
My Confession of Faith

in the Labour Alliance



By **J. KEIR
HARDIE**

M.P.



ONE PENNY.

I. L. P. Publication Department,
23, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, E.C.

INDIA.

Impressions and Suggestions.

By J. KEIR HARDIE, M.P.

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My Confession of Faith in the Labour Alliance.

“You may perhaps wonder why I do not ask you to found a Socialist Party. I do not think the workers are ready for it. And I feel that if you found a Labour Party every step you take towards the emancipation of Labour will be a step towards *Socialism*.”—Robert Blatchford in *Britain for the British*, Chap. XIX.

In a popular movement such as the Independent Labour Party, it is necessary from time to time to restate the principles upon which our faith is based. Our ranks are constantly being recruited from the young and earnest, in which fact lies the certainty of our success. Young recruits coming into the party now, however, can have no conception of what the situation was like prior to the formation of the I.L.P. The political conditions which then obtained seem now as far off almost as the days of mediaeval chivalry. Before 1893, when the I.L.P. was formed, there were two declared Socialist organisations in the field, in addition to the Fabian Society. The elder of the two was the Social Democratic Federation. Those of us however who were Trade Unionists as well as Socialists found, after watching and studying its methods of propoganda, that these were more likely to antagonise than to enlist working class support. Its propoganda was an ill-assorted blend of political action and physical force revolution, and its leading speakers appeared to be at special pains to pour ridicule and contempt on such working class movements as Co-operation, and Trade Unionism, whilst Temperance societies were their special *bête noire*. I felt, as did many others, that that sort of thing was not going to win the support of that organised section of the working class movement upon which Socialism must rely for its success. The Socialist League, the other organisation, so long as it retained William Morris as its guide and inspiration, enlisted the active support of the best of the young Socialist blood of that day. It was frankly anti-parliamentary, and in course of time it developed such an impossibilist attitude that Morris resigned and the League did not long survive him. Socialism in those days, was treated as a plant of continental growth which could never find lodgment in Great Britain.

It was to meet this set of circumstances that the I.L.P. was formed by active Socialists, who believed in conducting their propaganda in such a way as would win over working class organisations, especially the Trade Unions, to the support of Socialism, rather than alienate them. The declared objects of the Party were, 1st, To detach the working class from their allegiance to Liberalism and Conservatism and organise them into a Party of their own on a basis of rigid political independence; 2nd, To propagate the principles of Socialism, and secure the return of Socialists to Parliament and the various local administrative bodies. These objects still remain as the guiding principles of the party in every phase of its work.

Within the ranks of the Trade Union movement the idea of a separate Labour party was at that time scouted as a hair-brained, baseless dream. With very few exceptions the leading Trade Unionists were actively identified with the Liberal party. When first I entered the House of Commons as Member for South West Ham in 1892, and during the three years in which I sat for that constituency, the only insulting language I received there was from Liberal-Labour members. Their working theory seemed to be that because I refused to recognise the Liberal party as the special friend of the working class therefore I must be a paid agent of the Tories. The I.L.P. was charged with attempting the impossible task of trying to create a "third" party for which there was no room in our system of party government; our retort was that we were really trying to create a second party, since Liberalism and Toryism were in essence and in fact but two divisions of one party. The Churches, the press, the pulpit, the Trades Union movement, were all ranged against us, and all with one voice pooh-poohed our ideas.

Now all that has been changed. A Labour party is accepted as part of our political system equally with the Liberal and Tory parties. That of itself is a gain of no mean order. To have taken working class organisations representing 1,500,000 of the pick of the workers, and weaned them away from Liberalism and Conservatism and organised them in a party financed and controlled by themselves is a fact which in itself is in the nature of a revolution. To have over thirty Members in the House of Commons organised as a separate party, independent of both Liberal and Conservative, standing out as a distinct entity, is a standing testimony which cannot be gainsaid to the success which has crowned our efforts. Critics may disagree with the policy of the I.L.P. but they cannot deny its success. Be it noted that all this has been accomplished without any leadership from the so-called intellectual classes. Not a single member of the Labour party in the House of Commons ever had any educational advantage beyond what the Parish School could give, and some of them

not even that. They have been drawn from the mine, the mill, the furnace, the gas works, the workshop bench, the railway siding, and from behind the counter; yet, despite their educational disadvantages and their lack of social standing, friend and foe alike admit that they have shown more than average capacity in the parliamentary arena. That fact alone has destroyed for ever the theory of a ruling class. The Labour party has shown conclusively that the common people can rule themselves.

