master Cutler, 1907. J.P. Town Trustee. Warden of Sheffield Assay Office. A Director of Sheffield Banking Co. Director of National Providential Bank Ltd. Conservative.

J.E.Bingham (1839-1915). Walker and Halls Silver and Electro-Plate (Nephew of Hall) Family business, still run by Bingham in 1957. Twice Master Cutler, 1881 and 1884. Vice Pres. National Fair Trade League. Pre. Sheffield Tariff Reform League. Pres. Hallam Municipal Conservative Association. City Councillor, St.Peters 1877-1882; 1895-98. Took up issue of Street Pitching on Council. Founder and President of the Sheffield Society for the Encouragement of Bravery. Founder member of National Service League, see S.G.8.2.07. Prominent Volunteer, Colonel, Engineers 1884-1909. Promoter of Rifle Shooting and Club movement; had rifle range erected at his works. Freemason.

'Model Employer'; Employees described their " affection for him as an employer; their high opinion of his upright and faithful character and their admiration of his genius and business attainments." and inscribed this on the life-sized statue which they presented to him in 1903.

Helped form the Sheffield Smoke Abatement League. Donated land to the city as a public park; was foremost in the movement to save the Botanical Gardens as a pleasure ground for locals. Conservative.

Sir William Clegg (1852-1929) Solicitor, Clegg Bros, Fig Tree Lane.

City Councillor, 1886; Alderman, 1892. Lord Mayor, 1898-99. J.P. Temperance advocate. Leader of Sheffield Liberal League, 1906-1914. Leader of Anti-Socialist League from 1906.

During year as Lord Mayor gained reputation as sympathiser with working classes, S.I. 15.11.99. Ch. Munitions Tribunal 1914-18. Liberal.

George Franklin (1853-1916). Accountant. Director National Telephone Company. Chairman of Sheffield and Hallamshire Bank. City Councillor, St Philips, 1881; Alderman 1891. From 1887, chairman of Finance Committee. Chairman of Sheffield Conservative Party, 1902-06. A 'Free Fooder' and Protectionist. Lord Mayor, 1897-98. Town Trustee. President of Press Club, 1898 99.

Supporter of Friendly Society Movement. President Sheffield Y.M. C.A. Secretary Sheffield Cherry Tree Orphanage. S.D.T 25.9.16. Conservative. Leader of Sheffield Conservative Party, 1902-6.

T.R.Gainsford (1844-1910) Managing Director, Sheffield Coal Co. Chairman Sheffield Water Co. 1886-1907.

City Councillor, 1871; Alderman 1883. Chairman of Ecclesall Conservative Association. Commissioner of the Peace and J.P. Town Trustee.

Member of National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. Prominent in local Eight Hour movement. S.D.T. 4.7.10.

R.A.Hadfield (1831-1940) Chairman and Managing Director of Hadfields' Steel Foundry Ltd. Employing 3-4,000 workers. Director Sheffield Gas Co. and Sheffield Railway Co. Considered as Parliamentary candidate, Attercliffe, 1894. Master Cutler, 1899. Entertained workmen while in office. First to introduce eight hour day in works in Sheffield. 'Model Employer' Published 'A Shorter Working Day' in 1892. Liberal. see The British Steel Maker, Nov. 1940.

A.J.Hobson (1861-1923) Cutlery Manufacturer. Director J.Rodgers and Sons and Director Thomas Turner and Sons (purchased in 1893). Chairman J.J.Saville and Co. Chairman Jessops, 1891. Interests in Birmingham Small Arms Co.

Defeated twice at Municipal elections. Elected unopposed, 1911, Ecclesall. Lord Mayor, 1911. Master Cutler, 1902. Vice Pres. Sheff Ch. of C. from 1903. Pres 1908-11. First Sheffielder to become Pres. Assoctd. Chambers of Commerce. Conservative Free Fooder until war. 1903, joined Free Food Leage and temporarily joined Liberals over the issue. Rejoined Conservatives, 1910. Prominent in local education movement. 1903, Member University College Council. Chair. Univ. Finance Committee. On Board of Royal Infirmary. Subscriber to Fisher Institute for Ladies of Good Character. Govt. advisor on economics during war. Knighted 1922. Conservative.

Herbert Hughes (1853-1917) Solicitor. Young Wilson and Co. Married into the Company family. Expert in Commercial Law. A Director of Jessops and Sons, Steel Founders. Director Sheffield and Hallamshire Bank. Technical advisor to Govt. on trade marks.

