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LEVELS OF INDUSTRIAL MILITANCY AND THE  
POLITICAL RADICALIZATION OF THE  
DURHAM MINERS 1885-1914.

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of  
Social Science, University of Durham,  
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Department of Economic History,  
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Craig Marshall.

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## Abstract

To date there have been several works written on the Durham Miners' Association, the most notable of which have been G Metcalfe's 'A History of the Durham Miners' Association' and E Welbourne's 'The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham'. These works have tended to concentrate on the growth of the D.M.A. itself, rather than studying any of the pressure groups which were active within the coalfield. This work is split into two sections. The first aims to discover the levels of industrial militancy and the degree of political radicalisation in the coalfield between 1885 and 1914. In order to do this a careful study has to be made of the official and unofficial disputes in the period, and of the policies put forward by different lodges in the D.M.A. council. As yet there has been little work on the growth of the Labour Party in the North East, an omission which this work starts to remedy by a study of the political fortunes of the miners in certain selected parts of the coalfield.

The second section of the work moves away from the ascertaining of the levels of industrial militancy and political radicalisation towards an analysis of factors which influenced their respective levels. In this section four separate influences are studied in some detail, the economic condition of the coalfield, the position of the Methodists regarding both militancy and radicalism, the level of migration and its influence and the relationship which existed between the union leaders and the rank and file. The findings of these studies go some way towards an explanation of the actions of the miners.

## Introduction

The period covered by this study, between 1884 and 1914, ranks as one of the most important in the history of the trade union movement. The union movement entered the period still suffering from the difficulties of the 'Great Depression', membership was small and morale low. During the late 1860's and the 1870's the trade unions had, however, made certain very significant advances regarding their legal standing. This was achieved by a string of Parliamentary Statutes. Most prominent amongst this legislation were the Master and Servant Act of 1867, the 1871 Trade Union Act, the 1876 Trade Union Amendment Act and the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act.

In the short term the severe recession of the late 1870's did not provide an economic environment which would permit the unions to take advantage of their new gains. Over a longer period of time the legal advances, in particular the diminution of fears of prosecution by the employers, and the greater union control over their own finances, greatly assisted the spectacular growth of trade union membership from the late 1880's. The total trade union membership in Britain rose from 750,000<sup>1</sup> in 1888 to 4,145,000<sup>2</sup> by 1914.<sup>2</sup>

The scale of increase in union membership, particularly during the economic upswings around 1890 and after 1910, was a key factor in the transforming of the trade unions from being merely regional pressure groups towards becoming

1. H. A. Clegg, A. Fox & A. F. Thompson, 'A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Vol 1. 1889-1910' (Oxford 1964) p466.
2. H. Pelling, 'A History of British Trade Unionism' (London 1963) p262.

a co-ordinated rational force. In 1885 the first moves towards a more united trade union structure were already being made, most notably within the Miners' National Union. It would be wrong, however, to consider that the unions had achieved any great unity on the matter by the start of our period. By 1914 some considerable advances had been made, again most notably with the miners' unions which were united as a national body by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (M.F.G.B.) The most striking example of the increasing unity of the trade union movement came, however, with the formation of 'The Triple Alliance' in June 1914. This alliance consisted of the M.F.G.B., the Railwaymen and the Transport Workers' Federation. Their goals have never been particularly clear, but G A Phillips' work on the subject<sup>1</sup> sees the alliance as primarily a symbol of and support for the principle of amalgamation and organisation by the unions. He also notes that the three industries were partly inter-related, since a dispute in any one would automatically affect the other two; the alliance was thus important since much mutual co-operation was needed. The outbreak of war in 1914 deprived the Triple Alliance of the chance to demonstrate its industrial might, but there can be little doubt that it was a sign of the increasingly national strength of the unions in Britain.

1. G.A. Phillips, 'The Triple Alliance'. The Economic History Review 1971, ~~XX~~ pp. 55-67.

This shift towards firstly increasingly large regional unions and then onto the national union inevitably presented problems for the unionists. The sudden transition from a small union with a membership of a few hundred to a large-scale organisation with sometimes over a hundred thousand members put a great strain on the union structure. The leaders of the union who had previously known many of the members personally and had often continued to work with them, now found themselves as full time salaried officials at the head of large complex organisations which required a completely new approach. The leaders often became bureaucrats, unable and/or unwilling to mix freely with their members. The result was that in the early 1900's the degree of alienation between the rank and file and the leadership became a serious problem for the first time.

The period of growth is best remembered for the 'new unionism' of the match girls, the dockers and the gas workers.

"The new unionism appeared to differ from the older established unions, catering largely for unskilled and poorly paid workers, the new unions tended to have low entrance fees and subscriptions, and depended not on benefits but on aggressive strike tactics to win concessions from their employers, and so keep their members satisfied. Furthermore, they were willing to recruit workers without distinction of type of employment....The leaders of the older unions were inclined to doubt whether such tactics could prove successful in the long run".

The emergence of the 'new unions' must not be allowed to direct attention away from the continued growth of the older unions. The older unions, particularly in coal mining and cotton textiles, retained their numerical domination over the trade union movement as a whole, the 'new unions' constituting only a very small percentage of the total trade union membership. The ideas and policies of the 'new unions' were, however, important: their overt militancy resulting in some questioning of the more conciliatory policies of the leaders of the older unions by their rank and file. The industrial unrest of the late 1880's and the early 1890's has been frequently attributed to the militancy of the 'new unions'. The London dockers' strike of 1889, the Gasworkers' strike of 1889-90 and the Dockers' strike of 1893 are all important landmarks in the growth of the new unions.<sup>1</sup> It must be noted, however, that the economic downturn of the early 1890's resulted in more serious strikes in other sectors of the union movement. The Durham miners' strike of 1892 and the M.F.G.B. strike of 1893 involved a far greater loss of days' work than the combined total losses of the 'new unions'.

After their somewhat spectacular early growth the 'new unions' became more cautious in their industrial policies. Despite the growth in their memberships after the turn of the century they could not be classified as 'heavyweights' in the trade union movement. A second major outbreak of

1. H. Pelling, 'Modern Britain 1885-1955' (London 1960) pp. 40-1

industrial militancy occurred between 1908 and the outbreak of war in 1914. This unrest has been in part attributed to the spread of syndicalist beliefs through the workforce of the country. The 'new unions' involved in strikes in this period were the railwaymen in 1911 and the London dockers in 1912. The railwaymen's strike must be viewed separately, since it was a strike for union recognition. The older unions were again much more involved in the strike activity, the M.F.G.B. coming out on strike in 1912 following on strikes by Durham and Northumberland in 1910 and South Wales 1910-11. Some felt the formation of the Triple Alliance in 1914 was a great victory for the syndicalist beliefs, but the war prevented historians from seeing whether its power lay in its actions or its threats.

The period as a whole was on the surface one of considerable industrial unrest, closely tied to the movements of the trade cycle. More important, though, it is the period during which many of the powerful trade unions of today established themselves. With the great increase in both the numbers and the strength of the trade unions a new type of industrial relations was emerging. In the mid-nineteenth century the trade unions had suffered severely at the hands of their employers. By 1912 the M.F.G.B. was powerful enough to hold the government to ransom on the minimum wage issue. This remarkably rapid changeabout is a central area of study of this work.



Having studied the changing pattern of industrial militancy amongst the Durham miners, the next area for study concerns the transition from liberalism to labourism and socialism by many miners. At a Parliamentary level the miners became strong liberal supporters in the 1880's and this tradition remained unchanged until Arthur Henderson was elected as a L.R.C. candidate in the 1903 Barnard Castle by-election, defeating a Liberal to do so. Durham was not, however, included in the Liberal - L.R.C. electoral agreement of 1903 concerning the contesting of seats by both parties at the same time. The subsequent struggle for supremacy between the Liberals and the L.R.C. at the Parliamentary level is studied at both general and by-elections.

Thompson's findings in London<sup>1</sup> indicated that at a local level, in the election of county and parish councils and the Poor Law Guardians, the socialists fared far better than they did at a national level. Accordingly a highly selective study of these local elections is made to determine whether or not Durham followed London in having a higher degree of 'radical' socialist representation at the local level. Thompson's work, solely on political elections, incorporated a detailed analysis of the activities of both the Conservative and the Liberal parties in London. Since this study concentrates largely on the radicalism among the miners specifically, it has not been possible to study the general fortunes of either the Liberal or the Conservative parties in Durham in very great detail. Consequently it is not possible to compare the results of this limited study with those of Thompson.

1. P. Thompson, 'Socialists, Liberals and Labour The Struggle for London' (London 1967)

Although Durham does not appear to have experienced any widespread growth of socialism in the 1890's a socialist miner, J W Taylor, was returned as Labour M.P. for Chester le Street in 1906. At the turn of the century there appears to have been a rapid spread of socialist belief, largely through the vehicle of the I.L.P. By 1906 Durham is said to have become one of the centres of I.L.P. activity in Britain. The section on political radicalism aims to see how many I.L.P. branches there were in the county, how rapidly they spread and how big they were.

Spanning the same period there were considerable changes in the patterns of representation of trade unions and organised labour groups in Parliament. In 1884 after considerable pressure from the T.U.C. and numerous other bodies, the Third Reform Act was passed. This act reduced the franchise requirements to a level which enabled large numbers of working class men to vote. Prior to 1884 only two working class leaders, the miners T Burt and A MacDonald had been elected to Parliament (both in 1874), but this extension of the franchise gave the unions the chance to elect Parliamentary spokesmen in several constituencies which contained large numbers of trade unionists. The result was the emergence of a small but important 'Lib-Lab' group of M.P.s. These men were trade union leaders who took the Liberal whip in the Commons, their role being primarily that of a pressure group pursuing the policies of their respective unions.

At the same time as the unions were establishing a position in Parliament, there was a gradual spread of 'socialist' propaganda throughout the country which was to have an important bearing on the growth of organised Labour Parliamentary representation. Initially the socialists were merely an assortment of differing groups whose beliefs were influenced to varying degrees by the works of Marx, Henry George and others. The most prominent amongst these groups were the Social Democratic Federation, the Independent Labour Party, the Socialist League and the Fabian Society. These bodies, although grouped together under the general heading of socialist, worked independently, frequently in opposition to each other. In terms of the national parties they had made little impact before 1900; but their unlimited enthusiasm and vigorous propaganda work did result in a very limited degree of success in local elections. Most of these socialist groups had similar political and industrial policies. The I.L.P.'s main political demands were typical of the others, a demand for the end to social inequality and for the nationalisation of the country's assets. They demanded improved housing, better educational facilities for all and the vote for women. Their industrial policies proved to be their most popular, aiming to end unemployment through state ownership, the demand for a statutory eight hour day, and the demand for a legal minimum wage. It is important to note that all these

policies were distinctly national in character, rather than regional, a hallmark of many socialists' electoral campaigns.

The growth of the assorted socialist parties did not cause any undue anxiety to the national political parties; the socialists were vociferous but were not felt to constitute a real threat to the existing political order. In 1900 however a link was established between the Trade Union movement and the young socialist parties. The Labour Representation committee was set up uniting the I.L.P., the S.D.F., numerous trade councils and the members of the T.U.C. Parliamentary Committee.<sup>1</sup> The L.R.C. was in fact a very loosely knit body, its only aim being to increase the number of Labour M.P.s. There was a very uneasy truce between the staunchly Liberal Parliamentary Committee and the socialist I.L.P. and S.D.F. The low attendance at the inaugural meeting suggested a lack of interest in the body, and the low level of affiliation for the following twelve months is testimony to the indifference felt towards the L.R.C. by many trade unions. Even Keir Hardie's somewhat unexpected success in the 1900 Parliamentary election at Methyr Tydfil failed to stimulate any new burst of support.

The turning point came in July 1901 when the verdict was announced for the plaintiff in the Taff Vale case. The judgement awarded damages to the Taff Vale Railway Company against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants for losses resulting from the action of its officers.

1. P. Poirier, 'The Advent of the Labour Party' (London 1958) pp. 85-87.

The judgement established a legal precedent that a trade union, though not a corporate body, could be sued for damages, a decision which undermined the legal standing of all trade unions. If the movement was to be saved from financial ruin it was essential that the Taff Vale judgement was overruled. The only way open for the unions to overcome the consequences of the verdict was to press for a change of the law by Parliament. The newly formed L.R.C. thus became the obvious vehicle to use to exert union pressure. After 1901 the L.R.C. was supported by an increasing number of unions, until by 1905 only the miners of the major unions remained unaffiliated.

At this stage the L.R.C. was simply a pressure group working largely within the framework of the Liberal Party. If candidates of both parties contested an election they risked splitting each other's vote and allowing the Conservatives to win a previously Liberal seat. After several disastrous by-election defeats the Liberals decided to come to an agreement with the L.R.C. over the seats which were being contested in the next general election. The agreement was to be of benefit to both parties, since it enabled the L.R.C. to win seats which it would have had no chance of winning had a Liberal contested the seat, and for the Liberals it reduced the number of seats the Conservatives would win because of Liberal - L.R.C. split votes.

Largely due to this electoral agreement in 1903, the L.R.C. won twenty-nine seats at the 1906 General election, and apparently established itself as a Parliamentary force. The composition of the group must not, however, be ignored - in 1906 the L.R.C., which renamed itself the Labour Party, remained a loose knit group encompassing staunch Liberals and avid socialists. The group's success was largely due to the trade unions' need to have the Taff Vale decision reversed, and to the Liberals' anxiety back in 1903 to come to terms with the new threat. The passage of the Liberals Trades Disputes Act in 1906 removed the common sense of purpose within the group, and raised the question as to whether the Labour Party had any further functions to perform.

Towards the end of 1906 this unsettled position was further aggravated when the Liberals passed a Workmen's Compensation Act, which impressed even the socialists in its boldness. The Liberal element within the Labour party argued that the group had fulfilled its function and ought to be disbanded, the socialists countered with the need for a separate third party. The most critical period came in 1907 when a T.U.C. debate on the future of the Labour Party resulted in a very narrow victory for the socialists.

The split between the two factions was further aggravated in July 1907 when a young I.L.P. member, Victor Grayson, won a by-election at Colne Valley despite the fact that the Labour Party had not endorsed his candidature. In Parliament he sat as an I.L.P. member and refused to

sign the Labour Party constitution. These internal difficulties led to a decline in the Labour Party's fortunes. After 1907 the party failed to gain any further seats at by-elections and its candidates polled very badly.

In 1910 the party suffered further setbacks. The affiliation of the M.F.G.B. in 1908 and 1909 had increased the number of M.P.s in the group; however, the strong Liberal element amongst the miners further widened the split within the party. In the January 1910 general election there was a fall of five seats in the party representation. In February judgement was given against the unions in the Osborne case, which effectively prevented the use of union funds for political purposes. This verdict financially crippled the Labour Party which was heavily dependent on union funds. The December 1910 election saw some slight improvement with the party gaining two seats. The results made it obvious that the Osborne judgement would not have the same effect on the Labour Party as the Taff Vale case had.

It has been frequently argued that by 1914 the Liberal Party had overcome the challenge of the infant Labour Party which was now a declining force in national politics.<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered, however, that before the outbreak of the war, politics had not yet completed the transition from being regional in character with local issues featuring strongly in elections, to becoming national in character.

1. R. Douglas, 'Labour in Decline' in K. D. Brown, "Essays in Anti-Labour History" pp. 105-125 (London 1974)

Consequently it is important to study individual regions as separate entities.

As yet there have not been many works dealing with politics within specific areas. P F Clark's work on the emergence of 'new Liberalism' in Lancashire<sup>1</sup>, which places great emphasis on the importance of social reform highlights this regional differential. Clarke traces the fortunes of the Liberal Party in the North West, and suggests that the Liberals' position greatly improved in the pre-war period. He attributes this success to the adoption of policies of social reform by the local Liberals which reduced the appeal of the new Labour group. K O Morgan's study of Liberalism in Wales again concentrated on Parliamentary elections within a specific area<sup>2</sup>. He too concluded that the Labour Party never represented a serious challenge to the Welsh Liberals. Morgan does, however, stress that the Welsh Liberals never accepted the 'new Liberalism' of Lancashire, the old Liberal-Nationalism link and the strong Nonconformist-Liberal ties proved well able to stem the Labour advance.

Brief studies of other regions further support the view that the British political elections before 1914 followed a distinctly regional rather than a national pattern. The paucity of detailed work on parliamentary elections in the various regions suggests that it is too early to declare, as R Douglas has done<sup>3</sup>, that the Labour

1. P. F. Clark, 'Lancashire and the New Liberalism' (Cambridge 1971)

2. K O Morgan, 'The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour. The Welsh Experience 1855-1929' in K D Brown op cit pp. 159-182.

3. R. Douglas, op cit. p125.



Party nationally was in decline, rather the fortunes of the party in each specific region must be studied carefully and assessed independently of the party's fortunes elsewhere.

A new dimension has been added to the debate by Paul Thompson's work on London.<sup>1</sup> While accepting that the Labour Party had failed to maintain its initial momentum at a national parliamentary level, Thompson's work suggests that the party did enjoy a great deal of success in local elections right up until the war, and consequently had built a strong base for future growth. There have been attempts to play down the significance of Thompson's work, most notably Wrigley's work on Battersea.<sup>2</sup> The lack of work on local elections does, however, open up new areas of potential study.

As in the industrial sector the miners' unions played a central role in the political changes of the period. The size of their unions, the high percentage of the workforce unionised, and their traditional industrial militancy strengthened their position as the leaders of the Trade Union movement. With the extension of the franchise in 1884 the miners gained Parliamentary representation on a scale no other group could rival.<sup>3</sup> They thus gained a strong Parliamentary pressure group to add to their overall strength.

The miners were not, however, as powerful as

1. P. Thompson, 'Socialists, Liberals and Labour. The Struggle for London' (London 1967)
2. C. Wrigley, 'Liberals and the Desire for Working Class Representatives in Battersea 1886-1927' in K D Brown op cit pp. 126-158.
3. R. Gregory, 'The Miners in British Politics 1885-1910' (Oxford 1968)

appearances suggest, largely because they were split into two distinct groups, the Miners' National Union, and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. The M.N.U. was the older body, founded in 1863 it had been dominated by Northumberland and Durham. In 1884 following disagreements over demands for a statutory Eight Hour day and for a legal Minimum Wage the M.N.U. split leaving Northumberland and Durham as its only members and the M.F.G.B. was formed by the remainder. The two bodies were openly critical of each other, and greatly weakened the credibility of the miners' demands.

Towards the end of our period these seemingly irreconcilable differences were overcome. In 1907 the M.N.U. broke up and the Northumberland miners affiliated with the M.F.G.B. accepting both its political and industrial policies. Following this in 1908 despite the continued opposition of their leaders the Durham men voted to join the M.F.G.B. United at last, the miners were able to achieve their two main objectives - the eight hour day, through political pressure, and the national minimum wage after strike action. Moreover, the miners' unions had in 1908 and 1909 affiliated to the Labour Party, and (except for a few individual M.P.s) had technically shed their old 'Lib-Lab' identity.

Such is the outline of national Labour history in this period. But how far did the miners of Durham conform to this overall pattern? The thirty years prior to the outbreak of the first world war witnessed the national growth of both 'official' (union backed) and

'unofficial' industrial militancy. How far was Durham affected by this mood, or did it follow an individual path? Durham was the last of the major coalfields to affiliate to the M.F.G.B., was this due to industrial or political factors, or both? When the M.F.G.B. affiliated to the Labour Party in 1908 at least one Durham miners' M.P. refused to sign the Labour Party constitution. Does this mean that the Durham miners were politically 'backward', or were the leaders out of touch with the rank and file? These are the major problems to be tackled in this study. First the evidence for increasing industrial militancy and increasing radicalism will be discussed; and then some possible explanations will be tentatively considered. The remainder of this introduction will now elaborate on these avenues of approach.

This work on the Durham Miners' Association is in many ways a preliminary general survey. Consequently in some parts of the study it has been necessary to be selective as to which areas are covered in depth. This has had to be the case since many of the topics which are studied are fully capable of being studied at depth individually for a Ph.D. thesis. Whenever one area has been specifically selected to the exclusion of other areas, the reasons for the selection will be given, and in some cases the reasons for the exclusion of others are given, although this is usually due to either a shortage of time or material, or both.

The first section of this work deals with the industrial climate of the coalfield. During the period the leadership of the Durham Miners' Association (D.M.A.) pursued very 'moderate' policies in the industrial field. This moderation took the form of the use of sliding scale wage agreements, which tied wages to coal prices; the use of conciliation and arbitration boards; and a general unwillingness to support the use of strike action either as an aggressive or a defensive policy. There is evidence <sup>1</sup> which suggests that, as became increasingly the case in the trade union movement nationally at the turn of the century<sup>2</sup>, the moderate policies of the D.M.A. leaders were in opposition to the demands of a more militant rank and file. The extent and timing of this split in one of the largest unions in the country is of considerable importance.

Despite the ardent anti-strike policies of the D.M.A. leaders, the Durham miners did become involved in strikes during the period, including three county stoppages. The causes behind these strikes are thus of considerable importance, as were the efforts of the D.M.A. leaders to try to avert them and then to try to end them. Nationally there was a trend towards an increasingly high level of violence during strikes after 1900,<sup>3</sup> the actions

1. D. Douglass, 'Pit Life in County Durham' (History Workshop Pamphlets No 6. Oxford 1972)
2. H. Pelling, 'A History of Trade Unions' p. 145.  
J. E. Williams, 'The Derbyshire Miners' p. 227. (London 1962)  
R. P. Arnot, 'The South Wales Miners' pp. 372-3 (London 1967)
3. R. P. Arnot, ibid pp. 200-380.

of the Durham miners in this area must be uncovered. In addition to the major disputes there were smaller local strikes which were far more common. These disputes can be placed into two categories, the official and the unofficial. The official disputes - prosecuted by the union leaders, were not particularly common in the Durham coalfield, and when they did occur few lasted longer than a fortnight. The unofficial strikes were undertaken in defiance of the D.M.A. leaders and no strike notice was put in. The strikes were of necessity brief affairs, since the men were not in receipt of strike pay, and they were liable to prosecution for breaking the terms of their contracts. Consequently the high level of unofficial strike action tells us a great deal about the feelings of the men in the coalfield.

Two problems which were of particular importance to the miners at this time were the demands for a minimum wage and the demands for a statutory eight hour day. The mining unions were powerful, both in an industrial and a political sense, and this gave them the chance of forcing the country to accept their demands. In Durham the coalfield was divided on the issue. The Liberal leadership of the D.M.A. was strongly opposed to any government intervention in the industry. However, the 'rank and file' miners whose wages were subjected to the fluctuations of prices on the London and international markets, were increasingly enthusiastic about the possibility of a minimum wage. The issue was to cause considerable disagreement within the D.M.A. right up to the First World War.

The demand for a legal eight hour day was a key factor in determining much of Durham's industrial policy. The issue had been the key reason for the split between the M.N.U. and the M.F.G.B. The M.F.G.B. supported the demand for a statutory eight hour day but Durham, where the hewers already worked a seven hour day naturally opposed what it considered to be a retrograde step. Further opposition to the demand was due to fears that the introduction of a three shift system into the pits would seriously disrupt the domestic life of the miner's family, of whom three or four members frequently worked in the pit.