Another matter is worthy of attention. From the first day of its inception the I.L.P. rigidly barred out all merely political questions from its programme and purview. Prior to its advent the mind of the working class was mainly occupied with such barren topics as Disestablishment and the like, and one of the biggest tasks we had was to inculcate the fact that no merely political reform could in any way affect the industrial and economic position of the worker. To-day, despite the despairing efforts of politicians, merely political topics are sinking more and more into the background, and the condition of the people—with all that that phrase implies—is every year coming more and more to the front. Both the old parties pay us the homage of competing with us for working class support by promises of social and industrial reforms. Even the Tariff Reform movement is sought to be commended on the plea that it will provide work for all at good wages. So rigidly have we adhered to this attitude of barring all merely political questions, that not even payment of members has found any very prominent place in our activities. Even now with the possibility of Trade Unions being deprived by the law courts of the power to use their funds for political purposes, I, personally, would regret to see even this important and desirable measure forced to the front by the Labour party. The one exception which the I.L.P. has made to this rule is the political enfranchisement of women. Our work will be handicapped and our movement lop-sided until women take their place with men as comrades and political equals in our great world-wide agitation for industrial and economic freedom.

Now our very success seems to be bringing us a fresh crop of troubles, and it is worth making plain what it is that underlies the feeling of unrest which found its most startling expression in the incidents connected with the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the I.L.P., recently held at Edinburgh. The bed-rock of offence seems to be, as I shall show later on, that the I.L.P. has allied itself with the Labour party. Those self-constituted critics who challenge the wisdom of the alliance, or who are opposed to recognising the reciprocal responsibilities which it involves, cannot allege that the I.L.P. has suffered either in membership, financial standing, or prestige, through having joined the Labour party. The alliance was formed in

1900, and the following table shows what the progress of the I.L.P. has been since then.

Year ending last day in February.	No of Branches.	Affiliation Fees and National Branch Subs.	Total Income.	Surplus or Deficit.
1900-1	193	£263 15 9	£721 8 8	=£310 16 9½
1901-2	203	288 1 1	813 2 10	=298 7 11
1902-3	197	299 3 5	1004 15 1½	=108 11 4½
1903-4	239	341 4 4	1752 12 8½	=34 12 10
1904-5	272	368 0 2	1506 15 6	+516 4 0½
1905-6	375	492 8 11	1884 7 9	+679 10 10
1906-7	545	790 16 6	*6063 19 11	+3190 17 0
1907-8	735	1156 4 0½	6838 12 5½	+3740 10 6
1908-9	887	1485 3 8	8870 18 2	+2934 17 11½

These figures show an unbroken record of growth and financial prosperity during the nine years that have elapsed since the alliance was formed, and especially during the past three years. With the exception of the Parliamentary fund, the finances of every department of the party's work are sound, and the decision of the Edinburgh Conference to levy the members 1/- per annum for parliamentary purposes will speedily replenish the coffers of that fund also. It cannot therefore be on the ground that the organisation has suffered that objection is now taken to the alliance. It is however alleged that the Party has lost its distinctive Socialist features through having joined with the Trades Unions. In the issue of the *Clarion* for April 23rd, Mr. Robert Blatchford, its brilliant editor, makes this definite pronouncement in these words: "I do not approve of the I.L.P. alliance with the Labour Party. I think a Labour Party is a good thing; but the I.L.P. was a Socialist Party. In joining the Labour Party it ceased to be a Socialist Party."†

Is that charge true? If so, then indeed it is time we were beginning to reconsider our whole position. There are close upon one thousand branches of the party extending from Cornwall, in the west of England, right up to the confines of John o' Groat's in the north of Scotland. I ask the members of the Branches: Is that statement true of your branch? I ask each member individually: Are you less of a Socialist than you were before the Labour alliance was formed? I ask those branches which were in existence before 1900: Has the character of your work or your propaganda been changed, modified, or your Socialism in any degree whatever toned down since the alliance was formed? There can only be one answer to these questions. The I.L.P. is to-day what it has been from the beginning, a definitely Socialist organisation carrying on its

* This includes a special donation of £1,000 given by two ladies towards the Keir Hardie Jubilee Special Effort Fund.

= Deficit.

+ Surplus at end of year.

† This pamphlet was in the printer's hands before Mr. Blatchford's article appeared in the *Clarion* on May 7th.