City Councillor, Broomhill and Ecclesall, 1892. Alderman 1907. From 1906, chairman Sheffield Conservative Party.

Sec. Ch of C. 1882-1905. V.Pres. 1908-13. Pres. 1914-16.

Law Clerk to Cutlers Co., 1902-17. Lord Mayor, 1905-6.

Awarded C.M.G., 1901 and C.B., 1911. Town Trustee. Sec and Chairman of The Sheffield Club, a social club for the local elite. Pres. Law Society, 1904.

Commanding Officer, Hallamshire Rifles, 1899-1908. Prominent spokesman for the Volunteers and on National Service.

For appreciation, see Ch. of c. Annual Meeting, 22.2.17.

Conservative.

W.C.Leng (1825-1902) Proprietor Sheffield Daily Telegraph from 1868 until his death. Influential in obtaining Parliamentary Enquiry into Trade Union Outrages, 1864.

Chairman Sheffield Conservative Association, from 1901.

Leader of Sheffield Conservative Party, 1868-1902. Tariff Reformer.

Obit, Yorkshire Post 1.2.02.

Conservative.

Frederick Thorpe Mappin (1821-1910) Mappin Bros, Silver Plate Manufacturers, until 1859.

1859-79, Senior Partner, Thomas Turton and Sons Steel.

1873. Chairman Sheffd. Gas Co.

A Director Midland Railway Co. Pres. of File Manufacturers Association. 1879, retired from business for politics.

City Councillor, 1854-57, St Peters. 1876, Ecclesall.

1877-83, Alderman and Chairman of Finance Committee.

1880, M.P. East Retford. 1885-1906, M.P. Hallam.

Master Cutler, 1855. Lord Mayor, 1877. Town Trustee.

Borough Magistrate, 1875-99. Baronetcy, 1886.

Leading Figure in University movement. Council member, Firth College, 1879-85. Pro-Chancellor Sheff. Univ., 1905-10.

Donated several large funds to Univ. Technical School. Donated Art Collection to City.

Captain Hallamshire Rifles (Volunteers) 1861.

Temperance advocate. Contributor to several local charities.

Liberal

Samuel Osborne (1865-1952) Steel Manufacturer.

City Councillor, Crookesmoor, from 1903. Lord Mayor, 1911.

Possible Parliamentary candidate for Brightside by-election, 1897; thought to be acceptable to working class electorate.

'Model Employer!'

Liberal

George Senior (1838-1915) Chairman George Senior and Sons, Ponds Forge. Noted as prime example of social mobility, "from village boy to Lord Mayor" S.D.T. 16.4.10. "A model employer of labour. The workmen have been his friends."

City Councillor, Park, 1889-1901. Alderman. Considered as poss. Conservative candidate, Parliamentary by-election, Brightside, 1897.

Lord Mayor, 1901. Town Trustee, 1901-15. Master Cutler 1910.

Chairman of Sheffd. Wednesday Football Club. Contributor to several charities.

Conservative.

Charles Skelton (1833-1913) Sheaf Bank Works, Tools, Heeley.
Family Business.

City Councillor, Nether Hallam, 1880-1913: Radical, Attercliffe.
Lord Mayor, 1894. President Social Questions League, 1894.
Described as "a Modern Puritan"; a nonconformist, T. Totaler,
Methodist New Connexion. Supported Sunday School Movement.
Reputed 'Model Employer'; worked alongside employees. "One
could not help but wonder sometimes how he managed to get
through all his engagements, municipal, political, philanthropic,
and religious..." S.I.11.10.13.
Liberal.

T.E. Vickers (1833-1915) River Don Works. Steel.
Chairman Brightside Conservative Association. J.P.
Prominent in local Volunteer Movement: Lord Lieutenant, Hallam-
shire Rifles. Colonel, 1884.
Resident in London, therefore took little part in local
politics. S.D.T. 20.10.15.
Conservative.

Douglas Vickers (1861-1937) Managing Director, Vickers Sons
and Maxim Ltd. Director, Midland Railway Co. and Parkgate
Iron and Steel Co. Ltd.
Conservative Parl. candidate, 1910, Brightside. J.P. Derbs.
1880-1894, Officer of 1st Hallamshire Volunteers.
Supported Language education at Sheff. University through a trust.
Erected Houses for employees, Vickers Housing Scheme, Grimes-
thorpe, 1919.
Conservative.