Because of the extent of the opposition to the eight hours demands in Durham (and Northumberland), support for the M.F.G.B. and any socialist body which supported the issue, was naturally coloured. The agreement between the rank and file and the D.M.A. leadership on this point was of crucial importance in determining the 'isolationist' policies of the Durham miners, and did much to prevent the division between the leaders and the men assuming serious dimensions on the 'minimum wage' question.

The last major section of this work suggests several possible explanations for the shift in the miners' political and industrial attitudes during the period. Obviously this section is more hypothetical in character than the previous two, and in the absence of the time to study in detail the impact of certain factors on the

miners' actions can only be conjectured. The first avenue of approach is to study the changing economic fortunes of the coal industry in the county, and the resulting prices and wages. The economic fortunes of the Durham coalfield were based largely on her London and export trades. This meant that the price of Durham coal had to remain low enough to compete in the European market even after the addition of the transport costs. The highly competitive nature of these markets prevented the Durham miners from limiting coal production in order to bring about an artificially high price for coal, and the corresponding high wages.

Besides the selling price of coal, which was controlled by external forces, the key factor in determining the profitability of the coalfield was the productivity of the miner. Durham was an old coalfield, consequently the distance to the coalface was longer than in more recently exploited coalfields, and the best seams had already been worked. It is not surprising therefore to discover that Durham's productivity was amongst the lowest in the industry. Moreover, as their productivity declined at a faster rate than any other British miners their wages failed to keep pace with those elsewhere. The obvious reasons for the falling relative wages were the sliding scale agreements of the D.M.A. leaders which kept wages tied to prices in a period when the M.F.G.B. was trying to improve its members' wage rates.

The second major area of explanation involves a study

of the common ideologies current in the mining communities. In the Durham coalfield the Methodist movement was exceptionally strong. The leaders of the D.M.A. were Methodists to a man, and it is important to try to assess whether the traditional strength of popular Methodism was a major obstacle to change in the miners' industrial tactics or political attitudes. Such a study runs into considerable difficulties concerning an actual definition of 'Methodist' attitudes and beliefs. The structure of the Methodist religion places great emphasis on the importance of the local chapel and the local elders and lay preachers. This structure, combined with the fact that there were several distinct forms of Methodism, such as Primitive Methodism, Wesleyan Methodism and the New Connexion, resulted in the absence of any single 'Methodist' attitude towards social, political and industrial matters. Consequently, one has to guard against overstating the Methodist stance on any given question.

The Methodists, in particular the Primitives, were an important force in Durham. They had close ties with the Liberal Party, a factor which partly explains the staunch Liberalism of the nineteenth century amongst the mining communities.<sup>1</sup> The importance of Methodism's initial opposition to the Socialist movement must be stressed; similarly after the turn of the century when the Methodists' attitudes became more tolerant and a form of 'Christian Socialism' came to be accepted by many active younger Methodists. The Methodists' attitudes towards

1. R. Currie, 'Methodism Divided' (London 1968) pp. 184-5 see also W. R. Ward, 'Popular Religion 1780-1850' (London 1972).



industrial tactics remained less flexible, however; a firm belief in conciliation and compromise was backed up by a strong dislike of strike action. The assessment of the overall impact of Methodism has to rely at this level largely on personal judgement.

The third possible explanation for the growth of militancy and radicalism rests on a consideration of social differences within the coalfield. There is a contrast between the older mining communities with their well established structures and social networks, and the new communities comprising mainly of migrant workers. The effects of migration in both its forms - migration into the coalfield, and migration within the coalfield must be assessed. A community composed largely of migrants will differ markedly from the older established one. The average age of the men is likely to be lower, there may well be an imbalance of men over women, the social network of the community will not be strong. A migrant community also has an effect on the life of the pit itself. The workforce would not be settled, the men still learning to work with new workmates, the local union branch may not have firmly established itself in the men's or the management's eyes and consequently the relations between the two sides may have been poor. Since the new pits, particularly after the 1880's, were large concerns the element of personal relationships between the manager and the workforce, so important in the running of the older pits, was absent. Any combination of these factors may well have resulted in the emergence of a new type of industrial attitudes and political beliefs.

The size of the migrant flow is also important in assessing the impact of migration on the coalfield. Since the size and location of the mining communities often resulted in the miners becoming very isolated from other people the migrant may well have played a crucial role in the spreading of new ideas. The absence of many social attractions excepting the public house, in the colliery village, made discussion groups popular in the mining communities, and consequently it only needed one new man to start outlining new political or industrial views to interest the whole community. The emphasis placed by the socialists on encouraging their members to speak in public and to debate would have been a great asset in the colliery villages. The study of the level of migration enables us to see just how rapidly the new industrial and political beliefs could have spread in this way.

The last specific area to be looked at involves a discussion of the problems inherent in all bureaucratic structures in so far as these are illustrated by the divisions between the leadership and the rank and file of the D.M.A. As already suggested, this split was partly marked by the advance of socialism amongst the rank and file and its rejection by the leadership. Similarly in the field of industrial relations, more militant tactics and different objectives were favoured by the rank and file, and rejected by the leadership. This section attempts to explain why such a split between the two groups should emerge. In doing this, considerable use is made of R Michels' work on political parties.<sup>1</sup>

1. R. Michels, 'Political Parties' (Glencoe 1915)

Finally, by way of an introduction, it is necessary to state the sources which have been used in this study. The first two sections in the work, the study of the degree of industrial militancy and political radicalism to be found amongst the Durham miners, were based largely on a study of primary sources. The former was divided into sections dealing with the emergence and early history of the D.M.A. and then its organisations, structure and industrial record between 1885 and 1914. The work on the emergence of the D.M.A. did not fall into our period and is consequently based largely on the works of R Fynes<sup>1</sup> and G H Metcalfe<sup>2</sup> and a brief study of the local press of the period. A need to determine the actual structure of the D.M.A. and to find out how it worked in practice necessitated a detailed study of the D.M.A. records.<sup>3</sup>

A picture of the unions' industrial record also emerged from the work on the D.M.A. records. The circulars issued monthly by the association's general secretary were of considerable use since they frequently referred to events of the previous month, although usually in general terms. These records are, however, understandably biased, and it would be unwise to base the study solely on them. Consequently a very brief study was made of

1. R. Fynes, 'The Miners of Northumberland and Durham' (Sunderland 1873).
2. G. H. Metcalfe, 'A History of the Durham Miners' Association 1869-1915.' (Unpublished M.A. thesis. University of Durham 1950).
3. The Durham Miners' Association, 'The Minutes of Council Federation Board and Executive Committee meetings 1884-1914,' in the D.M.A. Headquarters, Redhills, Durham.

the records of the Durham Coalowners' Association,<sup>1</sup> which contained a similar bias from the opposite side. The most useful sources of material on the miners' strike activities were the local newspapers. A comprehensive study of the contemporary newspapers, in particular the 'Durham Chronicle'<sup>2</sup> and the 'Durham County Advertiser',<sup>3</sup> provided the most balanced picture available. The newspapers frequently reported the minor disputes which are not documented elsewhere, and this was particularly important in the case of unofficial strikes which were ignored by the official bodies.

The major drawback to the use of newspapers was their limited local field of interest; both the 'Durham Chronicle' and the 'Durham County Advertiser' were Durham City newspapers which concentrated their attention on the city and its immediate surroundings, consequently the material they provide is from a rather small area. There are local newspapers for several other areas of the coalfield,<sup>3</sup> but the great amount of time needed to study these newspapers prevented the study from reaching them.

The political section was based largely on the material which could be obtained from local newspapers. The

1. The Durham Coalowners' Association, 'Minutes of the Executive Meetings of the Durham Coalowners' Association' (Northumberland County Record Office)
2. 'The Durham Chronicle' and 'The Durham County Advertiser' (in the Durham Advertiser Offices, Saddler Street, Durham City) All dates given by day, month and year of publication.
3. J. M. Milne, 'The Press in Northumberland and Durham 1855-1906.' (University of Newcastle. M.Litt.Thesis 1969)

Conservative 'Durham County Advertiser' made little mention of either the Liberals or the emerging socialist groups, but the Liberal 'Durham Chronicle' was more regular in reporting their activities. The newspapers were exceptionally useful in providing information about local electoral activities, the meetings of the local Liberal and Labour groups, and the activities of their leading personalities. To counteract the predominant Durham City bias of the local papers, the 'South Durham and Auckland Chronicle' was extensively studied after 1900.<sup>1</sup>

There is a dearth of material concerning the activities of local political groups in the area prior to 1914. This is not particularly surprising since the Conservatives had only secured a tenuous footing and have undergone several reversals since 1918. Similarly the post-war eclipse of the Liberal party, which never had a particularly strong local network, has resulted in the loss of their records. The Labour groups of this period were in all areas in a very early stage of development, and have not left any detailed records for posterity. Consequently our studies have to be somewhat limited. A degree of work was possible on local Labour leaders, due to the careful documentation of all newspaper references to them, their occasional mention in the jubilee histories of the local co-operative societies which were common in the first two decades of the twentieth century and references in D.M.A. records. In looking at local government, considerable use was made of the Durham County Council minutes from 1892-94.<sup>2</sup> These records provided an insight

1. 'The South Durham and Auckland Chronicle' (Durham Advertiser Offices, Saddler Street, Durham City)
2. Durham County Council Minutes 1892-1914' (Durham County Record Office)

into the interests of both individuals and parties. The minutes were also of considerable use in assessing the impact of the 'socialists' on the running of the County.

In the third section of the work the hypothetical nature of the study meant that fewer primary sources were used. The chapter on the economic conditions of the coalfield made use of the aforementioned coalowners' association minutes, the D.M.A. records and the H.M. Inspector of Mines' Annual Reports.<sup>1</sup> The study of Methodism made only limited use of the newspapers and of co-operative histories, but was mainly concerned with pulling together the mass of secondary material on the subject, and interpreting its relevance to Durham. The study of migration necessarily involved considerable work on primary sources. Colliery records for three pits were studied, some in considerable detail.<sup>2</sup> A study was made of school records in an attempt to establish the level of migration of children going with their families.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately there was a lack of material in these areas, which necessitated a brief extension of the search to the rich but largely uncatalogued records of the N.C.B. record office in the Team Valley.

Considerable use was made of the few research theses which have been written on the Durham miners or related

1. 'H.M. Inspector of Mines' Annual Reports 1885-1914' (H.M.S.O.)
2. 'Chopwell Colliery Records 1896-1914', 'Consett Garesfield Colliery Records 1889-93' and 'Craghead and Holmside Colliery Records 1886-1900' (N.C.B. deposit. D.C.R.O.)
3. 'School Records 1885-1914' (Education Dept. deposits D.C.R.O.)

subjects. The best known is Metcalfe's previously mentioned 'The Durham Miners' Association', which has become virtually the standard text on the subject, containing a wealth of data on the association. R Moore's thesis on Methodism in the Deerness Valley<sup>1</sup> is one of the several more recent works on the Durham miners; in it he provides us with an illuminating insight into the life of the Durham miner. F Webster's recent work on 'The Durham Miners. A Sociological Interpretation',<sup>2</sup> is a good companion volume for Metcalfe's work. Webster presents a well argued sociological account of the Durham miners between 1830 and 1926, unfortunately the scale of the work has resulted in several major omissions due to a concentration solely on the D.M.A. records. A third recent work is A Wilson's study of the Consett Iron Co.<sup>3</sup> While concentrating mainly on the iron side of the company he was still able to make a valuable contribution to an understanding of the company's collieries. Mountford's work on 'The John Bowes Company',<sup>4</sup> is a valuable study of the important problems facing a coal company in the period.

1. R.S. Moore, 'The Influence of Methodism in inhibiting the development of class consciousness and in decreasing class conflict with special reference to four West Durham mining communities 1870-1926' (Univ. of Durham Ph.D thesis 1972)
2. F. Webster, 'The Durham Miners. A Sociological Interpretation.' (Univ. of Durham. M.A. thesis 1974)
3. A. Wilson, 'The Consett Iron Co. Ltd. A Case study in Victorian business history' (Univ. of Durham. M.Ph thesis 1973)
4. C.E. Mountford, 'The History of John Bowes and Partners up to 1914' (Univ. of Durham M.A. Thesis 1967)

The diverse nature of this study makes it inevitable that there is a wide secondary literature. Most of these works are referred to in the footnotes, and all are listed in the bibliography. Several works are, however, of particular interest. These can be put into two general categories, those dealing specifically with local issues and those of a more national character. E Wellbourne's study of the Durham miners<sup>1</sup> remains a classic academic work, it is a well balanced, carefully argued book, essential reading for anyone with an interest in the miners. Two books which deal specifically with the Durham miners are D Douglass' 'Pit Life in County Durham'<sup>2</sup> and G Best's 'Bishop Westcott and the Miners'<sup>3</sup>. Both these works are rather thin on documentation and their arguments need further substantiation. However, the ideas of both men are stimulating and well worth reading. The most important of the national works is R Gregory's work on the political stance of the miners in British politics.<sup>4</sup> This book allows us to compare the political situation in Durham with that of other coalfields in Britain for much of the period.

1. E. Welbourne, 'The Miners' Union of Northumberland and Durham' (Cambridge University Press 1923)
2. D. Douglass, op cit.
3. G. Best, 'Bishop Westcott and the Miners.' (Cambridge University 1966)
4. R. Gregory, op cit.



To conclude the introduction the outline of the work will be re-iterated. The first two chapters deal with the evidence relating to the level of both political radicalism and of industrial militancy in the coalfield between 1885 and 1914. In order to find an explanation for both these levels, several influences on the mining communities are studied in detail. This results in an analysis of the economic structure of the coalfield, the attitudes of the powerful methodist group, the effect of the level of migration in people's attitudes and the role of the D.M.A. leadership in determining the policies adopted by the rank and file. Since there were obviously numerous other factors which exerted a degree of influence on the miners one cannot hope to do any more than indicate which appear to be the more important ones.

CHAPTER 1.

INDUSTRIAL MILITANCY.

### Early Attempts at Forming a Union

The miners of County Durham made three attempts to form a permanent union prior to their success in 1869. As early as 1830 Thomas Hepburn had succeeded in uniting the men of Northumberland and Durham into one union body. The focal point for the miners' efforts was their common grievance with the miners' bond.<sup>1</sup> The bond was a crude form of contract which the miners entered into with the coalowners every year, fixing wage rates and the working conditions.

"On a Saturday near March 20th the whole of the workmen were called to the colliery office, and there the manager would read over (nearly always in tones inaudible to all except those who were close to him) the conditions of labour for the next twelve months. There was usually a balancing of prices. As an inducement to the men there was a sovereign given to the first to sign, ten shillings to the second, five shillings to the third and two shillings and sixpence to every man thereafter. The wish to secure first place was generally so great that the manager was fortunate if he were not carried off his feet. As a preparation for the rush certain men would be bribed to incite and thus induce the men to act in an unthinking manner."<sup>2</sup>

1. H.Scott, 'The History of the Miners' Band in Northumberland and Durham with special reference to its influence in industrial disputes'. (University of Manchester M.A. Thesis 1946)
2. J.Wilson, 'History of the Durham Miners' Association' p.49 (Durham 1907)

Hepburn's union first tried peaceful tactics to overcome the band, and petitioned Parliament to outlaw the system. Not surprisingly they received very little sympathy from the wealthy M.P.s. In April 1831 they took their protests a stage further, and presented the coalowners with demands for a twelve hour day for boys and the abolition of the 'Tommy shop' (the expensive colliery shop which paid part of the men's wages in goods not money). In return for these concessions the men were willing to continue with the band system. The owners delayed, but following an outbreak of violence in May they capitulated and met the miners' demands in full.<sup>1</sup>

The men's gains were short-lived; in April 1832 the coalowners announced that no-one belonging to the union would be re-employed when the bands were signed. Despite Hepburn's eloquent warnings the men again launched into a campaign of violence and destruction which resulted in the virtual military occupation of the county. Hepburn was quick to acknowledge defeat but was forced to totally abandon his union activity. His last speech to the men concluded:

"If we have not been successful at least we as a body of miners have been able to bring our grievances before the public." <sup>2</sup>

1. R.Fynes, 'The History of the Northumberland and Durham Miners.' Ppl-36 (Sunderland 1873)
2. Ibid. P36

The next effort to unionise the Durham miners came in 1841 with the formation of the 'Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland'.<sup>1</sup> The Durham men were again eager to form a union, and joined in large numbers, raising £500 towards a law fund to retain W.P. Roberts, a lawyer later to be known as the Pitmen's Attorney General.<sup>2</sup> The association proved successful under the astute leadership of Martin Jude, having a membership of 100,000 miners by 1844. In that year, however, the Durham miners decided to use the support of the union to further their demands for a higher wage. The coalowners refusal to even consider their demands resulted in strike action.

The 1844 strike demonstrated the great power of the mid 19th century coalowners. Troops, police and blacklegs were brought in in large numbers, evictions were widespread and local shops were ordered not to give credit to the miners.<sup>3</sup> In the strike the union suffered a devastating defeat and afterwards any men who were suspected of having union sympathies were victimised. These aggressive tactics of the coalowners prevented any recovery by the union and it simply disappeared from the coalfield.

1. R.Challinor & B.Ripley, 'The Miners' Association: a trade union in the age of the Chartists'. (London 1968)
2. S.Webb, 'History of Trade Unionism' pp.182-5 (London 1921)
3. R.Challinor & B.Ripley, op cit. p143

The third attempt to form a union came in 1863 when the Northumberland and Durham Miners' Union came into being. Although in name Durham was part of the new movement, in practice only three of the thirty delegates at the inaugural meeting hailed from Durham. To counteract this a policy of encouraging union beliefs in Durham was pursued with great vigour at public meetings throughout the county. By October the union was well established, support was rapidly rising in Durham and several thousand people attended most meetings.

Once again it was the aggression of the Durham miners which brought about the downfall of the union. The cause of the strike was a dispute at Oakenshaw over the 'rocking' of tubs by the master weighman at the pithead. This action caused the coal to settle at a level frequently beneath the minimum permitted quantity of coal for a tub. At Oakenshaw the master weighman, who received a commission on the number of tubs he confiscated, had pursued a very vigorous policy of 'rocking' the tubs, and the men naturally objected.

The strike itself was an unpleasant affair. The local colliery owner, Mr Love, pursued a policy of evictions at Sunnybrow, Brancepeth and Oakenshaw. The miners reacted by spreading the strike beyond the local collieries so Love then brought in large numbers of blacklegs, re-opened his collieries and forced the strikers to give in and return to work.

The effect of the strike on the union was disastrous. It did not have enough funds to support its members in

strike action, and the rocking tub dispute proved to be a serious drain on its resources. As the increasingly serious financial plight of the union became apparent the Northumberland miners severed relations with Durham. They felt that the link with Durham:

'was to them like being connected with a body of death, and they realised that the connection in the end would be fatal.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus by 1865 the Durham miners had by their high propensity to strike caused the failure of three unions. This propensity to premature and precipitate strikes was to prove a problem which Durham leaders would face for the next half century. The need for a powerful moderate leader who could control the militant rank and file was imperative to the long term existence of a miners' union in Durham.

The Durham Miners' Association (DMA) was successfully founded in 1869, a decade which saw the creation of the Staffordshire Miners' Association in 1863, the Northumberland Miners' in 1864 and the South Yorkshire Miners' in 1864.<sup>2</sup> Ironically the association was the product of an industrial dispute. In the spring of 1869 too many men had wanted to sign the bond, and the coalowners had attempted to capitalise on this by forcing the men they employed to accept a 10-15% reduction in wages. The trouble started at

1. J. Wilson. op cit. p.6

2. H. Clegg, A. Fox & Thompson 'A History of British Trade Unions Vol 1 1889-1910.' (Oxford 1964) P.17.

Wearmouth where the men having accepted a 15% reduction found it impossible to live reasonably under the new terms, earning less than £1 for an eight shift fortnight. The owners in turn pleaded that they were making insufficient profit to gain interest on their capital investment. The men responded to this by coming out on strike. In order to escape prosecution for breaking their bands, the men vacated their colliery houses and handed in their lamps and copies of the colliery rules, thus technically ending their employment rather than striking.

After a period of stalemate during which the owners tried unsuccessfully to hire blacklegs the owners were forced to offer the men employment on better terms. The men refused this offer, but issued a statement concerning the formation of a union.

"That it is the opinion of the men that all classes of workmen whatever their occupation may well henceforth unconditionally and uniformly embark in a struggle of Monkwearmouth Colliery Unionists in order that a fair remuneration for labour may be gained on amicable and harmonious terms."<sup>1</sup>

The driving force behind the strike was a hewer, John Richardson. He urged upon the men the necessity of establishing a union before anything else. On July 3rd 1869 at a meeting in the Market Hotel, Durham City, Richardson gained the support of those present and the D.M.A. was formed.<sup>2</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle 23.7.69

2. Durham Chronicle 9.7.69. Wearmouth, Thornley and Houghton were the founder members.



Three weeks later the Wearmouth strike ended, with the men gaining a fortnightly engagement contract and the owners the right to re-employ those whom they chose; Richardson was not re-engaged and in September became a D.M.A. agent.

Numerous meetings were arranged to gain support for the new union, some being attended by many thousands of miners.<sup>1</sup> Advice was readily given by other miners' associations throughout Britain. William Crawford, the driving force behind the 1863 Union, offered both assistance and advice on the union's structure.

"The County is too wide and extensive for one Association. To make the work not only practical but effective it ought to be divided into three or perhaps four separate districts. These districts ought to be thoroughly independent of each other."<sup>2</sup>

The problems for the union to overcome were still very great, but the example of the Wearmouth strikers was not lost on the miners. Despite fears of victimisation, difficulties in obtaining meeting halls, in getting material printed by local printers and the open hostility of the coalowners, the union began to grow. On November 20th 1869 a committee was elected, and a set of rules read out.

The D.M.A.'s continued existence was by no means guaranteed in its early period and its membership fluctuated wildly during the first two years. The turning point came

1. E.Allen, 'The D.M.A. A Commemoration' P.9 (Private issue)
2. Durham Chronicle 15.10.69.

at the end of 1871 when William Crawford was elected secretary and to all purposes leader of the D.M.A. Crawford was to be the great moderating influence essential to a Durham miners' union's survival. From the very start Crawford's moderation was opposed by some of the militants; of the three founder branches of the union, Wearmouth left the association <sup>1</sup> and Thornley became involved in an unofficial strike over a serious case of victimisation and was later expelled.

For the next twenty years, Crawford was to dominate the D.M.A. in every field. His magnificent stature, his violent language and emotional appeal did much to arouse the Durham men from their previous apathy. His popularity enabled him to mould the union into the organisation he wanted. He wrote a set of rules <sup>2</sup>, laid down union policy, and also had the novel idea of having an annual miners' gala. Thus in its early years the D.M.A. became the organisation through which Crawford put his beliefs into practice.

The organisation of the D.M.A. up to the present day is still largely based on Crawford's ideas. The supreme government of the Association was vested in a Council which consisted of a President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and one member elected by each financial lodge as delegate.

1. G. H. Metcalfe, 'The Durham Miners' Association' p.37 (University of Durham M.A. Thesis 1950).
2. The rules appeared on 24.6.72 and although not personally signed by Crawford, they closely resemble those he wrote for the Northumberland Miners' Association.