Socialist propaganda with a degree of success scarce equalled in any country in the world. If Mr. Blatchford thinks that the I.L.P. has ceased to be a Socialist organisation, or that the Labour party is hindering the growth of Socialism, the opponents of Socialism are not, at least, of his mind. Prior to the advent of the I.L.P. Socialism was too weak, too insignificant even to be sneered at. Following upon the birth of the party it began to be laughed at as a folly; now, after nine years' alliance with the Labour party, an Anti-Socialist League has been formed to combat its progress. Dukes, earls, Members of Parliament, and business men are contributing money to the League to enable it to carry on an Anti-Socialist propaganda. The men at the head of the Anti-Socialist League are no fools, and dukes and others of that kidney, especially if they happen to be Scotch, as some of the supporters of the A.S.L. are, would not throw away their money in fighting a party unless they believed it to be a menace to their vested interests. I do not undervalue nor detract from the work that is being done for Socialism in these days by other organisations and agencies, but all these put together are as the very small dust in the balance compared to the influence and the work for Socialism of the Independent Labour Party. It is therefore a libel on the party and its work, which neither Mr. Blatchford nor any other critic of the Labour alliance can justify, to assert that the I.L.P. has ceased to be a Socialist party. In finance, in membership, in the number of its branches, in its influence and prestige in the sphere of politics and as a Socialist-propagandist organisation, in each and every one of these aspects the I.L.P. has improved enormously during the past nine years, and it is worth while incidentally remarking that all this has been achieved under the guidance and the administrative work of the men who resigned at Edinburgh.

Mr. Victor Grayson was reported on Monday, 19th April, to have said that the friction in the I.L.P. was between those who only want to improve the condition of the wage-worker and those who want Socialism. This statement, if correctly reported, is equally wide of the mark with that of Mr. Blatchford. The friction does not lie between old-fashioned Trades Unionists who want to improve the condition of the worker and Socialists who want to change the industrial order. The friction lies between people all of whom are Socialists, who want Socialism, who put Socialism before everything else. The difference which exists is not concerning principles but rather the methods by which Socialism can be more speedily won. If I take my own case for example, I stand, as I have done for a quarter of a century, for realising Socialism by working with and through working class organisations, especially Trade Unions. That is the position which our critics challenge. That is the real rock of our offence. This may be denied. It probably will be, and so once more I fall

back for proof on Mr. Blatchford as being, with all respect to everybody else, the most important and influential of our critics. In an article which appears in the *International Socialist Review* for April, Robert Hunter, the well-known American Socialist writer, quotes from a recent issue of the *Clarion* in which Mr. Blatchford states: "The comparative failure of the Labour representatives in the House of Commons is *due to the fact that they are working men*. It arises from no other fact whatever. It is not lack of intellect, nor lack of courage, nor lack of knowledge which palsies the Labour group. *With one or two natural aristocrats to lead them* all would be well." There, then, is the real cause of all the trouble, the real nigger in the fence. Other writers with more guile and less honesty than Mr. Blatchford mean all that he says, but carefully try to conceal the fact that they are saying it.

We are now in a position to put the whole question at issue to the test. Is it the opinion of the I.L.P. that the Socialist movement in Parliament could be more safely entrusted to the leadership and guidance of aristocrats, "natural" or other, than it can to those working class leaders who have been thrown up from the ranks of labour? That the leadership of the party might be more brilliant, I, who was for two years its chairman, heartily concede. With an aristocrat to lead us we might even say and do things which have neither been said nor done yet; I can even believe that we might provide more sensationalism, and consequently more picturesqueness in connection with our work at St. Stephen's, and all these things would have a distinct value: but the price we should have to pay would be fatal. It would no longer be a working class movement; Labour would again have sunk to its old traditional position of a drudge carrying out the will of an imperious master. The outstanding value of the Labour party is that it is what its name implies, an uprising of the working class, overseered and guided by men of that class, painfully and slowly working out its own emancipation. It is a favourite saying of Mr. H. M. Hyndman that "no slave class ever emancipated itself." This is the orthodox view of the ordinary middle class philistine, who, with all his professions of sympathy still regards Labour as a badge of inferiority. To that doctrine I can give no assent.

But the argument does not end there. The Labour party, slow and stodgy though it be in its methods, is yet a safer guide to follow in moments of crisis than would be any "natural aristocrat" modelled after the type of either of the two gentlemen named above. When the Boer War broke out, the Labour party, unlike Mr. Blatchford, to a man stood firm in its protest against that black crime in our country's history. And now Mr. Blatchford and Mr. Hyndman are lending the weight of their influence to swell the war whoops of the Jingos who want more Dreadnoughts and more soldiers as a defiance to Germany. On both these occasions, the Boer War

and the Naval Scare, the Labour party has stood firm and solid as a piece of unyielding granite resisting the waves of popular passion which beat around it, and unterrified by the howls of the ignorant, easily misled mob. It is in moments of crisis that the real man is revealed; when all is plain and smooth sailing it is easy to be true to your principles. It is when these, in some sudden emergency, are tested as by fire that we find out "who is on the Lord's side."