Howard Vincent (1849-1908) Lawyer. 1884, toured world as a Lib-
eral, returned a staunch Tory Imperialist.
M.P. Central Division, 1885-1907.

J.R.Wheatley Chairman and Managing Director, Wheatley and Bates
Wines and Spirits.

J.P. 1902.

Alderman, and Lord Mayor, 1903.

Organised and Managed the fund set up for the relief of local
distress caused by trade depression, 1903-04.

Chairman of Corpn. Finance Committee.

A 'Model Employer'.

Conservative.

H.J.Wilson (1833-1914) Chairman and Managing Director of
Sheffield Steel Smelting Co. Family Business. Principal
exponent of Lib-Labism within Liberal Party. Parliamentary
representative, Holmfirth(1885-1914)

Pacifist. Leader of local anti-war movt. 1899-1900.

Liberal.

APPENDIX TWO: PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS

(not including unopposed results)

Attercliffe

July 5, 1894.

Batty Langley (L) 4,486.

G.H.Smith (C) 3,495.

F.Smith (L) 1,249.

Jan. 16, 1906.

Batty Langley (L) 6,523.

A.Muir Wilson (C) 5,736.

May 4, 1909 (by-election).

J.Pointer (I.L.P.) 3,531.

S.King Farlow (C) 3,380.

R.C.Lambert (L) 3,175.

A.Muir Wilson (Ind. C.) 2,802.

Jan.17, 1910.

J.Pointer (I.L.P.) 7,755.

S.King Farlow (C) 6,079.

Dec.7, 1910.

J.Pointer (I.L.P.) 6,532.

S.Walker (C) 5,354.

Dec. 29, 1914.

W.C.Anderson, unopposed. (I.L.P)

Dec. 14, 1918.

T.W.Casey (Co-Lab) 12,308.

W.C.Anderson (Lab) 6,539.

Brightside

Aug. 6, 1897 (by-election)

F.Maddison (L) 4,289.

J.F.Hope (C) 4,106.

Oct. 1900.

J.F.Hope (C) 4,992.

F.Maddison (L) 4,028.

Jan. 16, 1906.

J.Tudor Walters (L) 5,409.

J.F.Hope (C) 4,408.

Jan. 17, 1910.

J.Tudor Walters (L) 6,156.

D.Vickers (C) 4,200.

C.Lapworth (Soc) 510.

Dec. 7 1910.

J.Tudor Walters (L) 5,766.

D.Vickers (C) 3,902.

Dec. 14, 1918.

J.Tudor Walters (Co-L) 12,164.

R.E.Jones (Lab) 6,781.

Central

Jan. 16, 1906.

Sir Howard Vincent (C) 4,217.

S.Updale (L) 3,290.

April 21, 1908 (by-election)

J.F.Hope (C) unopposed.

Jan. 17, 1910.

J.F.Hope (C) 3,829.

A.J.Bailey (L) 3,440.

Dec. 7, 1910.

J.F.Hope (C) 3,455.

A.J.Bailey (L) 3,271.

Dec. 14, 1918.

J.F.Hope (C.-U.) 9,361.

A.J.Bailey (Lab) 5,959.

R.G.Murray (soc) 643.

Ecclesall

Oct, 1900.

Sir E.A.Bartlett (C) 5,059.

R.Vaile (L) 3,230.

Feb. 3, 1902. (by-election)

S.Roberts (C) 5,231.

R.Vaile (L) 4,119.

Jan. 16, 1906.

S.Roberts (C) 5,856.

R.C.Lambert (L) 5,392.

Jan 17, 1910.

S.Roberts (C) 6,407.

J.Derry (L) 6,196.

Dec. 7, 1910.

S.Roberts (C) 6,039.

J.Derry (L) 5,849.

Dec 14, 1918.

Sir S.Roberts, Bart. Unopposed. (C.U.)

Hallam

Oct 1900.

C.B.Stuart Wortley (C) Unopposed.

Jan. 16, 1906.

C.B.Stuart Wortley (C) 5,546.

Alex Grant (L) 5,465.

Jan. 17, 1910.

C.B.Stuart Wortley (C) 5,788.

A.Neal (L) 5,593.

Dec. 14, 1918.

D.Vickers (C.U.) Unopposed.

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