Any lodge with more than twenty financial members was allowed to send a delegate to the council meeting, but one delegate was the limit regardless of the size of the lodge. The power was thus divided amongst the lodges, the larger districts being unable to secure votes in direct proportion to their membership.

The most important organ of the D.M.A. hierarchy was the Executive Committee. It was called to consider any urgent cases arising at the various lodges between the meetings of the Council, as well as any other business Council delegated to it. This committee comprised of not less than eleven members, including the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and Agents of the D.M.A. Elections for the committee took place every six months when four members retired. The purpose of the Executive was to direct policy. The committee was in practice usually dominated by the secretary who was responsible for the agenda at each meeting and had to write monthly circulars for the members. Crawford's control over the committee gave him control over the day-to-day running of the D.M.A. As secretary he was the best informed man in the union, his knowledge of the rules was unparalleled and by careful use of the circular he was able to put himself in an unchallengeable position at the head of the organisation.

The democratic nature of the association was upheld by periodic elections. The general officers, the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary were annually elected by the Council; this was a check on their powers, although no top D.M.A. official was ever voted out of

office. The rules also tried to ensure that the officials were only servants of the association; they were expected to pursue their work conscientiously and any executive member who missed a Council meeting without giving a reason was suspended until the following meeting considered his case.

The rank and file paid a membership fee of 6d. per fortnight, boys under 17 years were admitted as half-members at half price. Sickness or accident benefit was 2s.6d. per week for six months, then 1s.3d. per week for the second six months and for any subsequent period 1s. per week. The sick rules had a strong moral element about them stating:

"That no member shall be allowed to any sick allowance who is afflicted with venereal disease or whose illness is caused by fighting, rioting, racing or any other game whatsoever."<sup>1</sup>

Any lapse in payment of more than six weeks meant automatic suspension from all benefits until the arrears were paid off and one further month had passed. Payment of unemployment benefit depended upon the causes of unemployment, the Council having the right to determine to whom it should be paid.

There were no provisions in Crawford's rules for the organisation of local lodge government. This was a reflection of his belief in a strong central administration. It was only after Crawford's death that the lodges began to play an important role in business matters. The revision

1. D.M.A. rules 1872. rule 35.

of the rules in 1912 recognised this and gave the local lodges detailed consideration.

Crawford's organisation of the D.M.A.'s internal affairs reflected his desire to concentrate power into the hands of one leader. Since the majority of the Council members were full time miners, none of them had the time or energy to play an important part in the running of the association. A consequence of this was the formation of a clique of full time administration at the head of the D.M.A. Initially this clique consisted of Crawford, W H Patterson, John Wilson and John Forman. Significantly all were Primitive Methodists selected by Crawford largely due to their similar political, economic and social beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

Crawford played an important part in the formation of several bodies related to his industrial policies. In 1872 a Joint Committee was set up comprising of six coalowners and six miners with an independent chairman.<sup>2</sup> It gave both sides the chance to air their grievances, undoubtedly contributing much to a mutual understanding of the coalfield's problems. A failure to agree on a wages issue at this level resulted in the matter going to arbitration.

During the 1870's a series of other related mining unions were formed in the coalfield. In 1872 the Colliery Enginemen's Association was started, in 1874 the Cokemen's Association and in 1878 the Mining Mechanics' Association.

1. R.F. Wearmouth, 'Methodism and the struggle of the Working Classes. 1850-1900.' pp. 121-143 (London 1954)
2. J. Wilson, op cit. p 39

Under the guidance of Crawford these three bodies linked with the D.M.A. to form the Federation Board in 1878. Despite the independent structure of the Federation Board the numerical supremacy of the D.M.A. ensured that Crawford was the central figure in the new organisation, too.

Having succeeded in establishing himself as the key trade union figure in the coalfield, Crawford set himself the task of building up both the numerical and the financial strength of the union. When he first gained control over the D.M.A. the union was still in its infancy. The membership figures for September 1870 show that the D.M.A. had only 1,891 members.<sup>1</sup> When Crawford died twenty years later in 1890, the membership had risen to a colossal 97,030,<sup>2</sup> making the D.M.A. the largest single union in the country.

The most straightforward way of increasing the numbers in the D.M.A. was to pursue a successful wage policy. Crawford's wages policies were closely tied in with the acceptance of a sliding scale agreement with the owners. A sliding scale agreement was first reached in 1876, tying the miners' wages to the price of coal.

"The merits which may be claimed for the sliding scale arrangement are that the adjustment of wage rates to an agreed basic rate is, or can be, reasonably quick and impersonal. It does not require the lodging of a claim

1. C. Metcalfe, op cit. p. 39

2. D.M.A. Special Council Meeting, 29.1.90.

by the men for an increase, or of the claim for a reduction by the owners."<sup>1</sup>

The only problem to be overcome was to reach an agreement on the basic relationship between the price of coal and the men's wages, and this was done in March.

First Sliding Scale.<sup>2</sup>

<u>Price of Coal</u>		<u>Wages of Miners</u>
<u>At or above</u>	<u>but below</u>	
	5s.4d.	- 7½%
5s.4d.	5s.8d.	- 5%
5s.8d.	6s.4d.	Present.
6s.4d.	7s.0d.	+ 10%
7s.0d.	7s.8d.	+ 15%
8s.4d.	9s.0d.	+ 20%
9s.0d.	9s.8d.	+ 25%
9s.8d.	10s.4d.	+ 30%

Easily the most important factor for the average miner was that the first scale made a provision for a minimum wage of 4s. 8d. per shift.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately a rapid fall in prices in the late 1870's resulted in the coalowners terminating the scale. A second sliding scale agreement signed in 1879 lacked a minimum wage clause.<sup>4</sup>

The success of the sliding scale agreement was limited. The most basic objection to it was that while it ensured

1. E. Allen, op cit. p. 10

2. D.M.A. Minutes of Executive Committee, 14.3.77

3. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 9.12.76

4. See Appendix C for the second and third sliding scale agreements.

good wages at times of high prices, it did not prevent the miners' wages falling beneath the poverty line in times of sharply falling coal prices. The D.M.A. terminated the 1879, 1882 and 1884 sliding scale agreements in an attempt to improve the miners' position. It was only Crawford's own dominance which was able to keep it in existence until 1889. The executive committee was still in favour of it even then:

"the committee strongly urged the maintenance of the scale. It steadied trade, made work and wages more regular than any other means. Where sliding scales existed the districts were in better condition."<sup>1</sup>

If there was any doubt about wage levels Crawford was very anxious to make use of conciliation and arbitration in order to avoid a confrontation. The policy was not, however, endorsed by all the D.M.A. members.

"From its very inception the D.M.A. leadership adopted a policy of conciliation and arbitration and accordingly it spent a large part of its time not in struggles with the owners and their agents, but with the rank and file."<sup>2</sup>

It is true that the leaders' policies, particularly their willingness to go to arbitration, was not well received. Welbourne describes one meeting on the subject:

1. J. Wilson, op cit p202.

2. D. Douglass, 'Pit Life in County Durham' p45



"They said that arbitration had become a farce, that in every case the owners asked for twice as much as they expected to get, sure that the umpire could halve their demands."<sup>1</sup>

A major reason behind Crawford's introduction of the system of arbitration and conciliation to fix wage levels was his fear of strike action. When he took over the infant D.M.A. he was well aware that the industrial militancy of the Durham miner had already wrecked three earlier attempts at forming a union: his own involvement in the forming of the Northumberland and Durham Miners' Union in 1863 gave him first hand experience of the problem. Crawford's policies were not, however, unusual during this period.

"If the last two decades of the nineteenth century saw a notable widening of the area of trade union organisation, they also saw a strengthening of the desire on the part of both officials and employers for the avoidance of industrial disputes through methods of orderly negotiation."<sup>2</sup>

The success of these policies is undeniable; between 1869 and 1890 there was only one county strike. The strike in 1879 served to illustrate the differing aims of the union's leaders and the men. In the interval between the ending of the first sliding scale agreement and the agreement on the second scale, the owners demanded a 20% reduction in underground wages and 12½% in surface wages.

1. E. Welbourne, 'The Miners' Associations of Northumberland and Durham p. 185 (Cambridge 1923)
2. H. Pelling, 'A History of British Trade Unionism' p122.

The D.M.A. leaders told the men to accept the reductions, but the lodges rejected their advice and balloted by 224 votes to 7 votes in favour of a strike. A long strike ensued which ended when the men agreed to accept an 8.3/4% reduction. While the men celebrated their 'victory' the D.M.A. leaders showed more concern for the damaged financial position of the union.<sup>1</sup>

This disruption of the union's finances convinced Crawford that any further strike should be prevented, at all costs. He applied himself to the task and succeeded in preventing any other major strikes in his lifetime. It is apparent, however, that in order to attain this goal he was willing to ignore the demands of his men, no matter how valid they were. As a direct result of the executive's anti-strike policies there emerged in the Durham coalfield the phenomena of the unofficial strike.

An unofficial strike was a strike by the miners without the support of their union. As a consequence the men were liable to prosecution by the coal companies for failure to honour the terms of their contract. Such prosecutions were common and usually resulted in a small fine or in a few cases a prison sentence. Besides the possibility of court action the miners were not entitled to strike pay from the union, and consequently were also faced with considerable financial hardship.

The only D.M.A. records are full of brief reports of

1. J. Wilson, op cit. p164

'unofficial' stoppages, although only a small percentage were actually reported to the body. The situation became serious enough by the 1880's to merit circulars on the problem:

"Men entering into an association are both morally and legally bound to be governed by its rules and constitution. This however is not being done now by a large portion of our members."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the 1880's the unofficial strike level remained so high that a third of the general secretary's circulars refer to the problem. It would be wrong, however, to attribute these strikes to extremist elements in the coalfield. Because of the nature of the disputes they are not well documented. The vast majority only lasted for between one and three days, and most were settled without union interference. Consequently the D.M.A. records, while referring to the high levels of unofficial disputes, do not go into details and, similarly, the newspaper reports tended to merely state that the pit had stopped work. Because of the illegal nature of the disputes the leaders were never identified to the press or in court and so their side of the dispute remained unknown.

What does become obvious when studying the 'unofficial' disputes prior to 1915 is that the large majority were caused by grievances such as safety regulations, housing, victimisation and wage levels, which should have been dealt with by the local D.M.A. agent, and not left for the men to settle themselves. Crawford's policy of no strikes

1. D.M.A. Circular, 12.8.82.

often meant that disputes where the men had an excellent case were not supported by the D.M.A. The inadequacy of such a policy was shown in 1880 when following the Seaham disaster in which 164 men died, the men laid the pit idle the next day, the customary mark of respect for the dead. The Joint Committee immediately announced:

"It is the opinion of the Joint Committee that the action of the men in laying the pit idle on the day following the accident be condemned and should not be continued."<sup>1</sup>

As a direct result of this hasty and somewhat tactless statement the miners embarked on a long unofficial strike lasting until May 1881.

Inevitably in the face of such placatory policies the relations between the D.M.A. leaders and the more militant lodges deteriorated. The lodges began to organise opposition to Crawford's policies and with his physical decline after 1885 the opposition became increasingly powerful. Led by Thornley and Hebburn the militants embarked on their own industrial policies as a result of which by 1890 the unofficial strike level was so high that the coalowners threatened to break off all official relations with a body which had so little control over its members.<sup>2</sup>

In 1888 Crawford played a major part in a split between the mining unions which was to have important repercussions for the next twenty five years.

1. D.M.A. Joint Committee Meeting, 10.8.80

2. D.M.A. Council records, 15.5.90.

At the start of our period Britain's mining unions were united under the Miners' National Union. This body was a very loosely knit organisation with no coherent policy. All its members pursued their own individual policies in the most part, with little reference to other county unions. The M.N.U. was dominated by Northumberland and Durham and reflected their staunch Liberalism.

In 1888 only Northumberland and Durham were left in the M.N.U. when all its other members left to form the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (M.F.G.B.). The key issue behind the split was the desire of the M.F.G.B. members to press the government for a legally imposed eight hour day. Such a proposal was opposed by Northumberland and Durham because they had already gained a seven hour day for their hewers. Such difficulties were inevitable in different coalfields.

"Although in the mines the tendency was towards national regulation of the industry it was obvious that conditions in different areas varied too much to allow the easy application of nationally uniform agreements."<sup>1</sup>

The eight hours issue was not, however, the sole reason for the split up of the M.N.U. Because of their dependence on their export trades Northumberland and to a lesser extent Durham were not subject to the same selling conditions as the rest of Britain's coalfields bar South Wales. Consequently it was desirable for these

1. H. Pelling, 'A History of British Trade Unionism' p. 135.

unions to pursue their own policies in isolation rather than to attempt to support a national body which they had little in common with. Clegg, Fox and Thompson made the point that:

"The economic revival of the early 1880's led many English miners towards newer and wider alliances. This collaboration promised a better chance of unity than either the Amalgamated Association or the National Association, both of which included exporting areas with their widely fluctuating prices." <sup>1</sup>

After this split it is important to see that Durham was no longer a part of any national miners' movement, it pursued its own policies frequently opposite to those of the M.F.G.B.

1. W.Clegg, A.Fox and A.Thompson, op cit. p20

The Interregnum. 1890-92

When Crawford died in July 1890 he was succeeded as General Secretary by one of the founders of the union, William Patterson. Patterson had not apparently been thought of by Crawford as his successor. A weak man who lacked both personality and drive, his main asset was that he was a conscientious worker. The contrast with Crawford was very marked:

"Patterson... was a lesser man, possessed of none of Crawford's readiness to shoulder responsibility. He argued where Crawford had ordered, he consulted where the founder of the men would more wisely have presented them with an accomplished fact."<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly the start of Patterson's period as secretary was marked by a great upswing in the number of unofficial strikes. Patterson lacking the charisma and strength of Crawford lost the respect of the men. The position was aggravated by the presence of John Wilson on the D.M.A. executive. Wilson, an M.P., a county councillor and financial secretary of the D.M.A., showed signs of leadership which Patterson so obviously lacked. He was a strong contender to succeed Crawford and his continued presence served to highlight Patterson's weaknesses. This divided leadership can only have been harmful to the D.M.A.

The upswing of the coal market between 1888 and 1890 gave the miners a strong bargaining position and the lodges were only too willing to ask for wage rises in excess of 20%.<sup>2</sup>

1. E. Welbourne, op cit p. 256

2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 11.9.90

Such demands were possible in the absence of the now defunct sliding scale agreements and substantial rises were granted. The miners were not, however, so willing to accept the consequences of a recession.

"More than anything else the workers wanted the growing power of their union to secure a steady wage for them, and an end to the cuts of the bad years. Their leaders sought to give them what they wanted by negotiation, backed up by threats and if necessary by strikes. But few employers could control the prices at which they sold and therefore could not guarantee to maintain wages in a depression."<sup>1</sup>

This friction between the union and the coalowners due largely to the lack of a sliding scale was further aggravated by the exceptionally high level of unofficial strikes. It became probable that there would be a confrontation between the two bodies, and in 1891 a dispute at Silksworth brought matters to a head.

The cause of the Silksworth strike was common enough in coalfields throughout Britain. The union men were refusing to work alongside non-union labour. At Silksworth the local lodge asked the management to insist on the pit deputies joining the D.M.A. The request was refused, resulting in a motion at the next D.M.A. council meeting asking for permission to strike. The D.M.A. approved the motion and strike notices were handed in on November 12th.

The strike was initially peaceful, but by Christmas,

1. Clegg, Fox and Thompson. op cit. p. 472
2. Durham Chronicle, 16.11.90



the strikers began to adopt a more violent approach, throwing stones and jostling officials.<sup>1</sup> This unrest put more urgency into the negotiations resulting in agreement being reached between deputies and local lodge officials; satisfied with this agreement the men returned to the pit to restart work.

The coalowners appear to have decided to make the Silksworth dispute an example to other militant collieries.<sup>2</sup> On the grounds that violence and coercion had been used to persuade the deputies to join the D.M.A., the owners refused to restart the pit until the Federation Board guaranteed to provide security and freedom of non-D.M.A. deputies. This demand put the miners in a difficult position. In the general desire for the strike Patterson had failed to consult the Federation Board on the matter, with the result that that body was in no position to provide such an assurance. The D.M.A. men were then locked out by the Silksworth owners.

Early in 1891 the strike escalated. On January 9th over two hundred eviction orders were served, more being rumoured.<sup>3</sup> The local lodge reacted by asking the D.M.A. to lay all of Lord Londonderry's collieries idle. On February 19th the 'candymen' started the evictions from the colliery houses: eleven the first day, one hundred during the first week. Despite the pleas for calm by the D.M.A. leaders present, the evictions led to violence and

1. Durham County Advertiser, 26.12.90.

2. J. Wilson, op cit. p223. Silksworth was a well known militant lodge.

3. Durham Chronicle, 9.1.91.

large numbers of police were drafted in to guard the candymen. The arrival of large numbers of spectators served to aggravate the already tense situation.

At first stones were thrown, but later as the number of evictions rose the crowd attacked the pit deputies' houses. One house was badly damaged while at another the deputy held the crowd at bay with a revolver.<sup>1</sup> As the situation worsened the police suddenly baton charged the crowd inflicting serious injuries on many people.<sup>2</sup>

The violence continued at a high level for a fortnight producing a bigger crop of legal actions than any other Durham strike. The mass arrests which resulted kept the courtrooms full for over a year. Those tried included the local Liberal M.P. Samuel Storey and three police constables, all of whom were acquitted.<sup>3</sup>

A second wave of evictions was due to start in March, but these were prevented by the D.M.A. reaching a settlement with Lord Londonderry. The settlement appeared a considerable victory for the men. The owners advised the deputies who had rejoined the D.M.A. to pay their union arrears and they also guaranteed that those who had been on strike were not to be victimised.

If one sees the strike in perspective it becomes obvious that the strike was a poor omen for the future. The lodges had organised the strike and the D.M.A. leaders

1. Durham Chronicle, 27.2.91.

2. J. Wilson, op cit. p 226

3. Durham Chronicle, 27.3.91.

had played very little part in its running. In Crawford's days such a half-hearted approach by union officials would not have been tolerated. The highly adverse publicity which both sides received for their part in the strike heightened the bitterness already prevalent.

1891 saw two further major disputes, one at Murton and the other at Wingate. The latter resulted in further outbreaks of violence, but the Murton dispute was the more significant since it caused internal disputes within the D.M.A. The strike was called following the dismissal of a deputy. The D.M.A. executive committee refused to recognise the strike as official, however at the next full Council meeting this decision was reversed by a large majority.

During the year the D.M.A. had one hundred and twenty unofficial strikes referred to it. Welbourne described the difficulties of this for the D.M.A.:

"Never before as an angry union circular remarked had there been so many unconstitutional strikes. In one day 16 pits had been laid idle and only one of them had troubled to inform the agents of its action. Local lodges had devised a method of defeating the rule which deprived them of strike pay for informal hasty action. They struck, and at the conclusion of the dispute, they obtained from the council in relief of their urgent wants."<sup>1</sup>

The adverse economic conditions did little to improve the position. A cut of 3.3/4% in April and the demand for a 10% cut in November united the men in their hostility towards

1. E. Welbourne, op cit. p. 265

the owners. In January 1892, when the coalowners demanded an immediate 10% reduction, the Federation Board studied the case and recommended the acceptance of the reduction since the owners had fully substantiated their case.

The coalfield ballot which followed failed to support the Federation Board. It resulted in 605 for accepting the 10% cut, 2,500 for arbitration, 7,102 for a Federation Board settlement and 41,887 for refusing all offers. A second ballot followed in which 40,468 wanted a strike, 926 a 7½% cut, 1,153 a 2.5% cut and 12,956 a Federation Board settlement. The third ballot was a straightforward strike ballot - 43,056 in favour, 11,856 against.<sup>1</sup> In February the strike notices were handed in and on March 12th the coalfield stopped. The other members of the Federation Board came out on strike at the same time, despite the fact that both the cokemen and enginemen voted against it, and the mechanics failed to obtain a 66% majority in favour of a strike.

The 1892 County strike is still remembered in the mining community as the most bitter in the coalfield's history.

"The conduct of the strike (or lockout) seems to have had about it a peculiar unpleasantness which claims the singularity of its immediate sources. The unpleasantness seems all to have proceeded from the pitmen's side."<sup>2</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle, January and February 1892

2. G. Best, 'Bishop Westcott and the Miners' p. 17 (Cambridge University Press 1966).

The men's frustration can be seen in the lack of coordination or thought concerning their actions. While using every available weapon to defeat the coalowners the miners began to use tactics which added greatly to their own problems. For the first time they refused to allow the pumping engines to keep working and consequently ended the possibility of a quick return to work. They refused to work the engines which gave upland villages their water supply; they rejected the colliery services, including medical care, refuse collection and the supply of free coal for the sick and aged.<sup>1</sup> By preventing the delivery of coal to the local gasworks they deprived their own communities of gas.<sup>2</sup> Even papers reporting on the miners' strike commented on this self-denial:

"No consideration of loss or affliction seems to prevail with the men."<sup>3</sup>

In varying areas the relations between the men and management differed. At some pits relations were good throughout, several colliery managers taking it upon themselves to feed the children.<sup>4</sup> The Cooperative Wholesale Society allowed several stores to give the miners up to six months' credit.<sup>5</sup> Such actions did much to ease the acute position of the miners.

1. Durham Chronicle, 16.4.92., 23.4.92., 30.4.92.

2. G. Best, op cit. p. 18

3. Colliery Guardian, 18.3.92

4. At Kimblesworth the manager attempted to feed 3000 children per day.

5. P. Darvill, 'Cooperation in the North East' pp. 165-7 (University of Durham. M.Litt. thesis 1954).

In other areas there was considerably more unrest. Several attempts were made in N W Durham to introduce blacklegs into the pits. At two such pits, the Delight (Dipton) and Pontop (Annfield Plain), there were serious clashes between the police escorting the blacklegs and the strikers.<sup>1</sup> At Easington Lane men gathering coal for their own fires were mobbed. The most serious incident occurred at West Stanley where a reporter of the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, who had been openly critical of the strike was saved from lynching only by the timely arrival of the police.<sup>2</sup>

In these unsettled areas the discontent was spread at large unofficial meetings, frequently addressed by speakers who had only come to the coalfield to stir up trouble. At these meetings there were as many critical attacks on the D.M.A. leaders as there were on the coal-owners themselves.<sup>3</sup>

The county as a whole was put under a severe strain by the strike. The start of the dispute was marked by a great influx of police from throughout Britain. The absence of water in many of the colliery districts presented a serious health hazard. Although the dispute was a mining one, by May the whole North East was in difficulties. The miners' strike pay was down to 25s. per month, the shipyards of Sunderland, Jarrow, North and South Shields had been laid off as had the iron workers at Consett,

1. Durham Chronicle, 10.6.92.
2. G. Best, op cit. p. 19
3. J. Wilson, op cit. pp234-5

Middlesbrough and Stockton,<sup>1</sup> none of whom gained strike pay. The records of the local co-ops indicate the problems of the small shopkeepers in the districts.<sup>2</sup> Expenditure dwindled to a bare minimum, those who could give credit doing so in order to stay in business. Nevertheless numerous small shops were forced to close.