But it is alleged that the Labour party shuts out the middle class and turns Socialism into an exclusively working class movement. This statement as applied to the Labour party is not true. There are in the ranks of the I.L.P. thousands of what, without offence, I may describe as the lower middle class and a fair sprinkling of the middle class itself. The bulk of these are good comrades and their services to the party are invaluable. They very often bring into the movement a higher ideal of Socialism, and a much needed sense of business methods. The I.L.P. would be much poorer to-day and much less efficient without this element. Why, then, it may be asked is it that no middle class man has yet been returned to Parliament? My reply is that that is a matter for the constituencies which select and return the candidates. Dr. Stanton Coit, for example, had no difficulty in finding a constituency; his chief difficulty, I remember, was selecting the seat which he would contest out of the numerous invitations which he received. Other like cases could easily be mentioned. Membership in the I.L.P. and in the Fabian Society, being open to all ranks and conditions of people, brings the middle class Socialist into touch with the Labour movement, and where such is selected as a candidate he goes upon the Labour party list on exactly the same terms as a Trade Union official. If he has made himself known by his work in the I.L.P., or if his name has become a household word in the movement, he will have no difficulty in finding a constituency. It is untrue therefore to say, or to insinuate, that there is any exclusion open or implied; that "Socialists who are not Trade Unionists have no party by which they can get themselves elected to Parliament." Many of the best of our middle class comrades occupy positions which debar them from entering politics with a view to becoming candidates. Others again are so engrossed in branch work and in their own duties that they have not become well enough known outside the sphere of their own locality; but there are yet others, and not a few, not confined to any class, who are not selected as candidates because they are too well known. I could name say, a baker's dozen of men who act as though their principal reason for being in the I.L.P. is that they may get returned to Parliament, and because the party does not take them at their own valuation they are in revolt against the Labour party alliance and want to form a Socialist Representation Committee.

There, then, lies one of the root causes of the trouble. Much of it is being fostered and promoted by men who imagine that a Socialist party in which there were no working class leaders would afford them better opportunities for showing their capacity. Their supporters in the I.L.P. are to a large extent men just one degree removed from the artizan, who scorn membership in a Trade Union, and resent being mixed up with a Labour party. These have yet to learn that Socialism means fellowship and that the I.L.P. has no room for a set of superior persons.

Needless to add, a remark of this kind does not apply in any sense to men like Mr. Blatchford. Their trouble is of quite another kind. Men of Mr. Blatchford's type who are grumbling about the Labour party, have taken little if any part either in the organisation or the administration of the work of the movement, nor have they had any real experience of the duties and responsibilities of membership of a public body. They have thus but a hazy speculative idea of the problem with which they are dealing. Standing as they do outside the actual work of the movement, detached from the facts of the case, they speak, and write, and act, without any sense of responsibility. Had we all followed their lines there would have been no party, whether Labour or Socialist. One year's practical experience of the work of organising, equipping, and guiding such a movement as the I.L.P. would cure many of their hazy notions. They would also learn, *inter alia*, that those whom they picture as seeking to grasp all power, all authority, into their own hands are in reality the victims of circumstances which, largely the results of their own labours, have yet imposed duties, responsibilities, and burdens upon them from which they would be only too glad to be released. Vague statements, based upon misrepresentations of facts, and, consequently, leading to false conclusions, are much in use by those who are doing their best to foment strife in the I.L.P., and these can, in almost every case, be traced either to men who have taken little, if any, share in the drudgery of the movement, and who consequently know nothing about it, or to disappointed office seekers.

The malcontents would fain make much of the fact that the Labour party constitution now prohibits candidates or officials of the party from supporting candidates who are being put forward by a non-affiliated organisation. That is to say, if a Trade Union, or a Socialist organisation, which may join the party, but does not, puts a candidate into the field, none of the Labour party men may go to his support. But what is there amiss with this? Are we not aiming at a great united movement? Are we to encourage faction and schism by treating dissentient organisations as tho' they were on the same footing as those which are spending their money in trying to bring about Unity? Is the S.D.P. for example, to be left at

liberty to meet in Annual Conference and, without consultation with anyone, decide what constituencies its nominees shall contest, and are I.L.P. candidates and M.P.'s to be expected to help and encourage this form of sectarianism? The proposal that I.L.P. branches which can raise the money wherewith to contest an election should be free to do so without let or hindrance is also being worked for all it is worth. On the face of it this seems very plausible, and I know many good comrades who are loyal to the core to the party who cannot see why this should not be agreed to. It is one of those seeming democratic ideas which are often so misleading. It however raises the whole question; is the I.L.P. to be a national organisation carrying through a national policy? At each election the party makes itself responsible for as many candidates as its financial resources will stand. The election fund comes from the members in all parts of the country, and the constituencies sanctioned to be contested are those which in the judgment of the N.A.C. offer the best prospects of yielding a good return. If, however, branches are to be free to act on their own initiative this concerted action will be destroyed, and if even one branch in each Divisional area were to run a candidate in this fashion, the financial resources of each would be strained to meet the cost, and the National Election fund of the party be left without support. Thus the money which has yielded such splendid results in the past would be frittered away and the national outlook of the movement destroyed.

The incident which the critics of the Labour party have seized upon with most avidity and added to their armoury of abuse, has been Mr. Grayson's action in the House of Commons towards the end of last session. Nobody seeks to justify Mr. Grayson having acted without any consultation whatever with any one of his colleagues. It is universally conceded that if there is to be a party at all in Parliament, whether Socialist or Labour, it must be at least sufficiently disciplined as to lead to concerted action. I do not need, I hope, to remind my readers that the Labour Party when the House of Commons met after the autumn recess obtained from the Government a promise of time to discuss the Unemployed Question, and that the day for this had actually been fixed when Mr. Grayson made his protest. This fact is, as a rule, overlooked by our critics. Obviously this fact made Mr. Grayson's action quite indefensible. What, however, commended itself to many people, who disapproved of his method, was the spirit of revolt and protest underlying his action. As I have already said, people want more picturesqueness, more of the embodiment of the old rebellious spirit of revolt, more fighting which will quicken the pulse in connection with the work of the party in Parliament. This is a feeling with which I at least can most heartily sympathise. The drab side of life is always repellent whether in politics or

in the workshop. At the same time the sentiment at the back of this feeling is just about as unhealthy as anything well could be. Everything in these days has to be done by proxy. Our young men no longer play football; they hire professionals to do the playing and they think they have fulfilled their part when they crowd round the ring cheering their favourites and howling at their opponents. It is much the same feeling which, quite unconsciously, craves for excitement, by proxy of course, in politics. I say quite candidly that the action of the Labour party in the House of Commons might be, and probably even should be, much more strenuous than it has been: but I say with even more emphasis that no movement which is going to live to be a permanent force in the life of the nation can subsist upon scenes and emotional excitements. Only in so far as a party, whether Socialist or Labour, can impress its thought and its power on the mind and will of the nation by acts of constructive statesmanship is it going to be of service in the long run.

So far as I can make out the minds of the critics of, and dissentients in, the I.L.P. (a very difficult thing to do by the way) it is that if, instead of having thirty-one members of a *Labour* party we had an equal number of *Socialist* members in Parliament, the craving for excitement would be fed upon such scenes as Mr. Grayson provided. This however only shows how completely out of touch the critics of the party are, not only with the realities of the situation at home, but also with the political Socialist movement of the world. Germany and France for example, have each a Parliamentary Socialist party of about, at present, twice the relative strength of our own in the House of Commons. They are not Labour but Socialist parties, presumably of the kind which our critics would like to see established here. The Socialist party in the French Chamber of Deputies is led by Jean Jaurès, a great intellectual orator and an ex-professor of philosophy. The party in the German Reichstag is also well equipped with guides and leaders from the ranks of the intellectual and middle class. I do not know whether Mr. Blatchford has discovered any "natural aristocrats" amongst these, nor do I know whether the critics of the Labour party consider that our German and French comrades provide the model we should follow. Be this as it may, the fact remains that in the Chamber of Deputies on the banks of the Seine, and in the Reichstag at Berlin, the action of these Socialist parties in and out of Parliament is on exactly parallel lines with that of our own Labour party at Westminster. Those who wish indisputable proof of this should read *Socialists at Work*, by Robert Hunter. They do not make scenes, they do not get expelled. They have their unemployed and other social problems as we have, but experience has taught them that it is not by the use of wild whirling words or phrases or by making scenes