The deterioration of the county's standard of living put pressure on the miners' leaders to end the strike. In May the Federation Board made tentative approaches to the coalowners, suggesting a 7½% reduction immediately and arbitration on the rest. The coalowners refused to consider either proposal and demanded an immediate 13½% reduction, indicating their determination to make the miners meet the cost of the suspension of work. This stand by the coalowners was important in gaining the miners an increasing amount of support, even from those who had previously been critical of their actions.

"The Federation Board on behalf of the men adopted what appeared to be a conciliatory policy in offering settlement at a 7½% reduction. We are aware that those terms are looked upon by the majority of the employers as exceedingly excessive and altogether unacceptable. But in the interval an additional 3½% has been added by the masters. The refusal on the part of the owners has put them in a worse position in the eyes of the county."<sup>3</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle, 27.5.92.

2. P. Darvill, op cit. p. 166

3. Durham Chronicle, 20.5.92.

The men's attitude towards a 13½% reduction was predictable. They voted by 33,451 to 4,425 to reject the offer.<sup>1</sup> Despite the low poll the ratio in favour of continuing the strike was now 7:1 as compared with 4:1 in March.

On May 13th the owners decided that the state of the coal trade merited a 15% reduction in wages. The Federation Board, sensing the urgency of the situation, offered on behalf of the men to accept a 10% reduction.<sup>2</sup> The offer was rejected by the coalowners, effectively ending the hopes of an early settlement.<sup>3</sup> This time the coalowners were openly charged with trying to starve the miners into complete submission.

"In addition to the privation misery and distress... nearly a hundred thousand people are on the verge of starvation. The local means of relief are exhausted and it will be necessary for the general public to aid the men if actual starvation is to be averted."<sup>4</sup>

On May 31st, just when it appeared that there was no hope of a settlement, Bishop Westcott, Bishop of Durham, entered into the dispute.<sup>5</sup> By personal contact he managed to persuade the two sides to meet in his palace and discuss a solution acceptable to all. Under his guidance the two sides reached agreement. The men were to accept a 10%

1. Federation Board ballot, 25.5.92.
2. Federation Board Minutes, 15.5.92.
3. Durham Chronicle, 27.5.92
4. Durham Chronicle, Editorial. 27.5.92.
5. See G. Best, op cit.



reduction immediately and a Conciliation Board was set up to deal with future wage changes.

The reasons for the strike in 1892 are plentiful. Several writers have attributed the blame for it to Patterson. Welbourne refers to his pre-strike circular:

"It made no attempt to influence the judgement of the men..... In an association full of ill informed, ignorant men, it would have been a higher conception of duty to have followed Crawford's example and to have striven to persuade the men to peace."<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly Patterson's leadership left much to be desired. He had only been in office for eighteen months and clearly had yet to gain control over the association. His personal shortcomings were obvious; he was not a natural leader of men. Yet it is unfair to criticise him while ignoring the role of the other D.M.A. leaders, in particular Forman and Wilson, who failed as badly as Patterson. The strike must also be seen in perspective; in 1892-93 South Wales, Northumberland and the M.F.G.B. members all struck in the face of large wage reductions,<sup>2</sup> suggesting that great conciliatory leaders such as Wm Abraham (Mabon) and T Burt were unable to overcome the militancy of their men.

A major problem was with the strong militant lodges which had engaged in a constant battle with Crawford throughout his career. The removal of Crawford had greatly strengthened these lodges, thus making them a difficult problem for the new D.M.A. leader to overcome. The

1. E. Welbourne, op cit. p. 259

2. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op cit. p. 108

moderation of the D.M.A. leadership had long been the subject of attack from these bellicose lodges. Opposition to sliding scales, conciliation, joint committees and arbitration was growing:

"In Bishop Westcott's decade the inadequacy of Burtism<sup>1</sup> was unmistakeably felt by many miners and expressed by an ever angrier minority."<sup>2</sup>

The attacks on the D.M.A. leadership came primarily as a means of putting pressure on them to demand a change of policy and in one sense this discontent was the first real pressure in Durham for a minimum wage; the leaders wanted nothing to do with it. Durham was at this time experiencing exactly what was being felt throughout the coalfields of Britain; Williams said of the Derbyshire leaders that they:

"would have had little liking for the Federation with its aggressive policy and its semi-socialistic principles of a minimum wage and a legal day, but in February 1890 when the Federation was demanding a wage increase of 10% there was an overwhelming majority of members in favour of affiliation...and Derbyshire joined."<sup>3</sup>

Other writers have blamed the rise of Socialism for the

1. 'Burtism' is Best's phrase for the policies of T Burt M.P. secretary of the Northumberland Miners' Association. These policies were essentially Liberal and involved the acceptance of a fixed relationship between wages and coal prices and therefore sliding scales, conciliation and arbitration. It must be noted that both Wm Crawford and John Wilson were men of equal standing to Burt and the D.M.A. was far larger than Burt's own Northumberland union.
2. G. Best, op cit. p. 15.
3. J. Williams, 'The Derbyshire Miners.' p251

strike, Wilson firmly attributes the general unrest and discontent to the influx of these outsiders.<sup>1</sup> This view is largely unacceptable since socialist ideas do not appear to have been widely accepted in the coalfield before the twentieth century. The propagandists were more involved in trying to win their first converts in the area, than making wholesale conversions. The strike provided an excellent breeding ground for the new ideas, but was not caused by them.

The wages of the miners were the immediate cause of the cessation of work. Wage negotiations had never been straightforward in the coalfield, particularly when a reduction was involved. The abolition of the sliding scale agreements in 1889 with its carefully laid out guidelines made the situation considerably more difficult. The reduction of 10% was the first reduction of that size outside of a sliding scale agreement since the 1879 strike. In the five years prior to the strike wages had risen by 27% and had reached their highest ever level in 1891. This rise, coupled with the falling cost of living, ensured that the miners in early 1892 were more prosperous than ever before. Seen in this light it is apparent that the miners were not striking to avert having to live in poverty.

Best offers an alternative view:

"But the miners' restlessness and uncharacteristic wildness during that interim, both before the big strike and while it was in progress, was all of a piece; and neither weak leadership on the one hand nor unusual human folly on the other side offer wholly plausible explanations, unless one

1. J. Wilson, op cit pp234-5

also sees, among leaders and led alike an irritable un-cooperativeness and 'hang the consequences' born of frustration and perplexity."<sup>1</sup>

Best leaves his analysis there, neither qualifying nor substantiating it. If one studies the statement more closely one notes that he does not stress the traditional wildness of the Durham miners. The militants had always been important in Durham, destroying the first three unions, and giving Crawford an increasingly difficult time despite his great hold over the D.M.A. What did appear to be new was the uncooperativeness and the self deprivation of the miners. The death of Crawford in 1890 had resulted in the militant lodges gaining considerably more power within the D.M.A. itself, and becoming an important influence in council. The D.M.A.'s new tactics may well have stemmed from the militant lodges' influence.

The polarisation of the two sides immediately prior to and during the dispute served only to make the situation more serious. The coalowners resorted to their traditional tactics of eviction orders and blacklegs, tactics guaranteed to win support for the militants within the D.M.A. During the strike, the militant miners were faced with a double crisis, firstly the attack of the coalowners on their wages, and secondly by the possibility of losing control of the D.M.A. in the power struggle with the existing executive, now led by John Wilson.

The longer the strike continued, the greater the .

1. G. Best, op cit. p16

possibility of defeat on both fronts became for the militants. It was obvious that the coalowners were determined to starve the miners into submission, and it was probable that the failure of the strike would result in the re-establishment of the policies of the two previous decades by the D.M.A. executive. A study of the violence which occurred in the strike reveals that the majority of incidents occurred towards the end of the dispute. It is quite possible that these disturbances owed much to the frustration of the militants.

It would be wrong, however, to attribute such goals to the majority of miners in the dispute. Many came out on strike because the miners of Durham traditionally opposed large wage cuts, and in 1892 the D.M.A. leadership was not strong enough to resist those demands. In the event the men lost the full amount and were further burdened with a Conciliation Board.

The end of the strike did find the D.M.A. executive unified in the face of attack from the coalowners and the radical lodges. The setting up of a Conciliation Board greatly strengthened their position since it took the wages question out of open view. The defeat marked the end of the 'reign' of the radical lodges. For the next decade and a half they were to concentrate more on political policies than industrial ones. The strike brought about one further important change within the D.N.A. The financial losses of the union and the complete collapse of faith in Patterson resulted in John Wilson assuming control of the D.M.A. in all bar name.

### The Rule of John Wilson

Wilson fitted easily into the position which Crawford had left two years before: the similarities between the two men were obvious:

"This successor was basically the same kind of man, an extreme moderate, and industrially a pacifist dedicated to a peace keeping role..... he was a committed Liberal and took the platform alongside many capitalists in the Liberal cause."<sup>1</sup>

Wilson had a long record in union affairs. As early as 1863 he had been Haswell lodge secretary. Excessive drinking, gambling and a restlessness had led him to travel extensively and become known as a hot head. After his conversion to Methodism he underwent a complete change of character and became a lay preacher in 1870. In 1875 he was elected to the D.M.A. executive and became a trustee in 1876, Treasurer in 1882 and an M.P. in 1885. He was enough of a national figure to be elected head of the prestigious T.U.C. Parliamentary Committee in 1891.<sup>2</sup>

Despite his youthful radicalism, he expressed no sympathy with the more bellicose lodges. Wilson was not a representative type of leader; like Crawford he stood alone. He became renowned for his insistence on acting strictly within the rules of the D.M.A. on which he was the union's leading authority.

Wilson was never to forget the bitter unrest and the poverty of the 1892 strike; for him it was the classical example of the futility of strike action. It did, however,

1. D. Douglass, op cit. pp46-7

2. R. P. Arnot, 'The Miners.' p 185 (London 1949)

provide the chance to re-introduce the sliding scale into the coalfield under the name of the Conciliation Board. With his strong beliefs in arbitration and mutual agreements, the Conciliation Board was to play a crucial part of Wilson's wage policies.

Before he was able to implement his new policies, Wilson faced one last challenge from the radical lodges. During the 1892 strike the D.M.A. had received considerable financial support from the larger miners' union, the M.F.G.B. of which Durham was not a member. Partly due to this financial support and in part attracted by the rather radical industrial policies of the M.F.G.B., in particular the demand for a minimum wage, the Durham miners voted to join the M.F.G.B. in late 1892.

For Wilson this move was a direct threat to his policies. He vigorously opposed any form of government intervention in industry, particularly in the field of hours and wages which the M.F.G.B. were demanding. Secondly the M.F.G.B. did not allow any of its members to use Conciliation Boards nor any sliding scale agreements - policies which were in sharp contrast to Wilson's own views.

The link with the M.F.G.B. brought the D.M.A. back into the larger national miners' movement, ending her independent isolationist policy. Throughout the next ten months Wilson was forced to adopt the M.F.G.B. policies and Durham became increasingly involved in national affairs.

Wilson's chance to separate the D.M.A. from the M.F.G.B. came in 1893 when at the M.F.G.B. conference in Birmingham the following motion was presented:

"Resolution. 'That this conference is of the opinion

that those districts who have suffered reductions in wages and who are now members of the Federation should take a ballot vote within fourteen days with a view to giving notice for an advance in wages equal to the reductions suffered during the last two years; and any district failing to comply with this resolution should not hereafter be considered members of this Federation.'"<sup>1</sup>

Despite Wilson's opposition the motion was carried by 199 votes to 50 votes. This motion placed the Durham miners in a very awkward position. The men were palpably unable to strike because the coalfield had still not recovered from the 1892 strike. Only half the men had obtained employment and the finances of both the miners and the D.M.A. itself were stretched to the limit, consequently a strike would probably have proved disastrous. A ballot was held on the issue and surprisingly the men voted for a strike by 20,782 to 19,704.<sup>2</sup> However, the ballot did not give the strikers the two thirds vote they needed and the strike call was rejected.

The D.M.A. was duly expelled from the M.F.G.B. for failing to act on the conference resolution. This expulsion was both unfair and unfortunate for the Durham miners. It was unfair quite simply because the men were not in a position to meet the demands made of them. It was unfortunate because the expulsion meant quite simply that despite the wishes of the majority of the rank and file Durham was thrown out of

1. M.F.G.B. Conference Minutes, Birmingham 19.7.93. Motion of Derbyshire Miners' Association.
2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 22.8.93.



the increasingly prestigious and powerful national movement of miners. As a result of this Durham was to be forced to follow an isolationist policy for over a decade, and to play a decreasingly important part in national affairs.

For Wilson the expulsion from the M.F.G.B. was very welcome since it enabled him to pursue his own policies, and in February 1895 he succeeded in establishing a Conciliation Board.<sup>1</sup> Its first meeting was marked by an unexpected demand from the owners for a 15% reduction; in the face of Federation Board opposition the case went to arbitration and a 7½% reduction was agreed upon. The second meeting followed a similar pattern with the owners demanding a further 10% reduction, but only receiving 2½% from the arbiter.

These excessively high demands for reductions by the owners negated many of the benefits of the Conciliation Board, which were now in use in many industries; in most cases outside of Durham agreement was reached and arbitors not used.

"On the whole the unions believed more in conciliation than in arbitration: that is to say they were more willing to negotiate a settlement of their own accord, perhaps with the help of expert negotiators, than to trust any supposedly impartial person to impose a settlement on both parties."<sup>2</sup>

This very poor start to the Conciliation Board's existence fanned the already widespread hostility towards the

1. J. Wilson, op cit. pp261-270

2. H. Pelling, 'A History of British Trade Unionism', pp121-2

board led by the militant Marsden lodge. The Federation Board was forced to issue a circular on the problem of the discontent:

"We are not going to say that its course, so far as it has gone, has been pleasant, for there have been two reductions, but these do not shake our confidence in it."<sup>1</sup>

This confidence was not held elsewhere, and at the next D.M.A. council meeting it was decided to ballot the men on the board's future.<sup>2</sup> The Federation Board accordingly arranged for a ballot and the ballot forms were accompanied by a circular strongly supporting the retention of the Board. The voting was:<sup>3</sup>

The D.M.A.

For the Conciliation Board	11,974
Against the Conciliation Board	29,000
Neutrals	17,000

The Federation Board

For the Conciliation Board	13,894
Against the Conciliation Board	30,587
Neutrals	20,000

The figures indicate the influence of the D.M.A. vote within the Federation Board, only the D.M.A. voted in favour of ending the Conciliation Board. The exceptionally high neutral vote is an indication of the divided feelings of many miners. This was hardly surprising since the Conciliation Board had completely failed to do its job during 1895, an arbitor having to be used on every occasion.

1. J. Wilson, op cit. p3
2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 10.11.95.
3. G. Metcalfe, op cit. p270

For many, however, the Conciliation Board was identified with the hated sliding scale and was accordingly unpopular.<sup>1</sup> Wilson delayed the Board's abolition for as long as he could, demanding what replacement machinery was to be used, but in the end he had to concede defeat, and on August 4th 1896 the Conciliation Board was terminated.

During 1896 Wilson again came under attack from the pro-M.F.G.B. group on the D.M.A. Council, and a ballot on the issue was called for. The returns showed a surprisingly large majority in favour of affiliation in a very low vote. The figures being 29,842 in favour to 16,647<sup>2</sup> against, Wilson had no choice but to notify the M.F.G.B. secretary of the decision and apply for membership. Wilson, acting on his own initiative, added that the D.M.A. would not support the M.F.G.B. policies of demanding a statutory eight hour day or a statutory minimum wage. In acting in this way he differed from most of the other staunchly Liberal miners' leaders. The two Derbyshire Miners' Association leaders, J Haslan and Harvey, when faced with a similar dilemma took no personal initiative.

"The public controversies between Haslan and Harvey and the Federation were not sufficient to keep Derbyshire out of the new organisation for long. It was the members of the D.M.A. as Haslan and Harvey constantly re-iterated who had the final word in this matter."<sup>3</sup>

1. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op cit. p122
2. Metcalfe, op cit. p237
3. J. Wilson, op cit. p297

After a year during which the D.M.A. council refused to debate the M.F.G.B.'s question on the hours issue, Wilson, again acting on his own initiative, informed the M.F.G.B. that Durham would still continue to oppose the eight hours bill. The D.M.A. was duly expelled from the body in May 1897 for failing to abide by the rules, leaving Wilson greatly relieved and able to continue with his previous isolationist policies.

At the same time as Wilson was negotiating these policies he was faced with a great upsurge in the level of strikes during 1896, the year having the worst strike level before 1910. These strikes were brought about partly by the low wage levels and Wilson's attempts to keep the Conciliation Board in existence. The high level of strikes continued into 1897 and Wilson was forced to refer to the problem in numerous circulars.

"We are sorry that as a committee we have to draw the attention of the county to the number of stoppages at pits which have taken place illegally. Nothing but evil can result from this course of conduct. It creates great friction between the lodges and general officials."<sup>1</sup>

In an effort to combat these unofficial strikes Wilson decided to make an issue of the payment of hardship grants to lodges involved in unofficial disputes.

In August 1897 Washington Lodge came out on strike against the wishes of the D.M.A. executive and as usual when the lodge applied for a hardship grant the D.M.A.

1. D.M.A. Circular, 3.9.97.

council approved the request despite opposition from Wilson. The D.M.A.'s trustees (of whom Wilson was the longest serving member) then refused to sign the cheque on the grounds that they had no right to pay out money when an unofficial strike was involved. Legal advice was sought which resulted in the case being taken through the courts. After a long drawn out legal case the D.M.A.'s trustees won their battle in the Court of Appeal in 1900.<sup>1</sup>

Wilson was jubilant about the verdict and wrote in his monthly circular of the choice open to the lodges:

"whether it is better to have a set of rules....or whether a lodge should have a free hand to stop a colliery at will, and then run a chance of creating a favourable feeling and receiving large sums from the funds, when, if the committee had been consulted the matter may have been settled."<sup>2</sup>

The last years of the century saw Wilson recover from the 1896 crisis and consolidate his grip over the D.M.A. He was aided by a series of substantial wage rises which helped to reduce the discontent in the coalfield. The extent of his increased standing was clearly demonstrated in 1899 when he succeeded in gaining a narrow majority - 580 out of 39,713 - in favour of the reintroduction of the Conciliation Board.

By 1900 Wilson's position as the leader of the D.M.A. seemed impregnable. He was the M.P. for Mid Durham, the D.M.A. General Secretary and a Trustee, an Alderman on the County Council, a Methodist leader and a leader of a

1. J. Wilson, op cit pp281-286

2. D.M.A. Circular, 3.11.00

local co-operative society. To secure his position still further he surrounded himself with reliable friends on the executive committee, just as Crawford had done thirty years earlier.

John Johnson became General Treasurer of the D.M.A. in 1890, financial secretary in 1896 and was elected M.P. for Gateshead in 1902.<sup>1</sup> He was Wilson's closest friend and was considered by many to be his most likely successor, before his premature death in 1910. The two men were Primitive Methodist lay preachers and shared similar views on both industrial and political affairs.

T H Cann came to prominence during the 1892 County strike, being jailed for assaulting a blackleg. He became overnight a hero of the rank and file and was a popular choice for Treasurer in 1896. In fact, despite his earlier indiscretions Cann was a staunch Liberal, a believer in Methodism and had exceptional organisational powers. He became a close friend of Wilson, whom he was to succeed in 1915 as General Secretary.

Samuel Galbraith was the third of Wilson's close knit group of friends. A member of the council for twenty years, Galbraith was elected Joint Committee agent in 1900. A Methodist preacher, he believed strongly in the Conciliation Board and in arbitration. Politically he was a staunch Liberal, he became an Alderman on the County Council and was elected M.P. for Mid Durham in 1915.<sup>2</sup>

The only other agent of note in this period was William House,<sup>3</sup> who was an industrial pacifist who openly opposed the

1. Durham Chronicle, 30.12.10

2. T. Readshaw, 'The Jubilee History of the Bishop Auckland Industrial Cooperative Flour and Provision Society Ltd.' pp281-5 (Manchester 1910)

3. Appendix F, Local Leaders. Wm House.

1892 strike. He was elected an agent in 1899 and President of the D.M.A. in 1900 following Forman's death. Although the majority of his views were similar to those of Wilson, House was quick to realise the importance of the Labour Party in the coalfield and allied himself with them as early as 1906. He was the first D.M.A. leader to side with the new political party.

Aided by the support of this group Wilson had little trouble in retaining his control over the D.M.A. through the executive committee. The executive committee enjoyed a remarkable continuity of membership. All the agents being elected to it before they were fifty years old and all living to become old men. Only Galbraith and House served under twenty years on the executive, serving fifteen years and eighteen years respectively.<sup>1</sup>

In the decade before 1900 the D.M.A. also witnessed a considerable growth in their membership. The numbers doubled between 1892 and 1900 and the body's finances had been successfully built up to a very high level. The favourable economic conditions which resulted in the expansion of the industry in the Durham coalfield also sent wages upwards, between 1896 and 1901 they rose by 37½%.

### The Decline of John Wilson

Despite his success in consolidating the position of the D.M.A. and in establishing his own position at its head, Wilson began to experience increasing difficulty in controlling the rank and file after 1900. One major cause

1. E. Allen, op cit. p. 58

of his difficulties was the rapid decline in wage levels in the coalfield. These wage falls greatly increased the general level of discontent in the coalfield, which manifested itself in an upsurge in the level of unofficial strikes, 62,266 shifts lost in the first ten months of 1901.<sup>1</sup>

The situation in Durham was greatly aggravated by the 1901 Coal Tax of one shilling per ton on exported coal, a tax which had to be borne by the miners, owners and buyers alike. The unjustness of this tax aroused Wilson's bitterest hostility:

"While I have viewed this tax as being against all the principles of just taxation, in looking at the evils I have kept most prominently before me the effect upon our position as wage earners...There has been no more serious tax introduced in the last fifty years."<sup>2</sup>

Yet despite these ominous signs the outlook for the coal trade remained surprisingly good and hopes were high.

"The miners have every reason to congratulate themselves on the position of their organisation. Never in the history of the Association had they to listen to a more encouraging report."<sup>3</sup>

The falling wages in 1902 continued to bring about a high level of unofficial disputes but the years from 1903 to 1906 are testimony to the impact of the Taff Vale judgement in curtailing strike activity. The total number of strikes reported in these four years was less than the 1901 level alone. Clegg, Fox and Thompson state:

1. Durham Chronicle, 6.12.01

2. D.M.A. Miners' Gala, 20.7.01.

3. Durham Chronicle, 26.7.01. Editorial



"the period during which the Taff Vale judgement exerted its full effect on annual strike statistics consisted at most only of four years from 1902 to 1905. Measured in terms of the size of stoppages, however, the period of industrial peace lasted nine years....from 1899 to 1907."<sup>1</sup>

In Durham there was no question of nine years of industrial peace, the strike level was high in 1901 and rose rapidly in 1907. Even during the Taff Vale period it would appear that the discontent in the coalfield did not noticeably decline, rather it was forced to express itself in forms other than strikes.