in Parliament, or by opposing Government measures like the Temperance Bill of last session, that they are going to win their respective countries for Socialism. Their work, like ours, is that of constructive criticism, pointing out the defects of capitalistic legislation, and its inadequacy as a means of getting to the root of the social problem, and putting forward their own proposals. Further, in France there have been for years practical working agreements between the Socialists and the Radicals, both in Parliament and during elections when the second ballots are being taken. It was not always so. In both those countries in the childhood of the movement, revolution was the dominant note of Socialist policy, but now, as the late Wilhelm Liebknecht, as Kautsky, as Bebel, as Singer, as Jaurès, as all the leaders, intellectual and other, have frankly admitted, having got beyond the childhood stage, having entered upon responsible manhood, and seeing before them in the near future the time when they will be called upon to take over the responsibilities of Government, they are proving to the nation that they can be statesmen as well as agitators. There is room inside the Labour party for young idealists full of enthusiasm, as well as for those with a longer tale of years and experience behind them; the movement needs both, and these, working side by side, will supply the happy blend which will carry Socialism forward to an assured and comparatively early triumph.

There is one aspect of the I.L.P. alliance with the Labour party which is constantly ignored and which yet forms the central fact in the situation. With the single solitary exception of my own election for South West Ham in 1892, no Socialist has yet succeeded in winning a seat in Parliament under other than Labour party auspices. The case of Colne Valley is no exception to this rule. Grayson's was an I.L.P. candidature, and, apart from his own personality, the influence which did most to win the election was the prestige which the I.L.P. had gained from the work of the Labour party in the House of Commons. The Social Democratic party has its candidates at every election, wooing the electors on what they allege to be a pure Socialist ticket. These men are not inferior in ability to the candidates of the Labour party. According to our critics the fact of their being Socialists, and unsullied by contact with Labour, should make them more acceptable to the constituencies; but the fact remains that not one of them has ever found his way to St. Stephen's. To me there is no mystery about all this. The candidate, of whatever party, but especially so of one so comparatively new as ours, who runs under the auspices of an isolated organisation, fails at the very point at which success begins to be possible. Whatever chance a Socialist candidate had in pre-Labour party days he has practically none now unless standing under Labour party auspices.

It is not so much Socialism, nor the absence of it, which wins elections, as the fact that the candidate is representing a party which the average man, who does not indulge over much in theories, understands and approves. In the old days an I.L.P. candidate ranked in the mind of the average Trade Unionist as being on the same level with a Liberal or Conservative, that is to say, he represented an outside party. Now-a-days, a Socialist standing under Labour party auspices gets a sympathetic reception for both himself and his doctrines because he comes to the average man as the representative of his own party, for which he is paying and over which he exercises control. Apart from the return of members to Parliament this to me represents the great gain of the I.L.P. alliance with the Labour party. We no longer come as missionaries to the trade unionist with the suspicion lurking in his mind that we are trying to pervert him from the true political faith and convert him to some heterodox belief of our own. We come to him as a part of his own movement, proclaiming his own gospel, and it is this which accounts for the extraordinary growth of Socialism throughout the ranks of the entire working class. From every point of view therefore, from that of expediency in getting members elected, from that of hastening the advent of Socialism by spreading its doctrines far and wide, from that of giving the working class a sense of confidence in itself and a degree of self-respect making it ashamed to lean upon others, the alliance more than justifies itself. Those who are seeking to disrupt it, or to introduce discord into its ranks, however well intentioned they may be, are enemies not only of the Labour movement but of the cause of Socialism which they profess to hold so dear. The proposal to form a Socialist Representation Committee is typical of their wrecking tactics. The I.L.P. had never discussed the proposal, had never even been invited to discuss it either at its Conference or through its branches. But the irresponsibles who pose as ultra democrats, cared nothing for that. They declared their intention of forming these coteries, well knowing that friction with the Labour party must inevitably result. The decisions of the party were to be either ignored or violated, in order that a few malcontents might have a party which they could control.

A broad tolerant catholicity has always been a leading characteristic of the I.L.P. It has never had a hard and dry creed of membership. It has always recognised that only by encouraging freedom of thought and activity could growth and expansion be expected. The I.L.P. has never expelled anyone, never had occasion to do so, never even thought of doing so. In its earlier days battles fierce and keen were waged yearly over questions of policy and internal organisation, but the commonsense of the party always came to the rescue and kept it free of swaddling bands. It is the same now.

and, so far as my influence goes, will always be the same. There is, however, a wide difference between this legitimate freedom and that irresponsible outside action which would, if successful, head the movement straight for discord, confusion, and ultimate disruption. Present-day malcontents don't seem to realise that in a popular movement, men who come to the front, and remain there, do so not so much because they get elected by so many votes, but because experience and service have shown that they can be trusted. The same instinct which leads a herd of buffaloes or a pack of wolves to follow the older and stronger members of the herd or pack, operates in like fashion in a great democratic movement. It is the truest and purest form of Democracy.

But now I carry the argument a step further. The Labour party is the only expression of orthodox Marxian Socialism in Great Britain. I wish it to be understood that I am not apologising for the I.L.P. alliance with the Labour party. I am carrying the war into the camp of the enemy. I know that many of our young comrades are having it dinned into their ears day after day by members of the S.D.P., and by the newspapers which represent the disruptive and dissentient element, that the Social Democratic party alone embodies the Socialist tradition of Karl Marx and the great founders of modern Socialism. Doubtless some of those who repeat those statements believe them. They have read and heard them so often that they have accepted them as being true. They have neither the time nor the opportunity for reading and understanding the evolution of Socialist policy as laid down by Marx, Engels, Liebknecht, and the other classical founders of modern scientific Socialism.

They have been led away by the veriest claptrap, by the mouthing of mere phrases. The Social Democratic Party, and those who are now trying to form a Socialist Representation Committee, are not only not representing the Marxian tradition; they are outraging every principle of Marxian Socialist tactics. Mr. J. B. Askew, a talented and keen student of Marx, who spends much of his time in Germany, who is a whole hearted supporter of Marx's theories, and a leading member of the Social Democratic Party, has recently put this statement on record in the *Neue Zeit*, "The position in England is not without its comic side, he writes. On one side we see the 'anti-Marxian' Independent Labour Party, and the like-minded Labour Party, *coming up completely to the lines laid down by Marx*, and following out in practice the truths which they fight in theory. On the other hand we see the Social Democratic Party in *theory* carrying the banner of Marxism and the class struggle, and in *practice* rejecting the same." That puts the position in a nutshell. The Labour party practices the Marxian policy of the class struggle, following Marx's own example, and is blamed by its critics for doing

so, whilst its critics, in practice, reduce Marx's great historic formula to a set of quite meaningless phrases. Writing to a friend in America about the time of the formation of the I.L.P., of which by the way he was a member, Fredrich Engels gave his opinion of S.D.P. tactics in the following virile words:—

The Social Democratic Federation here shares with your German-American Socialists the distinction of being the only parties to accomplish the bringing down of the Marxian theory of development to a rigid orthodoxy. According to them the working man is not to attain to this complete development ("class consciousness") through an evolution set in operation by his class feeling; but he has to swallow it down immediately as an article of faith and without development. Therefore, both remain only sects, and come, as Hegel says, from nothing, through nothing, to nothing.

That is a biting criticism of the S.D.P. attitude in standing outside the Labour party, and makes mincemeat of those superior persons who want to form a Socialist Representation Committee. The old International Workingmen's Association was not a Socialist organisation. It was, as its name implies, an association for uniting the working classes of all countries. It was founded in 1864, and in 1871, the year before it perished in the carnage of the ill fated Commune of Paris, Marx made this fact clear in one of his letters.

The International was founded, he wrote, to establish a *real organisation of the working class in place of Socialist and half-Socialist sects*. . . . The growth of Socialist sectism and of the real Labour movement are always in inverse proportions. As long as the existence of sects is historically justified, the working class is not yet ripe for an independent historical movement. As soon as Labour reaches maturity all sects become retrograde.*

Thus it is proved that the founders of the I.L.P., and, even more so, of the Labour party were, if I may use the expression, in the direct line of apostolic succession from Marx and the other great master minds of Socialist theory and policy. They never conceived Socialism as a narrow pettifogging dogmatic sectarianism, but as a wide all-embracing workingclass movement toilsomely learning by failure and experience the lesson of workingclass solidarity, and proclaiming the conquest of political power as the method by which the workers would achieve their economic emancipation. Therefore, whether it be Robert Blatchford with his great gifts, or the handful of irresponsibles who control the political policy of the *New Age*, most of them disciples of Nietzsche—the neurotic apostle of modern Anarchism,—who assail the Labour party, they are thereby violating the canons of classical Socialist doctrine, whether judged by the writings of the founders of modern scientific Socialism, or the practice of those Socialist parties which most closely adhere to Marxian tactics. I don't say that this is conclusive, the success of the I.L.P. is its own defence. It is however well to remember that that success has been won on an orthodox Socialist policy.