Wilson's first experience of these new forms of unrest came with a clash in the D.M.A. Council on the issue of M.F.G.B. membership. In 1904 Redhaugh lodge brought up the question of affiliation, but Wilson was able to bring about the rejection of the motion after a long discourse on the Eight Hour Day issue. In both 1905 and 1906 the question was raised again by Boldon<sup>2</sup> and Spen<sup>3</sup> lodges. Despite a series of circulars in 1906 in which Wilson stressed the importance of Durham retaining its independence the movement continued to grow. By 1907 it was becoming obvious that Wilson was in difficulty, particularly after M.F.G.B. figures showed that Durham wages had declined dramatically between 1900 and 1905 compared to those of the M.F.G.B. members.<sup>4</sup>

In February 1907 Hedley Hope lodge proposed joining the M.F.G.B. in the D.M.A. Council and Wilson attempted to

1. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op cit p326

2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 23.3.05.

3. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 20.6.06.

4. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op cit p327

dismiss it in the same manner as before. However, strong support was forthcoming for the motion from the Houghton, Chopwell and Blaydon lodges.<sup>1</sup> This support resulted in a council vote for a county ballot on the issue. Despite this decision it was not until November that the ballot was finally held. The ballot dealt Wilson a crushing blow: out of a 60% poll 66,949 were in favour of affiliation and only 18,963 against, a ratio of over 3:1 in favour.<sup>2</sup> Faced with such an overwhelming majority in favour of affiliation Wilson had no choice but to apply to the M.F.G.B. secretary for admission. This complete reversal of Wilson's previous policies effectively ended the period of his autocratic control of the D.M.A.

The most direct consequence of the vote was to force Wilson to change his stance on the eight hours debate then before Parliament. In doing this Wilson appears to have finally accepted that the D.M.A. had become a permanent member of the M.F.G.B. Durham had traditionally opposed the introduction of Eight Hour day legislation for two reasons:

1. The men were accustomed to working a system which allowed for one shift of transit hands (many of whom were boys) of from between 10 and 11 hours, bridging two seven hour shifts of hewers. Later on as larger pits developed a three shift system evolved using three shifts of hewers to two of transit hands.

2. To impose a strict eight hour day in Durham could result in any one of three possibilities:

- a) A single shift for all (shorter hours for boys,

1. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 10.2.07.

2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 30.11.07.

longer hours for hewers) and the dismissal of half the men due to lack of room.

b) A double shift of men and boys of eight hours each, giving the hewer eight hours (an hour longer) and the boys three hours less (but having to do more work than before).

c) Three shifts of hewers and two of boys, which could result in excessive coal production and thus lower coal prices.<sup>1</sup>

The Durham miners were thus caught in a very difficult situation, they had voted to join the M.F.G.B. but few wanted an eight hour day. The D.M.A. executive were strongly opposed to any form of legal stipulation concerning the men, particularly if it involved lengthening the hewers' hours. In 1903 a county ballot on the subject revealed 30,841 in favour of a Trade Unions effort for an eight hour day, with only 12,899 favouring Parliamentary legislation. The vote to join the M.F.G.B. however virtually ensured the passage of legislation on the matter and the Eight Hours Act was passed in 1908. Each association was to work on an agreement with local coalowners concerning the operation of the law.

The link with the M.F.G.B. greatly reduced Wilson's control over the D.M.A. and he was forced to try and re-impose his dominance. In 1908 when the M.F.G.B. instructed its members to ballot on the question of affiliation to the L.R.C. Wilson's close political ties to the Liberals were threatened. He claimed that although he favoured such

1. See McCormick and Williams, 'The Miners and the Eight Hour Day 1863-1910' Economic History Review XII<sup>129</sup> pp222-238 for the best discussion of this question.

a ballot it was against the rules of the D.M.A. which stipulated that Labour candidates were to be supported independent of political parties.<sup>1</sup> Despite the absence of the ballot Durham was carried into the L.R.C. by an overwhelming M.F.G.B. vote in favour of affiliation.

The movement which carried the D.M.A. into the M.F.G.B. was not the only form of opposition which Wilson had to face. Since 1902<sup>2</sup> Wardley lodge had led a mounting campaign within the D.M.A. Council to bring about the abolition of the Conciliation Board. This movement was somewhat slow in gaining momentum, but by 1906 Wardley was being closely supported by Marsden, Chopwell and Randolph lodges.<sup>3</sup> The movement gained its first success in December 1906 when the D.M.A. Council passed a resolution demanding the abolition of the Conciliation Board.<sup>4</sup> This resolution did not, however, force Wilson to disband the board, and aided by limited support from the Federation Board,<sup>5</sup> the Conciliation Board continued in defiance of the majority's wishes. Wilson was forced to use all of his powers as General Secretary to resist further demands for its abolition. Before one meeting of the Council in June 1909 he used

1. F. Webster, op cit. p251
2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 10.2.02.
3. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 16.6.06.
4. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 1.12.06.
5. Federation Board Minutes, 15.2.07.

his influence while compiling the agenda to prevent thirty five motions relating to the Conciliation Board from appearing for reasons varying from 'against the rules' to 'cannot appear'.<sup>1</sup> Despite this stubborn resistance the movement continued to press for its abolition, becoming increasingly led by Twizzell lodge.<sup>2</sup>

The moves for the abolition of the Conciliation Board gradually became merged with the more widespread demand for a minimum wage. The demands for a minimum wage reach back before the start of our period, the first sliding scale agreement actually containing a minimum wage clause. The basic belief behind the minimum wage was that a fixed minimum wage level should be agreed upon, beneath which a miner's wage would not fall, despite further falls in the price of coal. The miner would thus be saved from severe economic difficulties brought about through no fault of his own. Such demands were, however, in opposition to the generally held Liberal belief in laissez-faire, a policy of complete noninterference with the natural running of the economy.

The falling real wages at the start of the twentieth century coupled with the spread of socialist ideas combined to produce a great upswing in support for a statutory minimum wage amongst the miners. In Durham there appears to have been a great deal of rank and file support for the

1. D.M.A. Executive Committee Minutes, 14.6.09.

2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 25.2.10.

movement.<sup>1</sup> The leaders of these demands were St Hilda's lodge, and in particular their checkweighman Joseph Batey.<sup>2</sup> In the D.M.A. council meetings several other lodges expressed support for the demands as early as 1904,<sup>3</sup> notably Chopwell, Marsden, Tudhoe, Thornley, Heworth and Rowlands Gill.

As with the M.F.G.B. issue the Durham leaders were strongly opposed to the rank and file's demands. The affiliation to the M.F.G.B. in 1907 did, however, commit Durham to a policy of securing a basic minimum wage. It must be noted that the Durham miner was in greater need of one than many M.F.G.B. members.

"Following the great disputes of the nineties in the Federated area.....every coalfield in the country now had an established method of negotiating changes in miners' wages. Moreover wages did not fall below the minimum rates which were now written into most of the agreements outside Northumberland and Durham".<sup>4</sup>

The constant rejection of their demands for affiliation with the M.F.G.B., the abolition of the Conciliation Board and the adoption of a minimum wage policy fanned the unrest in the coal-field prior to 1910. In 1909 there was a total of one hundred and ten official strikes, testimony to the failure of Wilson's conciliation policies. The number of unofficial disputes is unknown, but the circulars in December 1908 and February, August and November 1909 all

1. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 9.4.04.
2. Appendix E, Local Leaders. Joseph Batey.
3. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 4.6.04., 12.7.04.
4. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op cit. p362

deal exclusively with the problem of unofficial strikes.<sup>1</sup>

In one issue of the Durham Chronicle alone in 1909 we find:

- a) "Despite a circular recently issued by the Executive Committee of the D.M.A. to the lodges, the strike epidemic continues and on Monday Houghton colliery was laid off with no notice."
- b) "Fifty six putters employed at Heworth Colliery were committed to prison by the Gateshead justices in default of 20 shillings and costs."
- c) ref a dispute at Washington:

"The first definite movement was early last April, when owing to disputes in regard to the laid out scale and allocation of colliery houses the men laid the pit idle without notices.... summonses were issued for laying the pit idle without notices and the great majority of the men in lieu of payment of damages elected to go to prison."<sup>2</sup>

One of the few constant features of the unofficial strikes at this period was that a high proportion of them were instigated by the putters refusing to work. A circular in May 1910 stated that in the previous six months the putters had caused one hundred and twenty stoppages,<sup>3</sup> and these were only the reported ones. The putters' main grievance was low wages, and many felt that although the union fought hard for the prestigious hewers' wages, they did not do as well for the other pitworkers.

1. D.M.A. Circulars, 30.12.08., 12.2.09, 23.8.09., 16.11.09.

2. Durham Chronicle, 10.9.09.

3. D.M.A. Circular, 4.5.10.

Consequently the putters adopted their own strike policies in the absence of any union assistance.

Throughout 1909 the D.M.A. leaders were engaged in negotiations with the coalowners concerning the implementation of the eight hours act in Durham. Little headway was made due to the insistence of the owners that the hewers were to work a full eight hour shift. The actual negotiations were not referred to by any of the D.M.A. leaders until December 1909, and even then the terms remained unknown.

Finally late in December it was announced that an agreement had been signed, the contents of which remained undisclosed. Newspapers reported:

"that when the terms of the settlement come to be publicly revealed it will be found that they will meet with ready acceptance from the men."<sup>1</sup>

The agreement was not published the following week, but on December 22nd the D.M.A. Council gave a unanimous vote of thanks<sup>2</sup> to the committee and agents for the agreements they had drawn up and signed, even though the council had yet to see them.

When the agreement was publicly produced<sup>3</sup> on Christmas Eve the D.M.A. lodges voiced strong protests. The hewers had gained the retention of their 7-7½ hour working day, with an increase in hours being paid by an increase in the basic county wage. However, the coalowner was left to

1. Durham Chronicle, 12.12.09.

2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 22.12.09.

3. Appendix A. The Eight Hours Agreement.



decide whether a pit was to be a two shift or a three shift pit i.e. a day shift or a night shift pit. The owner was also free to decide when coal could be drawn. The D.M.A. leaders had won the retention of their short day, but the cost of the concession was to prove unacceptable for many miners.

On January 1st 1910, the first day of the new agreement, 85,000 men in the coalfield came out on unofficial strike in protest against the agreement. This number represented almost exactly half of the total workforce of the coalfield. The aims of the strikers are somewhat confused, particularly since the eight hour day was now law. The best that they could hope to achieve was to replace the D.M.A. executive and/or attempt to renegotiate the agreement. Local meetings stressed these points.

'For years and years the Executive had been finally determining the work of the association without sending back the questions to the county. The question was how they could overcome the agreement by constitutional methods.... what some men desired to do by extreme measures they wanted to do constitutionally."<sup>1</sup>

The D.M.A. executive was now caught in an impossible situation. Having spend a year working in secret on an agreement which operated within the Eight Hours legislation they had failed to produce a solution which was acceptable to their own men. These men were now embarking on courses of industrial action which were likely to result in the downfall of the executive. At the same time the coalowners who had reached agreement with the D.M.A. leaders in good faith were now faced with the shutdown of much of the coalfield, while they were powerless to prevent it.

1. Durham Chronicle, 14.1.10. Meeting at Craghead.

In its initial stages the strike assumed a similar character to that of 1892. At Houghton Le Spring the men stopped the pumping engines which provided the village with water.<sup>1</sup> At Murton a large number of strikers stole coal from the colliery yard. The local Murton constabulary proved unequal to the task and twenty further officers had to be drafted in from Durham. The arrival of the police re-inforcements spurred on the strikers and soon a huge crowd of 6 - 7,00 tried to push forward to steal the coal, the constables were surrounded and attacked, several sustaining serious injuries, before the arrival of the local lodge secretary who calmed the men down.<sup>2</sup>

The rank and file miners came under sustained attack from the press:

"It is a simple and awful fact that thousand of Northumberland and Durham pitmen never cross the threshold of God from one year to another... The peril of the hour is the appalling indifference to religion, the practical atheism which abounds....Evidence proves that the majority of miners are thriftless. Thousands of them live from hand to mouth, luckily before the wages are paid deductions are made for the Union and the Permanent Relief Fund and the doctor's allowance."<sup>3</sup>

Such general attacks on the men were commonplace but probably had little or no effect upon the dispute. The D.M.A. executive on the other hand was doing its utmost to avert being overthrown. The January General Election

1. Durham Chronicle, 14.1.10.

2. Durham Chronicle, 21.1.10.

3. Durham Chronicle, 21.1.10. Editorial

was the first test of opposition to them. Fortunately for the D.M.A., John Wilson was returned unopposed, but John Johnson, the D.M.A. Treasurer, was not so lucky: in his campaign he suffered abuse from thousands of miners at Tanfield Lea, Annfield Plain and South Moor. On polling day the local colliery brass bands marched through the streets of Gateshead opposing his re-election. Not surprisingly he finished bottom of the poll.<sup>1</sup>

The widespread discontent at the executive's handling of the negotiations became obvious at the first D.M.A. Council meeting during the strike. The meeting, which began on Saturday 22nd January, continued until Monday 24th January, was held under tight police security. A motion calling for the resignation of the entire executive was defeated by only 338 votes for to 344 against. The D.M.A. executive had survived by only six votes.<sup>2</sup>

Although it was decided to ballot the lodges on the question of resignation, the meeting marked the high point of the strike, for the men now saw the futility of their position in stark relief. Since the strike was unofficial the men were receiving no strike pay, and were liable to prosecution. The eight hours act was law and the agreement signed by the agents was legally binding on them. Thus the failure to unseat the executive ended the only real chance the strike had of achieving anything.

During the council meeting and in the period following it the strike erupted into widespread violence, Murton again being the scene of a major confrontation between the

1. Durham Chronicle, 21.1.10.

2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 22/24.1.10.

strikers and the police. In order to prevent further coal thefts from the colliery the police surrounded it with twenty men armed with water hoses. These men proved unable to restrain a crowd of 5 - 6,000 and further reinforcements were called for. The arrival of forty more policemen only aggravated the situation, the police baton charged the crowd, who retaliated by counter-attacking. A running battle ensued during which the police made four further baton charges and the crowd moved through the colliery systematically wrecking the colliery offices, the official club, the manager's and undermanager's houses and outhouses. The gravity of the situation resulted in a further two hundred policemen being rushed in, a move which gave the police the upper hand, but greatly increased the tension. John Wilson was brought out from Durham but was refused a hearing when he tried to reason with the men.<sup>1</sup>

Horden too witnessed a serious outbreak of violence. In what appeared to be an organised campaign several hundred miners cut all the telephone wires in the village and attacked the colliery manager's house. The house was severely damaged and the men, unopposed by police, turned their attention to the social club. The club was burnt to the ground causing £11,000 worth of damage.<sup>2</sup> When police reinforcements finally arrived the crowd fought a pitched battle with them for the remainder of the night.

At Birtley a crowd of 2,000 assembled near to the colliery and apparently acting according to a plan, proceeded

1. Durham Chronicle, 28.1.10

2. Durham Chronicle, 28.1.10; 25.2.10; 1.7.10.

to demolish fences, windows, doors and even started to dismantle the branch railway line. In court it was said that the men's stated intention had been:

"to loose out the pit and make it in such a state that it would not work for five years."<sup>1</sup>

The documentation on the other areas during the strike is poor, but there does appear to have been widespread violence. In Consett the coal stockpiles were set alight and the colliery offices burnt to the ground. At Houghton several thousand people raided the colliery coal stocks stealing twenty five tons of coal, when the police prevented them from taking the coal for the boiler they proceeded to smash windows, rip out gates, and lift out the iron railings.<sup>2</sup>

At South Hetton the strikers made organised raids on the wagons which were trying to deliver coal to colliery officials.<sup>3</sup>

In the fortnight following the Council meeting the numbers returning to work gradually rose. The lodge vote at the start of February indicated the decline in the general fervour for the leaders' resignation, only 253 in favour of resignation, 426 against it.<sup>4</sup> In the lodges which remained on strike after the Council meeting it is apparent that the men were striking for local reasons, for instance at Murton where the manager proposed a four shift system. Only a few collieries held out for long; Murton

1. Durham Chronicle, 11.2.10.

2. Durham Chronicle, 28.1.10.

3. Durham Chronicle, 28.1.10.

4. D. Douglass, op cit. p65

and South Hetton remained on strike until April, Horden and Hamsteels until March.

In many ways it was inevitable that there would be trouble in Durham following the introduction of an agreement on the eight hours question. Because of the legislation on the issue the Durham men had to make concessions in order to retain their shorter working day. Clearly the majority of the strikers were men who had either failed to understand the situation or were simply unwilling to make any concessions. Significantly the leading left wing political collieries, notably Usworth and Washington, did not strike.<sup>1</sup> It would appear that after years of agitation for the eight hours legislation they were satisfied that the agreement was the best possible one in the circumstances, and were not prepared to strike on the issue.

It would also be wrong to see this dispute out of a national context. Throughout the coal industry there was trouble in 1910:

"The new spirit (of direct action) became conspicuous in the latter half of 1910 when the number and severity of industrial disputes began to increase sharply and the growing reluctance of trade unionists to follow their leader developed into open criticism and even repudiation."<sup>2</sup>

Even at the T.U.C. itself leaders were forced to refer to the problem:

"We must urge upon our members the absolute need for loyalty and the essential discipline which must be granted to

1. See Appendix C.

2. J. Williams, op cit. p.393

to us if our word, and our bond and our agreement are to be respected."<sup>1</sup>

The growing dissatisfaction did lead to some changes in the D.M.A. leadership. Following the death of Johnson shortly before Christmas in 1910 William Whitely was elected an agent. Whitely was an administrator of exceptional ability, but his close links with the I.L.P. since 1904 had previously prevented his rise into the D.M.A. hierarchy. Whitely was followed in 1911 by James Robson, an Auckland man who was very active on the county council. He was a Labour Party supporter and was later to become D.M.A. President. The election of these two men highlighted the shift in power within the D.M.A. Significantly, however, Wilson was able to keep the two socialist leaders J Batey and W P Richardson<sup>2</sup> from becoming agents until after his death in 1915.

Wilson's regime, severely shaken by the Eight Hours strike, was barely able to recover before the M.F.G.B.'s second great issue, the minimum wage, came to the fore. At the 1911 South port conference of the M.F.G.B. the minimum wage demands were the central topic. Although most counties already had minimum wage clauses in their agreements,<sup>3</sup> a minimum wage policy was decided upon and the D.M.A. accordingly opened negotiations with the coalowners to ensure that the miners were to be paid an average county rate independent of how much they hewed.

1. T.U.C. Report 1910, J. Hadan. President p. 48.
2. Appendix F, Local Leaders. W.P. Richardson and J. Batey.
3. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op cit. p362

These negotiations indicated the extent of the decline of Wilson's power. For a long time he had been the leading opponent of the minimum wage amongst the miners, and now he was being forced to pursue the M.F.G.B.'s policies. In January 1912 a ballot was taken on the issue in Durham: 57,490 voted for industrial action to achieve a minimum wage, 28,504 against.<sup>1</sup>

The negotiations between the D.M.A. and the coalowners had achieved very little after several months, and the strong support for a strike by the Durham men was probably influenced by the belief that Wilson would stand by the demands for as long as possible. Early in 1912 it became apparent that the men were preparing for a strike. Numerous meetings, many organised by the I.L.P., discussed the merits of the minimum wage and reinforced the men's determination to strike. Wilson finding his industrial policies crumbling around him pleaded with the miners for a policy of conciliation, but to no avail.

"I believe a strike is not the first weapon to use but the last. Like all wars (for it is that and nothing less) it should not be the first. It would be foolish and in many cases worse to make it the primary. He is not the greatest coward who is hesitant in his adoption of a fighting policy. Conciliation and courage are not antithesis. They are very often synonymous."<sup>2</sup>

On 1st March strike notices were handed in and the whole M.F.G.B. was plunged into a strike. The 1912 strike provided a sharp contrast to that of 1910. The rapid success

1. G.Metcalf, op cit. p327

2. D.M.A. Circular, 12.3.12.



of the strike was due both to its national nature and to the peaceful way in which it was conducted. In Durham only three disturbances were reported during the strike, all of which were due to raids on collieries for coal, and in no case was damage done.<sup>1</sup> The atmosphere was best summed up by the Seaham magistrates:

"Due to the complete confidence in the law abiding character of the population of this division the magistrates see no reason to anticipate any breach of the peace."<sup>2</sup>

This attitude seems to have prevailed in many coalfields, for example in Derbyshire:

"The best of good humour prevails, and the men are quite enjoying their holiday."<sup>3</sup>

The hardship associated with most coal strikes was not felt in the Durham coalfield. This was due largely to the short duration of the strike, but also the highly efficient organisation of the M.F.G.B.

On March 15th the Prime Minister introduced a minimum wage bill into the Commons. On March 27th the bill passed through its final stages and the M.F.G.B. balloted its members on a return to work. In Durham the men voted heavily in favour of a continuation of the strike, by 48,828 to 24,511. Nationally the majority in favour of a continuation was 42,998, less than the sixty-six per cent required and the strike was called off.

1. Durham Chronicle, 15.3.12 and 22.3.12

2. Durham Chronicle, 1.3.12.

3. Derbyshire Times, 9.3.12. cf. J. Williams op. cit. p. 211.

In Durham the strong opposition to the resumption of work was soon to be coupled with a second grievance. The suggested Joint Boards had to be set up within two weeks, and if possible the minimum wage determined within three weeks.<sup>1</sup> The D.M.A. executive assumed the duty of representation without first consulting the rank and file. The militants took exception to this and demanded elected representatives. At the following Council meeting the executive committee survived a vote of no confidence by 321 votes to 302.<sup>2</sup> Large meetings were held throughout the county protesting about the agreement. These meetings were organised by I.L.P. leaders at Pelton Fell, Alma and Twizzell lodges, and were so well organised that their attendances exceeded those of official D.M.A. meetings.<sup>3</sup> In the D.M.A. Council the militants led by Dawdon, Washington Glebe and Rough Lea Lodges continued to press for a higher minimum level.<sup>4</sup>

Wilson came under attack again in April 1912 when an attempt was made to set up a new miners' organisation by militants. The militants had three basic grievances about the D.M.A. which caused them to take their action. The first was the need for the reconstruction of the D.M.A. and in particular the change away from the one lodge one vote system towards one vote per hundred members. This change would have favoured the larger new lodges which tended to be

1. Minimum wage Act 1912, See Appendix B.
2. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 18.4.12.
3. Durham Chronicle, 8.3.12., 22.3.12.
4. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 20.7.12.

more militant than the smaller old established lodges. The second grievance referred to the inequality of surface workers; in the mining industry the surface workers had always been the lowest paid men, the aim of this demand was to reduce the wage disparity between the surface and the underground men. The last grievance concerned the need for amendments to the Minimum Wages Act, with particular reference being made to the level of the fixed minimum wage.

The new society came to nothing, but Wilson was shaken by the attempt. In a circular he listed all the goals of the new body, which included, that no agents could be M.P.s, the tabulation of council votes and lodge participation in the determination of policies for representatives at congresses and conferences.<sup>1</sup> Many of these policies were later to be incorporated into the D.M.A. but by giving so much publicity to the new society Wilson ran the risk of aiding its growth.