*From *Unpublished Letters of Marx and Engels*, in the *Socialist Review*, March, 1908. I.L.P. Publication Department.

Robert Blatchford has rendered great service to Socialism by his *Merrie England* and *Britain for the British*. But he knows little about organisation or political action. He lives, as he himself tells us, in practical seclusion, engrossed in his books. For his own peace of mind he would be well advised to leave politics to the other members of the *Clarion* staff. He says he still believes in a Labour party for the working class, but he wants a Socialist party for Socialists. In his state of mental confusion he thinks in terms of a middle class Socialist movement as a something quite apart from the common people. He is all for a "Socialist" party. Suppose I invite him to begin by setting us an example. There is nothing for example very distinctively Socialist about the title of his paper: why not change it to the *Socialist*? In his day Mr. Blatchford has formed, or aided in forming, a Fellowship, a Scouting Corps, and is now trying to establish Cafes. But it was a *Clarion*, not "Socialist" Fellowship, *Clarion*, not "Socialist" Scouts, and the cafes are not "Socialist" but *Clarion* cafes. Why does Mr. Blatchford, since he sets so much store by the terms "Socialist" and "Socialism" give them such a wide berth in his business ventures?

Finally, the I.L.P. is solid in its determination to stand in with the Labour party. A motion to withdraw only received 8 votes at the Edinburgh Conference, whilst 378 were cast against. The party therefore is sound at heart on this question. Further, the party heartily and handsomely repelled the discreditable misrepresentations by which a small knot of malcontents had sought to poison the minds of the rank and file against the leading members of the National Administrative Council. The 319 votes cast for my re-election was a practically unanimous vote of the Conference. "Why then," it may be asked, "did you resign?" And I reply, that I might be free to write a polemic like this pamphlet. I knew that the finances of the party were sound, that the organisation was in a healthy condition, and that the Divisional Representatives on the N.A.C. together with the four National members who will be elected to fill the vacant places, would worthily carry on the policy and tradition which have made the I.L.P. powerful and respected. I wanted to be free to warn the party of dangers which beset it without incurring the suspicion of being merely an official spokesman; and I wanted to aid, as one of the rank and file, in combatting that spirit of petty meanness, of unworthy suspicion, of imputing unworthy motives, of putting a sinister interpretation upon everything of which you don't approve or don't understand, which has been spreading like a dry rot in certain districts. This is the spirit that must be fought down and out if our party is to continue to guide and inspire the working class movement.

The I.L.P. must be prepared, so long as it remains in the

Labour Alliance, to accept in good faith all that that implies, election policy included. The *Labour Leader*, as the official organ of the party, must have more loyal support. The badge of the I.L.P. must be worn in preference to that of other detached organisations. The party has to make up its mind to be definitely I.L.P., not merely in theory but in practice. The Independent Labour party represents a phase of Socialist policy which is not shared by any other Socialist, or pseudo-Socialist, organisation in Great Britain. The policy of the I.L.P. is in line with that preached and practiced by Karl Marx, Fredrich Engels, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Jean Jaures, and Emile Vandervelde. That policy is also mine, and I want the party to grasp it more fully, realise it more in practice, be less tolerant of those who are opposed to it, and generally to take itself more seriously and with a greater sense of responsibility. So will the party be strengthened to meet the stress of the testing time which lies ahead of the Socialist movement in Great Britain.

The conversion to Socialism and the political organisation of the working class is no light task. The forces arrayed against us are powerful and unscrupulous. We have thus far achieved a very gratifying measure of success, but much still remains to be done. The secret of our success has been our ability to unite men of diverse gifts, giving each an outlet for his special talent; by opening the way for the chiefs of the great Labour organisations to join with us without loss of self-respect or sacrifice of principle on either side; by magnifying points of agreement, and minimising points of difference, and by the exercise of a wise toleration. We have never taken short views, but have always borne in mind the fact that the Socialist movement is not for a day, but for all time, and that a momentary triumph gained by sharp practices may exact a heavy penalty in after days. Critics of the policy of the I.L.P. ask us to risk all this by embarking upon a course which would tend to divorce Socialism from the working class, and introduce discord and strife where there is now unity. I at least refuse to countenance such folly.

A thousand years scarce serve to build a State,

An hour may lay it in the dust.

There is too much of my life builded into the party for me to treat it lightly, or its continued progress as a thing of no consequence. I shall end my political career as I began it, by raising the old Slogan,

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE; YOU HAVE ALL TO GAIN,
AND NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS.

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