Wilson himself was convinced that the new society was the work of a syndicalist element from Wales operating within the coalboard. His dismissal of syndicalism was short and to the point:

"His aim is Syndicalism and therefore in favour of a pure strike policy and against all forms of Conciliation Boards or lines of compromise. I hope it is not necessary for me to urge caution in accepting any teaching of that kind."<sup>1</sup>

The period from the end of the Minimum Wage strike to the outbreak of the First World War saw a high level of unofficial strike activity. Led by the putters, who had

1. D.M.A. Circular, 15.15.12.

justifiable wage grievances, the strikes, usually of one or two days' duration, hit most pits in the coalfield. Wilson made little reference to them in his circulars, and showed little apparent interest. Metcalfe compiled a list of twenty four separate unofficial strikes during 1913 from D.M.A. records, but unfortunately he does not explain that few unofficial strikes were reported to the D.M.A. A study of the Durham Chronicle which concentrates mainly on the pits within a five mile radius of Durham City lists a further nineteen unofficial strikes not mentioned by Metcalfe. Obviously the number of disputes in the county was much higher.

Much of the pre-war discontent in the mining industry was channelled into the Durham Miners' Forward Movement. Led by W P Richardson, J Batey, J Gilliland and P Lee the movement encompassed most of the post-war D.M.A. leaders. The meetings of the group dealt with a multitude of subjects which included the Minimum Wage Act and its working, demand for improved housing, the need for the adoption of Labour candidates and expositions on real wages.<sup>1</sup> The movement had several discussions on the nationalisation of certain industries notably in mining and the railways, but did not make a great deal of it.<sup>2</sup> The movement significantly never touched on the questions of the Triple Alliance or of the syndicalists, and there appeared to be no interest in either subject in the coalfield generally.

Wilson remained as the General Secretary until his death in April 1915, but his grip over the union was rapidly failing. This was hardly surprising since he was now an old

1. Durham Chronicle, 17.10.13.

2. Durham Chronicle, 7.6.12., 30.8.12.

man in his eighties and the pressure of work was too much for him. Accordingly those on the D.M.A. executive gradually took over his work in the years immediately prior to his death.

Wilson's death marked the end of the great pre-war days of the D.M.A. With a membership of 118,372 in 1914, the spectacular growth of the union had reached its peak. The Durham coalfield was to decline thereafter. The headquarters of the D.M.A. were moved from North Road to a new building at Red Hills in October 1915. In 1915 also, the two main Socialist leaders J Batey and W P Richardson were elected agents.

#### Summary. The Leaders and the Led

This section has been mainly concerned with the level of industrial militancy amongst the Durham miners between 1885 and 1914. It is apparent that militancy held few fears for the men: the three earlier attempts to form a union all came to grief due to strike action. One consequence of this was that there was a long history of ill-feeling between the coalowners and the men; if disputes did occur there was often violence, evictions and the use of blacklegs. When the D.M.A. was formed in 1869 the early leaders realised that the main hope for its survival was to follow a policy of moderation, rejecting the claims of the militants in the ranks and attempting to achieve a good rapport with the coalowners.

This moderate policy of the D.M.A. proved to be a success, by accepting 'sliding-scale' agreements many of the difficulties concerning wage negotiations were avoided. The union was gradually accepted by both owners and men,

and it grew rapidly, both numerically and financially, for the next two decades. During this time only one county strike occurred, in 1879, and this was strongly opposed by the D.M.A. leaders.

Undoubtedly this ardent anti-strike policy was a key factor in permitting the infant body's growth, but it did cause considerable friction with many of the local lodges. In their determination to avoid militancy the D.M.A. leaders frequently ignored valid complaints made by the lodges. One result of this was a growth in the number of unofficial industrial disputes in the coalfield. Many of these unofficial strikes were caused by disputes over safety, victimisation, housing and wage disputes, all of which were problems which the D.M.A. agents should have settled and not left for unofficial action.

The basic idea behind the D.M.A.'s industrial policies was the fear that strike action might result in the destruction of the union. There is little doubt that in the early days of the D.M.A. a strike could well have destroyed both the support for the union, and its financial base, but by 1890 however the union had become an indispensable part in the running of the coalfield. The coalowners were used to negotiating wages with the union leaders, the D.M.A. had become respectable in most people's eyes, its leaders were M.P.s and the union had an exceptionally strong financial base. The miners themselves were also used to having a union and its benefits, and were unlikely to allow the destruction of the D.M.A. The growing strength of the union was demonstrated in 1892 when following the disastrous county strike, the D.M.A. continued with comparatively little difficulty. It is possible to say that by 1890 this central factor in all of the D.M.A.'s

industrial policies was no longer completely relevant to the situation.

Durham was not alone in reaching a point where the late nineteenth century's industrial policies became increasingly irrelevant due to the rapid growth of the unions. In South Wales the problem was overcome by the formation of the South Wales Miners' Federation in 1898, a new body under completely new leadership. These new young leaders were determined to improve their members' wages at all costs, rather than thinking only of preserving their union.<sup>1</sup> In Derbyshire a similar situation to Durham existed with two ageing Liberal leaders, T Harvey and J Haslan, in control. Their policies were marked by an obvious reluctance to strike, but they proved more easily influenced by rank and file opinions than their Durham counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

The leaders of the D.M.A., Crawford and Wilson in particular, apparently failed to realise the significance of the huge growth of the D.M.A. This is not surprising since both men were largely out of touch with the rank and file, and were unlikely to move away from what had been very successful industrial policies. The rank and file, however, did realise the importance of the changes; they felt that a strong union meant that the employers, previously so critical of trade unions should be forced to listen to their demands and act accordingly. The success of the M.F.G.B. served to highlight the D.M.A.'s failure. By

1. R.P. Arnot, 'South Wales Miners,' pp370-372.

2. J. Williams, 'op cit,' pp264-6

combining the Federation's members it had successfully resisted the more extreme demands for reductions in the early 1890's. Following this the M.F.G.B. began to pursue an aggressive wage policy demanding increases in excess of rises in the price of coal. This aggressive wage policy paid off with M.F.G.B. members' wages rising rapidly, leaving the Durham miners' wages at a far lower level. The M.F.G.B. was using the new situation to its members' advantage; the D.M.A. failed to do this.

The Durham rank and file appear to have acted in two separate ways as they became increasingly aware of the failure of their leaders to meet their demands. The most obvious action was to adopt an aggressive strike policy, usually unofficial, in order to gain concessions in their own pits. The second was to work within the D.M.A. itself in order to achieve change; this movement manifested itself in its demands to join the M.F.G.B., demands for a Minimum Wage, and attempts to elect their own leaders to the executive.

After 1890 four collieries are reported as having exceptionally poor strike records, well above average for the coalfield as a whole. The worst affected of the four was Hutton Henry colliery where the men engaged in a constant series of unofficial disputes with the pit owners between 1894 and 1897. During that period well over 1,000 men were fined for breach of contract,<sup>1</sup> several of whom chose

1. Durham Chronicle, 19.7.95., 29.11.95., et subseq.



prison rather than paying a fine. The level of disruption was so high that the pit, sunk before 1850, was forced to close in 1897.

The Washington 'F' colliery was another beset by confrontations between the men and management. Much of the trouble appears to have started in 1897 when following two brief stoppages the men embarked on a long unofficial strike of five months' duration.<sup>1</sup> During this time the men were all fined for breach of contract and deprived of hardship pay by John Wilson's determination to end unofficial stoppages. Following the settlement industrial relations remained poor and regular stoppages occurred. The situation deteriorated still further in 1907 when many of the men were transferred to the newly opened Washington Glebe pit. In 1909 one dispute resulted in 150 men being jailed for breach of contract, i.e. going on unofficial strike.<sup>2</sup> The whole area remained a trouble spot with ten further unofficial disputes before the war.

If the new colliery at Washington had a poor industrial record, then the same can be said of the new colliery at Chopwell. The first work on the pit started in 1896, and in 1898 the colliery experienced its first strike. The strike lasted for seven months and it would appear that industrial relations at the pit never recovered from this poor beginning. By 1914 the colliery ranked amongst the most militant in the county.<sup>3</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle, 10.12.97.

2. Durham Chronicle, 10.9.09.

3. A. Wilson, 'The Consett Iron Company', pp.175-177

The fourth pit was Houghton le Spring. An old pit with a seemingly good industrial relations record, Houghton experienced a sudden change of policy in 1909. Between 1909 and 1913 there were eleven reported unofficial stoppages at the pit and almost certainly at least four more. Besides this during the 1910 unofficial eight hours dispute the colliery was subject to considerable local violence and pilfering. The reason for such a sudden change of policy may have been the appointment of a new colliery manager in 1909.

Of these four collieries only two, Chopwell and Washington Glebe, can be termed 'new collieries', being opened after 1885. All bar the medium sized Hutton Henry were large collieries, employing well in excess of 1,000 men in each. It may be significant that none of the small old collieries feature in the numbers of those with very poor industrial records.

If we make a careful study of the lodges which played an active role in the D.M.A. Council putting forward new policies and opposing the executive we find that certain collieries emerged as the leaders.<sup>1</sup> During the period between 1885 and 1914 it is possible to put the important issues which split the D.M.A. under four general headings: firstly wage demands culminating in the opposition to the Conciliation Board and the minimum wage movement; secondly affiliation to the M.F.G.B.; thirdly, the eight hours

1. Appendix C, Extremist lodges in Council.

and lastly direct opposition to Wilson and the agents.

The table beneath lists the lodges active in these fields.<sup>1</sup>

<u>Lodge</u>	<u>Minimum Wages</u>	<u>Concili- ation Board</u>	<u>M.F.G.B.</u>	<u>Eight Hours Dispute</u>	<u>Opposition To Wilson</u>
Chopwell	*	*	*		*
Marsden	*	*	*		*
Usworth	*		*		*
Washington	*		*		*
St Hildas	*		*		*
Heworth	*			*	*

Significantly no one lodge was actively involved in leading all movements during the period. The two most active lodges in council were Marsden and Chopwell, both becoming important only after 1900. Neither lodge came out on strike in the 1910 dispute, a point of considerable significance when one notes Chopwell's deplorable industrial record.

A careful study of the lodges which played a key role in pressing for affiliation with the M.F.G.B. shows that twenty eight were very active in support for the M.F.G.B.; of these only six - Horden, Harraton, East Tanfield, Lumley, Murton and Ouston - actually came out on strike during the 1910 dispute. The others appear to have fully understood and accepted the implications of their votes. It also has to be noted that out of the fifty pits which had 100% support for the 1910 strike, only five could be classified as new pits. The 1910 strikers were now essentially the older smaller pits

1. For full details see Appendix C.

in the county which did not already have three or more shifts per day.

The pits where there were very strong I.L.P. branches, Usworth, Washington and St Hilda's all played important parts in Minimum Wage demands, the M.F.G.B. affiliation demands and the opposition to the Wilson testimonial fund, but none participated in the 1910 troubles. These lodges played a key role in putting forward the 'radicals' J Batey and W P Richardson for agents' posts - presumably in an attempt to gain a voice on the executive. Their policy was, in other words, to gain control of the D.M.A. from within rather than actively opposing the union.

The majority of the lodges active in the D.M.A. Council were situated in the North and North Eastern parts of the county. This was to be expected since these areas had far more pits than the Southern and Western parts of the county. Certain smaller areas were, however, unusually active, in particular the lodges within a ten mile radius of Washington and Usworth.

It is apparent that the new lodges did not take an unusually active interest in council affairs; they appear in the minutes of council meetings about as frequently as their numbers merited. The only positive statement to come out of the study of the 'radical' collieries' location, age and activities concerns their size. There can be little doubt that the large collieries' lodges were more active in taking the lead in union affairs than the smaller ones. The main leaders, Chopwell, Marsden, Usworth, Washington and St Hilda's were all large collieries.

During our period the total number of lodges in the D.M.A. did not vary markedly, but the average membership of the lodges

rose dramatically, particularly in the larger new collieries.

<u>Total Number of Lodges<sup>1</sup></u> <u>in the D.M.A.</u>		<u>D.M.A. Membership<sup>2</sup></u>	
1881	193		
1886	179	1885	75,448
1891	191	1890	86,803
1896	192	1895	102,553
1901	186	1900	112,816
1906	191	1905	124,872
1911	200	1910	155,060
1913	197	1913	165,727

At the start of our period the lodges had an average of 385.5 members; by the end 837.6 members. The bulk of this rise was brought about by the emergence of the large new collieries. These large lodges were critical of Wilson's one lodge one vote policy and frequently voiced criticism of the D.M.A.'s rules on the point in council. With the closure of older collieries and the opening of new larger ones, the leaders' hold over the D.M.A. began to weaken.

It is ironic that the strength of the D.M.A. was being challenged after 1900 mainly over its own policies. On the one side the 'moderate' industrial policies of the leadership resulted in an unusually high level of unofficial strikes which threatened the credibility of the union as a unified body. On the other side the refusal of the D.M.A.'s

1. D.M.A. Records Department, Redhills, Durham

2. G. Metcalfe, op cit. Appendix 121

executive to accept change led to the emergence of a powerful 'left wing' group in council which forced the union into the M.F.G.B. and into accepting its policies. It was only prevented from taking over control of the union by the archaic one lodge one vote rule, which Wilson clung to rather than accept any form of proportional representation.

### Conclusion

The history of the D.M.A. between its foundation and the outbreak of the First World War appears, superficially, to represent an impressive record of success. By 1914 it was a large union, embracing a very high percentage of the potential membership in the coalfield, and it impinged on the social, economic and political life of the county at many points. The building of a new and imposing headquarters at Redhills (opened in 1915) was the outward symbol of this remarkable achievement - an achievement all the more remarkable because it appeared to indicate a continuity in leadership and inspiration which had been supplied above all by John Wilson.

Behind this facade of success, however, lay serious weaknesses and failures, for by 1914 the D.M.A. had in practice repudiated most of the ideals and tactics which Wilson (and Crawford before him) had upheld. Essentially the union began as an isolated and self-contained body, operating within the conditions of its own coalfield, and pursuing its own policies without regard to those pursued by coalminers or industrial workers elsewhere. Wilson continued to epitomise this essentially inward looking approach, and remained committed to policies which - he

would have argued - had preserved the continuity and built up the numerical strength of the union at times when miners' organisations elsewhere still tended to be weak and short-lived.

By 1900 the isolation and the individuality of particular coalfields was breaking down, and the rank and file Durham miners were increasingly impressed by the need to make common cause with the miners elsewhere - particularly when the latter were pursuing very different policies and especially, by rejecting the notion of tying wages automatically to the shifting price of coal, were now enjoying greater stability and better long term improvements in their incomes. More and more, individual lodges throughout the coalfield were disagreeing with the cautious and traditional policies of the old leadership; and once Durham's particular problem with regard to the 'eight hours' question had been finally resolved in 1910, there was nothing to prevent the Durham miners finally falling completely into line with the M.F.G.B. on the immediate question of the 'minimum wage' and the long term issue of nationalisation and an end to private capitalism in coalmining.

CHAPTER 2.

THE POLITICAL RADICALIZATION OF THE DURHAM MINER.



## Political Changes after 1880

The 1880's saw several important new developments in the structure of British politics. The Third Reform Act of 1884 had radically altered the parliamentary franchise; the Local Government Act and the County Electors Act of 1888 had introduced a new dimension of political activity, the County Council; and the 1894 Local Government Act further changed the situation by introducing parish councils.

### Miners and the Franchise

Our primary concern must be with the effect of these reforms on the political life of the miner. Prior to the Third Reform Act the large majority of miners were not entitled to vote. Their political activities were confined to deputations to ministers, the lobbying of friendly M.P.s, Parliamentary petitions and pressure group tactics in general. The Reform Act ended this era of political weakness. Under the new act the franchise was extended to include all forty shillings freeholders, copyholders and householders; the occupier as owner or tenant of any land or tenement of a clear value of £10 or more per year; the occupier as owner or tenant of any dwelling; the inhabitant occupier of a separate dwelling not as owner or tenant, but in virtue of office or employment; and any lodger whose unfurnished rooms cost £10 or more per year.<sup>1</sup>

The most obvious effect of the act from our point of view was that it made the miners into a political force in the parliamentary constituencies of the North East. The exceptionally high density of the mining population in some

1. H.Pelling, 'The Social Geography of British Elections,' (London 1967) pp7-8.

areas allowed them to dominate certain constituencies by sheer weight of numbers. Estimates suggest that in some Parliamentary constituencies the miners constituted as much as 61% of the electorate.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Parliamentary elections were the most important for the miners, the local government elections witnessed a higher degree of miners' participation. The County Electors Act of 1888 laid down those who were entitled to vote for the newly constituted County Councils. The vote was given to all owners of houses or separate dwellings and to the occupiers of land or tenements of a clear yearly value of £10 or more: lodgers, county freeholders and the diminishing numbers of freemen were all excluded.<sup>2</sup> Since the County Councils copied the structure of the old borough franchise single women gained the vote in the County Council elections through the 1869 Municipal Franchise Act.<sup>3</sup> Thus at local elections in mining communities a combined male and female vote has to be taken into account.

The Local Government Act of 1894 set up the parish and district councils. The franchise for these bodies was given to any person on either the local or the Parliamentary electoral lists. These constituted the Register of Parochial Electors who were entitled to vote at the elections of Poor Law Guardians, and of district and parish councillors.

1. R.Gregory, 'The Miners and British Politics 1906-1914.' (Oxford 1968) p. 96.
2. B.Keith-Lucas, 'The English Local Government Franchise' (Oxford 1952) p. 75.
3. Ibid. p. 166.

Having ascertained the electoral rights of the miners we are still faced with the problem of computing how many miners actually used those rights. Gregory in his work deals exclusively with the miners and their Parliamentary representation,<sup>1</sup> and attempts to estimate the percentage of miners on each electoral register. To achieve this he works out the number of miners employed in the mines within a given constituency via the Home Office's annual publication 'The List of Mines', he then subtracts 15% from this figure, representing the unenfranchised 16-21 years age group, leaving himself with the total number of adult miners in the constituency.

Gregory suggests two methods by which one can calculate the number of those miners actually on the electoral roll. Firstly he calculates the male population over 21 years old from the census figures - between 1901-1911 55-57% of the total male population - then knowing both the number of adult males in the constituency and the size of the electorate he computes the percentage of electoral registration within the area. In an area where the mining community is dominant he suggests with two reservations that one can take this figure as the percentage of the local mining community registered. The two reservations are a) registration in working class areas generally would appear to be low; b) one has the problem of outvoters (non-residents) who qualify for a vote by property qualifications.

For several reasons it would appear that Gregory places overmuch reliance on this method of calculation. Firstly there is the problem of registration itself; Gregory states that working class registration was usually low, but he

1. R. Gregory, op cit. pp192-7 Appendix A

fails to go into detail. He does not mention the extreme inefficiency of the registration system.<sup>1</sup> One of the main reasons for this low registration level was the migratory habits of the working class. A person had to have lived in an area for twelve months before he was eligible to register; since it took a further six months to compile and introduce the new electoral list it took a minimum period of eighteen months before one qualified to vote. Blewett estimated the average period for provisional qualification to be two years and one month.<sup>2</sup> In a mining community when both long and short distance migration was very common the degree of non-registration must have been above the norm. The closure or opening of a colliery could have had the effect of disenfranchising those in the community who were forced to move for over two years.

Gregory makes little mention of lodgers in his work. The incidence of lodgers in fact appears to have been high in the Durham coalfield. A report on the housing problem in Usworth in 1907 suggested that as many as 50% of the colliery houses has a lodger.<sup>3</sup> This is hardly surprising since the 1900 House Rent Agreement<sup>4</sup> stipulated that no unmarried man of any class should be entitled to take a colliery house, and many collieries made agreements concerning families taking lodgers. The emphasis on lodgers made by others appears

1. N. Blewett, Past and Present No 32. Dec 1965. 'The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885-1918'. p28.
2. Ibid, p. 35
3. Durham Chronicle, 16.8.07.
4. Conciliation Board Minutes, 5.11.00. 'House Rent and Fire Coal Agreement'

well founded.<sup>1</sup> A study of the 1899 electorate reveals that the nine most densely populated mining constituencies had only 822 lodgers registered between them.<sup>2</sup> In Auckland out of an electorate of 61,833 there were only nineteen lodgers registered.

Blewett suggests that a rental of £10 plus for each year eliminated most lodgers, and disputes over the definition of lodgings excluded several others.<sup>3</sup> Since the lodger had to re-register every year, and was disenfranchised if he moved house, even within the constituency<sup>4</sup> it is hardly surprising that the lodgers' registration was so low. Only in marginal seats was their vote higher. (In 1899 in the marginal S E Durham division 177 lodgers were registered; in the slightly larger safe Mid Durham division there were only 20.)<sup>5</sup> It would appear that the smallness of the lodgers' vote constituted a significant loss to the mining vote.

Related to the lodger qualification is Gregory's assumption that all miners over 21 years old qualified for a vote - this appears to be questionable. The majority of miners lived in free colliery houses which under an arrangement with the collieries qualified them for a vote. However, a study of house rent reveals that as late as 1908 the highest paid hewer received only £7.3s. housing allowance per year if not

1. G.Jones, 'The Franchise 1885-1918' Past and Present No 34 July 1966. pp136-7
2. Durham Chronicle, 30.6.99.
3. N.Blewett, op cit. p40.
4. Ibid. p. 36.
5. Durham Chronicle, 30.6.99.

living in a colliery house. This indicates that a proportion of the miners in any constituency might not have qualified for a vote by mere tenancy of a house.

Other factors which Gregory ignores include the problem of those who claimed Poor Relief while unemployed, sick or on strike, thus disqualifying themselves from the vote: sons who lived with their parents, a common practice in the coalfield, did not qualify for the vote.<sup>1</sup> No mention is made by Gregory of allowing for the plural vote, especially high in South East Durham.<sup>2</sup> Similarly a high degree of ownership voting was done from outside the county; Houghton le Spring had a 15% ownership vote in 1899.<sup>3</sup>

Having criticised Gregory's first method of approach let us turn to this second. In it he uses lists of election returns for isolated mining communities. By comparing these with the population of the villages (obtained solely from the List of Mines) he computes the percentage of registered miners. This method has one very serious limitation, which is that it can only be used for studying isolated mining communities which are by nature different from the more socially integrated ones. As a consequence no generalisation can be made from the results. Furthermore in his computation of the results Gregory assumes the areas to be constituted solely of miners; a study of the Chester le Street election of 1885 revealed that one of the most isolated mining communities in the county, Usworth, had an

1. N. Blewett, op cit. p33

2. N. Blewett, op cit. p49

3. Durham Chronicle, 30.6.99.

electorate of nearly 700. The Directory of Durham compiled in 1888<sup>1</sup> lists thirty people not working at the mine as living in the community including farmers, shopkeepers, retired gentlemen, school teachers and publicans. This number excludes all the colliery officials, farm labourers and shop assistants in the area. This suggests that the miners may have held at most 90% of the vote even in a very isolated 'mining' community.

It would appear that Gregory may well have overstated the number of miners who actually possessed the vote, but by how much it is impossible to state precisely, due to the paucity of accurate figures. There is no harm in using Gregory's figures providing that we bear in mind their inaccuracies.

It should be remembered that the problem of the registration in courts was crucial to establishing parliamentary voting rights. Persons who were dissatisfied with the new electoral lists could appeal to the revision court concerning their case. Both major parties employed a barrister to present the cases of known supporters. People of unknown political views were frequently opposed by both party barristers.<sup>2</sup>

The more restrictive requirements for the county council electorate probably resulted in an even lower level of miners' participation. But on the parish and district council registers the mining vote would have been at its highest. The high level of interest in these local council elections may well have acted as a stimulus to people to register.

1. Kelly's Directory of Durham, (1888 London) pp422-3.
2. P.F. Clarke, 'Lancashire and the New Liberalism' (Cambridge 1971) p. 105.

The D.M.A. and Electoral Reform in the 1870's

Even before the electoral reforms of the 1880's the Durham miners were becoming concerned about their political rights. The first outward signs of agitation for political enfranchisement in the North East came in 1872 when a meeting on the Town Moor in Newcastle demanded a re-distribution of seats and changes in the franchise.<sup>1</sup> In Durham this was followed in 1873 by the formation of an active Franchise Association led by John Wilson; the D.M.A. played a considerable role in the setting up of the Association.

From its inception the Franchise Association had very close links with the Liberal Party. In 1874 William Crawford was proposed by the Association to run as Liberal candidate at the general election; only an excess of prospective candidates prevented his candidature from going forward.<sup>2</sup> The Franchise Association by use of numerous public meetings, lectures by their committee and the D.M.A. executive, kept up a high level of public interest.

At the T.U.C. in 1883 the D.M.A. put forward a motion on political reform:

"That without accepting an equalisation of the county with the borough franchise as a final solution of the great question of Parliamentary reform this congress is of the opinion that the government should lose no time in introducing their promised measure, and calls upon the organised trades of the country to assist by every means in their power in promoting the popular movement in support of this long awaited

1. R.Fynes, 'The Miners of Northumberland and Durham' pp. 269-270.

2. J. Wilson, 'History of the Durham Miners' Association.' p88.



reform."<sup>1</sup>

During the summer of 1884 the Franchise Association activated the county with regular public meetings. These culminated in a one day strike in favour of the wider franchise by the D.M.A.; the entire coalfield stopped and district meetings were arranged throughout the county.<sup>2</sup> These activities gave Durham the reputation of being one of the advanced radical areas in the country.

The day the Third Reform Bill became law, the Durham miners started to discuss their plans. A Federation Board programme was placed before the members of the Council.<sup>3</sup>

#### Programme

1. Shall there be Labour representatives?
2. If so how many?
3. If it be decided to have Labour Representation who shall he or they be?
4. The ways and means of supporting such person or persons from the Association?
5. What shall the salary of such a man or men be?
6. Shall we nominate other than Labour Representatives?  
That is men who hold similar views to ourselves, but who will pay their own cost both in contesting and otherwise?
7. If this be done who should they be?
8. The selection of divisions.

The outcome of this meeting was a decision to run genuine working class men in connection with the Liberals. Three

1. G. Metcalfe, 'The Durham Miners' Association.' p434
2. Durham Chronicle, 7.10.84.
3. D.M.A. Council Minutes, 24.1.85.

candidates were chosen, Wm Crawford to contest Mid Durham, J Wilson to contest Houghton le Spring and L Trotter to contest Bishop Auckland. It was decided that the Federation Board should act as a ways and means committee, guiding the candidates. The successful candidates were to be paid a salary of £500 per year.

It is possible that the Durham miners acted rather too hastily. At the Council it was urged that the cultivation of close links with the Durham-Liberal Association was desirable. Having nominated three candidates for Liberal seats it was essential that a good relationship existed between the union and the Liberal Association. In the event only one of the candidates, L Trotter, was forced to step down. This was technically due to his inability to meet the condition of responsibility for the returning officers' fees,<sup>1</sup> but was almost certainly due to local Liberal opposition which had been openly stated ever since Trotter's candidature was known.<sup>2</sup> The fact that of the three D.M.A. candidates' constituencies Bishop Auckland had easily the smallest mining vote may well have allowed the Liberals to oppose a D.M.A. candidate without running a high risk of losing the seat. The question of how many seats the local Liberals would allow the D.M.A. candidates to contest was to be at the very core of the problem as to the effectiveness of the Lib-Lab M.P.'s on a national as well as a local level.

1. Durham Chronicle, 6.11.85.

2. It has been suggested that a personal scandal necessitated Trotter's withdrawal. See Durham Chronicle, 31.10.85 et subseq. This would appear unlikely since he continued to hold a seat on the Durham School Board and later secured election to the Durham County Council.

Elections 1885 - 1901

In the study of both parliamentary and local elections between 1885 and 1914 one is faced with the problem of either viewing the period as a whole, or in separate sections. A study of any one group of elections throughout the period led to difficulties in relating the results, and in particular those elected, to the results of other elections at the same time. By splitting the results into two periods it was possible to see more accurately the gains made by any political groups in each of the elections at any one time.

A marked change in both the personal and the political allegiances of the miners' candidates between 1900 and 1904 provided a natural break between the two periods. The division was consequently into two almost equal parts, both of which illustrate the changing character of the miners' political activities.

## Parliamentary Elections 1885-1900

### The 1885 Election

The 1885 General Election marked the start of the Lib-Lab era in parliamentary affairs in County Durham. The miners, despite the numerical size of their vote, were only granted two seats by the Liberals, Mid-Durham and Houghton le Spring. Both Crawford and Wilson adopted very strong Liberal programmes; they favoured reform of local government, free education and the continuation of free trade. Both laid considerable stress on their working class origins.

"Alderman T Richardson posed in Durham as a working man. If being well fed and well cribbed and doing no work constituted a working man....there were many working men who were Conservatives."<sup>1</sup>

Aided by T Burt M.P. the Durham leaders were returned easily, Crawford with a 2,554 majority at Mid Durham and Wilson by 1,744 at Houghton le Spring. Gregory's estimates suggest that both were mining dominated constituencies, Mid Durham having a 60% mining vote and Houghton 56%.<sup>2</sup>

Besides marking the start of the miners' Lib-Lab era the 1885 election was interesting for two other contests involving the miners. At Chester le Street Lloyd-Jones the old co-operator and champion of miners' rights stood as an independent candidate in opposition to the D.M.A. supported coalowner Sir James Joicey. In this contest the mining

1. Durham Chronicle, 13.11.85.

2. R. Gregory, op cit. p. 96

communities were caught in a dilemma between victory for the candidate or the party; significantly Jones finished second in a three man contest, only 803 votes behind Joicey. A breakdown of the district votes reveals that several districts, notably Usworth and Blaydon, voted for Lloyd-Jones in defiance of the D.M.A.<sup>1</sup>

The other election of note was at Jarrow. Traditionally dominated by shipbuilders the Jarrow division contained a high working class vote, which included the Hebburn miners. In 1885 the local shipbuilder Sir C M Palmer standing as a Liberal was opposed by a 'Labour' candidate James Johnson from Manchester. Johnson campaigned mainly on the need for improved working class education. Palmer won with a 3,971 majority, but Johnson polled 1,731 votes,<sup>2</sup> a poll higher than several early I.L.P. candidates in the 1890's.

#### The 1886 Election

The 1886 election on the Home Rule issue was marked by the unopposed return of seven out of the fifteen County Durham M.P.s, including Wm Crawford at Mid Durham. John Wilson was surprisingly defeated at Houghton by the Conservative N Wood. Wilson's majority of 1,744 became a deficit of 812 votes, his own poll falling by 1,452. Wilson was undoubtedly a victim of his Home Rule policy: in the election he gained the support of the Irish, who had opposed him in 1885, but lost many of his former supporters.<sup>3</sup> The high poll indicated that the level of abstention was low.

1. Durham County Advertiser, 4.12.85

2. Durham Chronicle, 4.12.85.

3. Durham Chronicle, 16.7.86

Wilson did not return to the House of Commons until 1890 when at a by-election he was returned for Mid Durham following the death of William Crawford. The loss of Crawford did little to damage Durham's representation. During his time as an M.P. Crawford never spoke in Parliament. In 1890 Wilson stood on the same Home Rule platform on which he had been defeated in 1886, and polled only fractionally fewer votes than Crawford had done.

#### The 1892 Election

Whilst the 1892 election was again fought on the Home Rule question throughout the country, in Mid Durham another issue was the key to the election. The timing of the election, directly following the end of the county strike, inevitably made that a central issue in Durham. When the Conservatives put forward a coalowner, A Hunter, as their candidate against Wilson, the election campaign livened up. Both candidates introduced personal abuse into their speeches, and stressed their contrasting positions in industry.

"Being interested, both pecuniarily and in the management in large and important undertakings in your county embracing mining, shipbuilding, engineering, etc..... He represents capital and I represent the men."<sup>1</sup>

This local issue dominated the election, leaving the Home Rule question in the background. With the vote hinging on responsibility for the strike Wilson's return with a slightly lower majority than in 1890 was not surprising.

1. Durham Chronicle, 8.7.92. J Wilson

In the county the Liberals, but not the miners, regained Houghton and won Durham City, a town with a small mining electorate; the Conservatives won in South East Durham.<sup>1</sup> At Jarrow a 'Labour' candidate Dillon Lewis, a London solicitor, stood and received much support from the Hebburn miners.<sup>2</sup> He was defeated, but won a highly creditable 2,400 votes.

#### The 1895 Election

In 1895 the Conservatives won Darlington, Hartlepool and Sunderland, all constituencies with small mining votes. The Liberals regained South East Durham, an area with a rapidly growing mining vote in the late nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Wilson, standing again at Mid Durham, proposed wide social reforms. He was strongly in favour of the introduction of old age pensions, he advocated large changes in the Employers' Liability Act and demanded the abolition of the House of Lords.<sup>4</sup> He was again returned with a slightly reduced majority.

#### The 1900 Election

The 1900 General Election was the last purely Lib-Lab miners' election held in the North East. Wilson, again opposed by the Conservative coalowner Hunter, attempted to move the election away from the Boer War issue, which dominated the election at a national level.

"The war was now settled and he objected to the election being fought entirely on the war question."<sup>5</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle, 15.7.92., 22.7.92.

2. E. Wilkinson, 'The Town that was Murdered'. (London 1939) p112

3. H. Pelling, 'The Social Geography of British Elections,' p338.

4. Durham Chronicle, 19.7.95.

5. Durham Chronicle, 5.10.00.

Instead Wilson concentrated his energies on a critical appraisal of the Conservatives' Employers' Liability Act and their Workmen's Compensation Act. On the latter he said:

"He objected to it because it was not as complete as it should be.... He believed every man injured in a mine or a factory or whose health was destroyed by foul air should be compensated by the nation. What he would have, was the establishment of a national fund to be maintained by those receiving large income from royalties and the industries of the country."<sup>1</sup>

In the election Wilson retained his seat, but with a reduced majority for the fourth consecutive time.

By the turn of the century the miners had gained very little from their alliance with the Liberals. They had only contested Mid Durham regularly, and Houghton on two occasions. After the pressure from the D.M.A. for the extension of the franchise the lack of mining representation is surprising. It is possible that the lack of any D.M.A. leaders, bar Crawford and Wilson, of sufficient stature to be accepted by the Liberal Association as candidates may have been a factor in this. Wilson himself was strongly opposed to unqualified working class candidates. The result was ~~that~~ Crawford and Wilson carried their union domination into politics.

1. J. Wilson, 'History of the Durham Miners.'



TABLE 1

General Election Results 1885-1900

a) Parliamentary Boroughs

	<u>1885</u>	<u>1886</u>	<u>1892</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1900</u>
Durham City	Cons	Cons	Lib	Lib	Cons
Sunderland 1.	Lib	Lib	Lib	Cons	Cons
2.	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	Cons
Darlington	Lib	Lib	Lib	Cons	Cons
Gateshead	Lib	Uncontested Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib
South Shields	Lib	Uncontested Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib
Hartlepool	Lib	Cons	Lib	Cons	Lib

b) County Constituencies

	<u>1885</u>	<u>1886</u>	<u>1892</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1900</u>
Mid Durham*	Lib/Lab	Uncontested Lib/Lab	Lib/Lab	Lib/Lab	Lib/Lab
N W Durham	Lib	Uncontested Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib
S E Durham	Lib	Cons	Lib	Cons	Cons
Bp Auckland	Lib	Uncontested Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib
Bnd Castle	Lib	Uncontested Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib
Chester le St	Lib	Uncontested Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib
Jarrow	Lib	Uncontested Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib
Houghton le Spng	Lib/Lab	Cons	Lib	Lib	Lib

\* Mid Durham 1890 - Lib/Lab

Liberal	12	10	14	10	9
Conservative	1	4	0	4	5
Lib/Lab	2	1	1	1	1

Local Elections 1888 - 1901

The study of the place of Durham miners in local elections presents special problems. There are two major obstacles facing the researcher: firstly, the identification of the occupation of the candidates to determine which of them were miners, and secondly, the identification of their political views or allegiances, if any. The problem of the occupation of the candidate is important since the study deals specifically with the miners. Obviously since any unidentifiable candidate may have been a miner it was necessary to find out the occupations of as many as possible. Every candidate referred to as a miner has been positively identified as one. Inevitably the numbers referred to thus are minimum numbers, but they are probably not far below the true numbers, unless otherwise stated.

The identification of these miners with candidates of advanced political views proved twice as difficult. A list of every person mentioned as for example an I.L.P. candidate in any given area had to be compiled and checked against the candidates in local elections. The candidates who were I.L.P. members were then compared with the list of those who were miners, the outcome being three lists: a) miners who were I.L.P. men; b) miners who were not I.L.P. men and c) I.L.P. men who were not miners. These lists naturally suffered from the greatest number of omissions since it was subject to mistakes from the identification of both occupation and political allegiance. The difficulties experienced in compiling a list of I.L.P. members in given areas proved far greater than those of occupation.

What is left is a statement of the absolute minimum numbers of miners known to have participated as candidates in the various elections, and the names of those miners known to have been I.L.P. members. In some cases an account of a local I.L.P. meeting before an election, or a list of both occupation and political allegiance of candidates appears in a newspaper and results in precise numbers of those involved. A few areas such as Usworth, were better reported than others, such as Wingate. Inevitably the more important an election the better the chances of obtaining the relevant material for 'positive' identification of radical miners became.

Despite these problems enough information emerged to give a broad outline of the changing political affiliations of the miners, and especially of their desertion of the Lib-Lab alliance for some form of 'independent labour' or 'socialist' involvement. The timing and the speed of this transition are of the utmost interest, as are the areas in which it occurred.

### The D.M.A. and Local Elections

In the county council elections the role played by the D.M.A. is of particular interest. The D.M.A. had played an important part in the agitation for changes in the organisation of local government in the mid 1880's and yet in the first election in 1888 the D.M.A. put forward only three sponsored candidates. After the failure of two of them the D.M.A. as a body continued to pursue a policy of only sponsoring one or two candidates at subsequent elections. These candidates were usually men of high standing in the association and included John Wilson, John Johnson, W H Patterson and T H Cann. It became common practice for the top D.M.A. men to secure election to Alderman rank, thus avoiding further electoral contests; Wilson, Crawford, Galbraith, House, Patterson and Johnson all benefited from this during the period.

The majority of the sponsorship was thus done by independent local lodges on their own initiative, a policy which inevitably led to a lack of co-ordination amongst the miners in the county. The selection of a mining candidate for Herrington is described below.

"Originally five nominations were received, but at the last moment it was found that two candidates had been nominated for the Herrington Miners' Union and Mr Chas Bassett was asked to withdraw, while at the meeting both Ths Patterson (Philadelphia Lodge) and Jno Fletcher (Enginemen's Association) also withdrew, which left only two nominations viz Henry Bell miner (Herrington Lodge) and Jno Tate Checkweighman (North Biddick Lodge). Both candidates addressed the meeting and their views were of a similar nature, the housing and education questions being the two most important

subjects dealt with. On a vote being taken the result was declared as follows, Jno Tate 72, Henry Bell 40, Mr Tate being selected; the miners' lodge will make arrangements for his candidature."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes, however, the selection was not so simple. In the 1913 election for Thornley, Peter Lee and J Wilkinson were both put forward as Labour candidates by their local lodges. The lodges failed to agree on a candidate and both men contested the election.<sup>2</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle, 18.2.10.
2. Durham Chronicle, 7.3.13.

### The County Council Elections 1881 - 1901

The new County Council provided the miners with the chance of gaining experience in local government. Eighteen electoral areas had over 1,000 D.M.A. members registered to vote. The electorate had been 'prepared' for the first election in 1888 by the Durham Franchise Association which declared:

"A vast number of meetings were held, and in a business manner the election prepared for, with a result that about 25% of the newly formed council were working men."<sup>2</sup>

On the evidence of the first election this statement appears misleading. The three official D.M.A. candidates standing were J Wilson at Herrington, W H Patterson at Willington and L Trotter at Greatham. Eight other D.M.A. members stood, of whom only one, W Robinson, was unopposed, at Sherburn. The election was dominated by two main issues: firstly by the position regarding drinking hours on licensed premises, it had been proposed that the new councils should be given regulatory powers over drinking hours, but this clause had been dropped in the committee stages in Parliament. The debate over whether there should be local or national drinking laws still continued. Secondly there was a great dispute over the control of the police force. The County was split on the issue of whether to give the county council control or to give it to a committee of the Quarter sessions.<sup>3</sup>

1. H. Drummond, 'The New Durham County Council.' in Public Administration No 196 summer 1962. pp141-150. The areas were Tanfield, Felling, Hebburn, Westoe, Chester le Street, Lambton, Lamesley, Herrington, Washington, Houghton, Hetton, Ryhope, Easington, Haswell, Bishop Wearmouth, Esh, Willington and Coundon. Both Sherburn and Brandon had just under 1,000.
2. J. Wilson, op cit p209
3. H. Drummond, op cit. pp144-5.

In the polls, despite a high turnout of 81.3%<sup>1</sup> the miners' candidates fared very badly. Besides Robinson, only Wilson, W Palmer at Bishopwearmouth and S Galbraith at Brandon were returned. Patterson, Trotter, W Bottoms (Washington), R Hope (Ferryhill), W House (West Auckland), R Wraith (Ryhope) and T Forster (Esh) were all defeated.

At the subsequent aldermanic elections Wm Crawford was co-opted on to the council and W H Patterson won a by-election at Tanfield. As a result out of the ninety four members of the new county council the D.M.A. had six, or about a 7% representation. The conservatives controlled the council by a majority of six.

#### The 1892 Election

The 1892 election did not revolve around any major issues. There was a general demand for the improvement of roads, footpaths and streets in colliery districts, local issues included temperance at Brandon, river pollution at Durham and Irish Home rule in West Hartlepool.<sup>2</sup> Three miners were returned unopposed, W Palmer, W H Patterson and L Trotter (Edmondsley)<sup>3</sup> and of the other thirteen who stood seven were elected: W Robinson, W Bottoms, S Galbraith, T H Cann (Greatham), R Stubbs (Westoe) and two men who stood as 'Labour' candidates - S Hills (Herrington) and T Rudd (Witton le Wear). The seven not elected were J Gaines (Hunwick), R Cheeseman (Coundon), P Reay (Lanchester), P Carling (Ryton), C Jameson (Shildon) and J Daley (Willington).

1. Ibid. p147

2. Durham Chronicle, 4.3.92., 11.3.92.

3. Durham Chronicle, 4.3.92.

Gaines, Cheeseman and Daley stood as Labour candidates. In the post aldermanic elections Gaines, Wm House (West Auckland) and J Errington (Felling No 1) were all elected. The miners having had Wilson made an Alderman before the election had fourteen representatives on the Liberal held Council.

#### The 1895 Election

Again in 1895 the miners increased their number of candidates.<sup>1</sup> Six miners were unopposed, and the general attitude was summed up in a newspaper editorial which commented on "the complete lack of enthusiasm shown in the county for the elections"<sup>2</sup>; no major issues came to prominence in the half-hearted campaign. The six miners returned unopposed were L Trotter, W Reed (Hebburn No 2), J Gaines, J Davison (New Lambton), T Rudd and Wm House. Thirteen candidates took part in contested elections, seven of them being successful; they were W Symonds (Greatham), T Forster (Sherburn), J Carrick (Shildon), R Stubbs, J Errington, S Galbraith and W Palmer. The six unsuccessful candidates were Wm Gardner (Herrington), P Reay, T Dunston (Ryhope), J Johnson (Thornley), W Bottoms and P Carling (Blaydon). Including the two aldermen there were fifteen miners on the council. This was increased to sixteen when J W Taylor was elected for Collierley in the post-aldermanic elections. The Liberals with their majority reduced to two were now heavily dependent on the mining members.

#### The 1898 Election

The 1898 elections were almost completely devoid of any

1. Durham Chronicle, 22.2.95.
2. Durham Chronicle, 1.3.95.



electoral issues. Only one contest, between two Liberals at Spennymoor provided any interest. One of the Liberals, Major Junor, received the support of the Conservatives, so it came as a surprise when his candidature was endorsed by John Wilson. The contest was centred on the tied house issue (of which Junor owned several) and resulted in the defeat of Junor.

In the election twelve miners were returned unopposed. They were J Johnson (Edmondsley), T Robinson (Ferryhill), S Galbraith, W Palmer (Silksworth), R Stubbs, J W Taylor, T Davison, T Forster, J Rudd, J Errington, J Gaines and W Palmer. Despite the high number of unopposed candidates the miners fared badly in the contested elections, with all six candidates being defeated. The six were J Hoy (Ryhope), S Armes (Sedgefield), H Jamison (West Auckland), J Carrick, A Woolner (Wolsingham) and J Gowland (Crook).<sup>1</sup> Gowland was the candidate of the Crook Socialist club. The vote appears to have been anti-mining rather than anti-Liberal - the Liberals increasing their majority to thirty. With two aldermen the mining contingent was reduced to fourteen.

#### The 1901 Election

The 1901 elections proved little more exciting than their predecessors. A contemporary commented:

"It was generally understood that whatever cross currents might be running in individual divisions there was no burning question calling for the verdict of the electors."<sup>2</sup>

The miners had nine men returned unopposed: J Johnson,

1. Durham Chronicle, 25.2.98.

2. Durham Chronicle, 8.3.01.

R Stubbs, J Rudd, J Davison, J Errington, T Robinson, C Barker (Hunwick) and T Davies (Teesdale). In the contested seats the miners won four out of nine seats: J W Taylor, J Robson, (Elvet), R Richardson (Ryhope) and J Hopper (Thornley) being returned.<sup>1</sup> S Galbraith and W Palmer (Bishopwearmouth) had both been made aldermen, bringing the mining contingent to four aldermen and seventeen in all. The five unsuccessful candidates were R Wren (Ryton), J Wilkinson (Spennymoor), R Cheeseman (Coundon), T Richardson (Washington)<sup>2</sup> and J Peacock (Shildon).<sup>3</sup> Of these the last three were already prominent radicals.

Miners in County Council Elections 1888-1901

	<u>1888</u>	<u>1892</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1898</u>	<u>1901</u>
No of Miner members	6	14	16	14	17
No of Labour of Socialist miners	0	3	2(1)	3	3
No of Aldermen	1	1	2	2	4
No of unopposed returns	1	3	6	12	9
No of successful contests	3(1)*	7(3)	7(1)	0	4
No of unsuccessful contests	7	6	6	6	5

\* Elected after the aldermanic promotions.

1. Durham Chronicle, 1.3.01.
2. Appendix F, Local Leaders. T Richardson.
3. Appendix F, Local Leaders. J Peacock.

The Activities of the Miners on the Council

The majority of work involved in the running of the county council was done by specialist committees, which reported back to the full council at every quarterly meeting. The number of miners on each committee is given below,<sup>1</sup> the size of the committees in 1894 (they did vary slightly) is also given.

Number of Miners on each Committee

Committee	Size of Committee	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894
Works	26	1	1		3	3	3
Local Govt	25						3
Health	26				4	4	5
Finance	24	2	2		5	6	6
County Rates	13	1	1			1	1
Education	26				4	5	5
Asylum	24	1	1		2	5	5
Earls House	22	2	2		2	2	2
Standing Joint	12	1	1		2	2	2
Allotments	24						
Contageous Disease	24	1	1		1	1	1
Parliamentary Proceedings	9				3	3	3

1. County of Durham, Minutes of County Council meetings, Nos 1-8. D.C.R.O./D.C.C.

Committee	Size of Committee	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
Works	26	2	2			1	2	2
Local Govt	25	4	5			5	5	3
Health	26	4	5			5	5	5
Finance	24	6	6			3	3	3
County Rates	13		1			0	0	0
Education	26	6	7			4	4	5
Asylum	24	5	5			2	2	4
Earls House	22	2	1			2	2	3
Standing Joint	12	1	1			3	3	3
Allotments	24					4	4	4
Contageous Disease	24	1	1			0	0	0
Parliamentary Proceedings	9							

Other minor committees of less than four years' duration included the Committee of the Wear, the Railway Rates Committee, the Election Expenses Committee, the Weights and Measures Committee and the Medical Officers Report Committee.

The few genuinely 'Labour' members were very active on Committees. T Rudd was a member of the Works, the local Government, the Allotments, the Education, the Asylum and the Parliamentary Proceedings Committee; J Gaines a member of the important Finance and Education Committees besides the Standing Joint Committee. William Bottoms in his brief period as a county councillor was on the Works, Local Government, Health and Parliamentary Proceedings Committees. The fourth 'Labour' member, J W Taylor, was on the Local Government, Allotments, Health and Education committees.

The Liberal D.M.A. leaders themselves were not so active on Committees. W H Patterson was on two, J Wilson on four, Wm Crawford on one, William house on four and S Galbraith on three. The Durham Mechanics' secretary, T Trotter, was also on four Committees. Significantly, only one, Galbraith, was on the Education Committee, regarded by the 'Labour' men as the key committee on the council. Three of the four 'Labour' men were on it.

A comparison between the 'Labour' group and the miners' liberal rank and file group again emphasises that Labour was unusually active on Committees. The three longest serving members of the Liberal group were W Palmer, R Stubbs and T Foster. Stubbs served on two Committees, Palmer on three and Foster on four. Stubbs and Foster were, however, both on the Education committee.

As with all committees, the longer a person had been a member the more weight his views carried. During the first twelve years of the Durham County Council several of the miners' members did make their mark on certain committees. The two longest serving were Galbraith and Wilson, who were members of the important Finance Committee from 1889 to 1901. The two other highly influential miners were T Robinson, who was on the Health Committee from 1892 to 1901 and the Asylum Committee from 1893 to 1901, and Wm House who sat on the Health Committee from 1893 to 1901 and on the Standing Joint Committee from 1892 to 1901. By the end of the period all four men were amongst the 'elder statesmen' of their committees.

The attendance figures of several miners on the County Council were published for only two periods, from 1889 to 1892<sup>1</sup> and from 1898 to 1901.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately none of the 'Labour' members were referred to in the returns, although a study of the council minutes suggests that they were very meticulous in their attendance. In the first period the percentage of votes cast out of a possible total was high for the miners. W H Patterson cast 60% of his votes, Galbraith 70% and W Palmer 78%. The one exception was John Wilson who managed a mere 31%.

The figures from 1898 to 1901 show a slight decline in the attendance of the miners; S Galbraith and T Robinson both cast over 70% of their votes, T Foster 65%, Wm House and J Johnson 50%, J Davison 40% and Wilson again last with 35%. During this period Wilson reduced his committee membership to a minimum and was thus entitled to only 53 votes while most others had in excess of one hundred. This would suggest that Wilson was neglecting his county council duties in favour of other claims on this time.

1. Durham Chronicle, 19.2.92.
2. Durham Chronicle, 14.2.01.

### Parish Councils

The study of Parish Councils has two great difficulties in common with the study of all small elected local bodies. The first is the correct identification of the occupation and political leanings of the candidates. The majority of the miners were sponsored by their local lodges and stood independently of political parties, although it must be assumed that most were of Liberal beliefs. The second problem is perhaps the more serious, due to the very limited amount of interest in the elections outside of the local area there are only very limited records of the elections. The records in the Durham County Record Office are, sadly, far from complete, and a study of the local Durham City press reveals only limited information concerning elections of local interest.

For these reasons it became necessary to confine the study to nine unrelated parish councils, Croxdale, Cornsay, Great Lumley, Sherburn, Trimdon, Tunstall, Usworth, Washington and Wingate. The selection of these particular areas was due to a variety of reasons. Firstly and most important, there is considerable electoral material available for all these areas, secondly they all had large mining populations and thirdly there is some surviving material on the activities of labour groups in the areas. Inevitably other areas with large mining communities have been left out, this has not been through choice, but of necessity.

The first Parish Council elections were held in 1894 following the passing of the Local Government Act of that year. The miners made considerable efforts to gain representation on the new bodies.

The miners returned were:

<u>Council</u>	<u>Size of Council</u>	<u>1894</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>1896</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>1897</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>1898</u> <sup>4</sup>	<u>1899</u> <sup>5</sup>
Sherburn	10	2	1	3	3	1
Tunstall	11	1	1	1	1	1
Cornsay	7	1	3	3		
Great Lumley	9	2	4	4	8 <sup>x</sup>	8 <sup>x</sup>
Trimdon	15	3	3	3	4	4
Croxdale	9	3	5 <sup>x</sup>	3	3	4
Washington	9	3	2	1	2	3
Wingate	15	8 <sup>x</sup>	3	5	10 <sup>x</sup>	9 <sup>x</sup>
Usworth	11	6 <sup>x</sup>	6 <sup>x</sup>	7 <sup>x</sup>	10 <sup>xx</sup>	8 <sup>x</sup>

x Miners controlled

xx The size of the Council rose to fifteen.

By 1900 the miners had already gained control of four of the nine councils, Great Lumley, Wingate, Usworth and Croxdale, the latter having been lost again. Only in Tunstall did the miners appear to have failed to make any significant headway, although this is possibly due to the dearth of material with which to identify the candidates.

After the initial enthusiasm of the 1894 elections the numbers of miners' seats fell below the 1894 total at the next two elections. It was only with the dramatic upswing of 1898 and the retention of the seats in 1899 that the

1. Durham County Advertiser, 21.12.94. Durham Chronicle, 7.12.94.
2. Durham Chronicle, 13.3.96.
3. Durham Chronicle, 26.3.97.
4. Durham Chronicle, 18.3.98.; 25.3.98.
5. Durham Chronicle, 15.3.99.



miners made their presence felt. The same councillors stood regularly for election, and with the exception of Wingate there was a very low turnover of miners' candidates.

The most interesting area for our study is Usworth where the miners gained control in the first election and retained it despite the enlargement of the council in 1898. In the 1894 election the miners' candidates sponsored by the local lodge included T Richardson, R Bolam, W Bottoms, W Shaw, T Bruce, M Handy and G Barker, all of whom were to play a major role in instigating the growth of the I.L.P. in the area, Richardson becoming an I.L.P. leader at the national level.

In the contests for the parish councils the miners fought essentially on local issues with party politics playing very little part. The more radical candidates, including the Usworth councillors, fought on three main issues: improved housing, better sanitary services and improved roads. The conditions of many of the colliery villages, including Usworth, made this platform highly acceptable to the local miners.

By 1910 only ten miners had sat on the councils continuously; four of these, W Bottoms, T Bruce, M Handy and W Shaw, represented Usworth and a further three, G Thirlaway, J Miller and W Hawking, represented Great Lumley. The other three men were J Atkinson at Washington, S Armes at Trimdon and T Miller at Tunstall. Significantly the continued representation by the same member was strongest in areas with a high mining representation on the council.

### School Boards

Tracing the school board elections presents many similar problems to those of the parish councils. The school board elections are made more difficult to follow by their irregular timing, once every two to three years. A result of this was that one frequently found mention of one specific meeting of a school board, but no details of any other. Series of election results were, however, obtained in Durham, Wingate, Usworth, Croxdale, Crook and Newbottle.

The Durham School Board traditionally had one member of the D.M.A. as a representative. The other six seats frequently contained four or more churchmen, who dominated the meetings. Interest in the school board elections was low, and only twice in 1886 and 1901 were there sufficient candidates to force a poll. The D.M.A. representative in 1892 and 1895 was Lancelot Trotter,<sup>1</sup> secretary of the Durham Mechanics' Association and a County Councillor. In 1898 he was replaced by John Johnson, the D.M.A.'s financial secretary.<sup>2</sup> In 1901 Johnson stood down and was replaced by J Harris of the Durham Trades Council.<sup>3</sup> The 1901 Board was the last one elected before the abolition of school boards by the Conservatives' 1902 Education Act.

The remaining school board elections are summarised below. Most boards had seven members.

1. Durham Chronicle, 12.2.95.
2. Durham Chronicle, 4.3.98.
3. Durham Chronicle, 22.2.01.

<u>Area</u>	<u>1894</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1896</u>	<u>1897</u>	<u>1898</u>	<u>1899</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1902</u>
Wingate <sup>1</sup>	1 <sup>x</sup>			3			3		
Usworth <sup>2</sup>			2 <sup>x</sup>			2			
Croxdale <sup>3</sup>			2 <sup>x</sup>			2			
Newbottle <sup>4</sup>		2			1				
Crook <sup>5</sup>						2			5

x First miners elected to the school board in the area.

Crook can be said to have been the only area studied in which the school board was controlled by miners. Three of the Crook members were later to become well known radicals: J Gowland, already a member of Crook Socialist Club, and J Leonard and W Heslop both of whom became promenant ILP leaders. Interestingly neither Sunderland<sup>6</sup> nor Gateshead<sup>7</sup> had any mining candidates for the school board.

1. Durham Chronicle, 22.11.97., 5.2.97., 19.12.00
2. Durham Chronicle, 4.12.96. 8.12.99.
3. Durham Chronicle, 17.3.99.
4. Durham Chronicle, 22.11.95. 21.11.98.
5. Durham Chronicle, 15.9.99. 12.9.02.
6. Durham Chronicle, 3.12.97. 5.12.00.
7. F.W. Manders, 'A History of Gateshead' (Gateshead Corporation 1973) p. 202.

Borough and Urban District Councils

The Borough and Urban District Councils present us with very similar problems to other local elections, notably a paucity of information on any elections, and on the candidates and their views. The Durham City Municipal Borough never had a mining candidate before 1914 and the Gateshead County Borough similarly returned no miners, although several other working class men were elected before 1900.<sup>1</sup>

From the evidence available the miners gained recognition on the U.D.C.s only gradually.

Number of miners returned

<u>U.D.C.</u>	<u>1894</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>1898</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>1901</u> <sup>4</sup>
Brandon	3(4)	2(4)	5(7)
Houghton	3(4)	3(3)	3(3)
Willington	1(1)	2(2)	0(0)

(Brackets indicate the number of mining candidates)

The only candidate of any particular note in these quite large elections was Samuel Galbraith who won Brandon East Ward in 1894, but did not recontest the seat. Brandon would appear to be the only area where the miners made a positive attempt to gain control of the U.D.C. In Willington in 1901 the miners did not even both to contest the election.

1. F. Manders, op cit. p. 48 and p. 334
2. Durham Chronicle, 7.12.94.
3. Durham Chronicle, 18.3.98.
4. Durham Chronicle, 8.3.01.

## The Rural District Councils

As with the U.D.C.s the Rural District Councils proved difficult for the miners to gain election to.

	<u>Size of Council</u>	<u>Number of miners returned</u>			
		<u>1893</u>	<u>1894</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>1898</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>1901</u> <sup>3</sup>
Durham R.D.C.	25	1	5	5	3 (9)
Chester le St R.D.C.	25		2 (5)	3 (6)	9 (10)

(Brackets signify total number of miners' candidates)

A study of those who were elected to the R.D.C.s provides us with some interesting information. The first miner elected was T H Richardson at Sherburn in 1893, Richardson was a Liberal who was later to be converted to socialism and join the I.L.P.<sup>4</sup> The radical J Lund was elected from Framwellgate the following year. Those returned to the Chester le Street R.D.C. include most of the radicals from Usworth, notably T Richardson for Washington and M Handy and J Carlton at Usworth; G Jaques, later the leader of the Chester le Street I.L.P., was returned for the Chester le Street division as a radical. The candidature of the 'socialist' leaders standing as radicals is an indication of the great importance of the R.D.C.; its powers over education, housing and planning were all attractions for the I.L.P. men.

1. Durham Chronicle, 7.12.94. 21.12.94.
2. Durham Chronicle, 18.3.98.
3. Durham County Advertiser, 29.3.01.
4. Appendix F, Local Leaders. T. H. Richardson.

### The Board of Guardians

Election to the Board of Guardians was the peak of many local leaders' careers. The Guardians, first set up in 1834 under the Poor Law Amendment Act, played an important part in looking after the very poor, the unemployed and the chronically sick, and consequently they proved to be a body which many working class leaders aspired to. Unfortunately the prestige of the Guardians was sufficiently great to ensure large numbers of candidates, and election was very difficult to secure.

As with other local bodies the election of Guardians was not well documented outside the Durham City area, and consequently only the details of the Durham and Sedgefield Board elections are given beneath.

<u>Board of Guardians</u>	<u>Total Nos</u>	<u>Number of Miners returned</u>			
		<u>1892<sup>1</sup></u>	<u>1894<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>1898<sup>3</sup></u>	<u>1901<sup>4</sup></u>
Durham	25	2	6(8)	7(11)	6
Sedgefield	25		1	1(3)	3

(Brackets indicate the total number of mining candidates)

On the Durham Board of Guardians three men stand out for particular attention. T Bell elected for Tudhoe in 1894 retained his seat throughout. He was to become an I.L.P. leader and later became a county councillor. J Lund was elected for Framwellgate in 1895 and retained his seat: also a member

1. Durham Chronicle, 1.4.92.
2. Durham Chronicle, 7.12.94.
3. Durham Chronicle, 25.3.98.
4. Durham Chronicle, 29.3.01.  
Durham County Advertiser, 29.3.01.

of the Durham R.D.C. he was a known socialist. The third man was J Robson who won Brandon East Ward in 1898. He was to rise to the D.M.A. executive in 1911, and the leadership of the body in the 1920's.

After initial success in 1894 the miners made very limited progress up until 1901. The sponsorship and organisation of candidates by the local lodges was as yet not very co-ordinated, one result of which was three different contests in Brandon where miners stood against other miners and split the mining vote.

In the Guardians elections the miners experienced a greater number of defeated candidates than in any other elections. The attractions of becoming a Guardian were great for the miner. The post was highly prestigious and put him in a position from which he was able to help the unemployed and those in need. The high social standing of the Guardians meant, however, that there were far more candidates and the contests more closely fought than in most other local elections. This, coupled with the wide area encompassed by one board, meant that although miners might be elected in the highly concentrated mining areas, the board as a whole was unlikely to contain many miners.

### Socialism in the Coalfield before 1900

The growth of Socialism in the North East before 1900 was not fully reflected in the local elections. As early as 1887 Tom Mann had begun a campaign to spread Socialism throughout the North East.<sup>1</sup> The Fabian Society put a full time organiser into the area, Fred Hammill, in 1894;<sup>2</sup> the main reason for his mission being purportedly to convert the workers of Durham to a 'reasonable' view on the eight hours question. There is some evidence of Fabian activity in the county; Waterhouses Fabian Society was lectured to by Harry Snell of London,<sup>3</sup> and the Cornsay Fabian Society had Tom Mann as its visiting lecturer.<sup>4</sup>

The I.L.P. despite being a later starter than the Fabians appears to have gained an early foothold in the county. In January 1895 two unnamed I.L.P. members were reported to have stood at local school board elections, both finished bottom.<sup>5</sup> The real starting point of the I.L.P.'s influence in the North East appears to have been a large meeting held at Chester le Street in 1898 of the North East Socialist Federation.<sup>6</sup> The meeting was chaired by George Jaques, the prominent Chester le Street socialist, and was addressed by Keir Hardie, J Bruce Glasier, Mrs F Harrison-Bell, William

1. D. Tarr, 'Tom Mann and his Times' (London 1956) pp239-246.

2. Durham Chronicle, 18.1.95.

3. Durham Chronicle, 26.2.97.

4. Durham Chronicle, 8.10.97.

5. Durham Chronicle, 11.1.95. Ed.

6. Durham Chronicle, 24.6.98.



Flynn (secretary of the Gateshead I.L.P.) and T Wilkinson (secretary of the Newcastle I.L.P.). The meeting was attended by I.L.P. branches from Shildon, Sunderland, South Shields, Spen, Stockton, Spennymoor, Dipton, Darlington, Consett, Ry' ton, Jarrow and Prudhoe, with the Waterhouses Fabians.

Keir Hardie's speech outlined the position of the movement and its aims in the North East. The main object of the meeting was to secure better organisation for the I.L.P. in the North East, with a more systematic form of propaganda. Hardie believed that the mining district held special opportunities for propaganda and wanted to get a portion of the mining population involved in the movement.<sup>1</sup>

After this mass meeting local I.L.P. meetings became more frequent, Hardie lectured at Bishopwearmouth,<sup>2</sup> Shildon,<sup>3</sup> and Chester le Street,<sup>4</sup> as the local I.L.P. branches became more active. Usworth, although not technically an I.L.P. branch was lectured to by Hardie on 'Labour Problems', T Richardson presided over the very large audience.<sup>5</sup>

At this stage of the movement's history there can be little doubt that much of the I.L.P.'s success was due to the social role which it filled. In a period before the radio,

1. Durham Chronicle, 24.6.98.

2. Durham Chronicle, 28.10.98.

3. Durham Chronicle, 23.6.99. 25.8.99.

4. Durham Chronicle, 30.6.99.

5. Durham Chronicle, 30.6.99.

television, with only the fresh emergence of the mass circulation of newspapers, public meetings were not unnaturally a form of entertainment. The I.L.P. with its organised Sunday outings, weekend schools, free concerts, teas and picnics became a key part of many miners' social lives.

Another purveyor of advanced views was the very interesting 'Yellow Van' movement. Started in 1896<sup>1</sup> the movement was run by H R Aldridge, the assistant secretary to the Land Nationalisation Society, and his wife. They were given financial aid by a group of unnamed local lodges,<sup>2</sup> and drove around in a yellow van instigating local meetings. The aims of the movement were:

"to render it ultimately impossible that men should sit idly by in the lap of luxury whilst their fellows are working day and night for them; to stop the depopulation of their rural districts by rendering it possible for the labourer to become a yeoman farmer, holding land with security of tenure at a fair rent under a local authority which he himself helps to elect; to attract others back to the land and thus relieve the congestion in the Labour market, to abolish the ugly masses of inartistic dwellings which now disfigure the landscape so that well built houses standing each on a sufficiency of land may be created and to build up a home market for the products of industrial workers by covering the land, now labour starved, with a sturdy class of men getting a good livelihood and therefore able to make a good demand for the

1. Durham Chronicle, 3.7.98.
2. Durham Chronicle, 22.1.97.

product of their fellow workers."<sup>1</sup>

The presence of the yellow van around Durham most days of the week for a decade was a good medium for socialist ideas. Tom Richardson was one of the organisers of the movement, which strengthens the view that it was a political organisation.

It was in the immediate pre-1900 period that the first significant demands were made for a minimum wage in the county. The minimum wage demands were a cornerstone of the I.L.P.'s industrial policy and their spread to Durham is an indication of the spread of the movement. The first meeting in Durham was in June 1898 at Usworth<sup>1</sup> when both Joseph Batey and Tom Richardson gave lectures on the need for a minimum wage. These two were to dominate the minimum wage demands in Durham for the next fourteen years. Other people who played an important part in the early movement were J Storey of Cornsay, T Summerbell of Sunderland and R Richardson of Ryhope. Significantly no minimum wage meeting ever suffered from a low attendance.

By 1901 it appears that there was a considerable increase in the grass roots activity of the socialists amongst the miners. Although no significant advance had been made in the field of local elections the spread of propaganda was paving the way for the success of the 1900's. In these elections the I.L.P. would choose its own candidates and sponsor them. On occasion they would be sponsoring someone also sponsored by the local miners' lodge. At other times if money was short they would endorse a candidature but not give any active financial support.

1. Durham Chronicle, 2.7.97.

2. Durham Chronicle, 26.6.98.

### Summary

By 1901 the Durham miners had achieved a degree of success in political elections. The active Franchise Association led by John Wilson had played an important role in bringing about a high level of interest in political affairs amongst the miners, and following the passage of the 1884 Reform Act the D.M.A. council had lost no time in planning the return of miners' M.P.s. At the start of our period it is thus possible to say that the Durham miners were unusually active in political affairs.

Their political intentions were made clear in 1885 when in the General Election they put forward three candidates for safe Liberal seats, all were prominent members of the D.M.A. and all received financial support. Two of the candidates, Wilson and Crawford, were returned with little difficulty, but the third, Trotter, was forced to stand down after pressure from the local Liberal party. The period between the General Elections of 1885 and 1886 marked the high point of the Durham miners' parliamentary achievements before 1901, after 1886 the D.M.A. never had more than one M.P. representing it, although it was one of the largest trade unions in the country.

There were two main reasons for the apparent failure of the D.M.A. to secure the election of more of their leaders to Parliament. The first concerns the seemingly lukewarm relationship between the local Liberals and the D.M.A. The Liberals were in fact dependent on the mining vote to maintain their tight hold over the county, but they were unwilling to allow the miners' candidates to stand for

more than one Liberal seat. This intractability was evident from the start with Trotter's forced abdication from the 1885 elections and was later to become an important factor in bringing about the growth of the Labour Party in the county.

The second reason for the D.M.A.'s Parliamentary failure was the refusal of their leaders to press their case for increased miner representation at local Liberal Party meetings. In the North West Durham and Houghton le Spring constituencies the miners comprised a clear majority of the electorate and were thus in a strong position. By exercising the threat to instruct the miners to abstain at a forthcoming election the D.M.A. could have forced the local Liberals to accept their demands, the alternative being the loss of the seat to the Conservatives. In fact the threat was never used and it would appear that the D.M.A. leaders did little more than politely ask on numerous occasions if they could have a greater number of M.P.s.

In the local elections the miners enjoyed a somewhat greater degree of success. The most important local body was the county council, first set up in 1888 when the miners already had the vote. Thus the miners were not restricted by 'sitting members' who could not be opposed. By 1892 they had gained 15% of the total number of seats and increased this to nearly 20% by 1901.

In the Parish Councils they enjoyed a greater success. The councils were only set up in 1894 and the miners were active in the elections from the outset. Of all the areas studied only one, at Turnall, did they fail to gain a

significant level of representation in the council.

By 1901 they had already gained control of four of the nine councils studied, Great Lumley, Wingate, Usworth and Croxdale, a considerable achievement for such a new political group.

In the other local elections the miners did not enjoy comparable results. In both the Borough and District Council and the Board of Guardians elections the miners' candidates fared worse than they had in other elections. The reasons for this probably lie in the importance of both bodies in the community. The Board of Guardians was a very prestigious body with a very real potential for helping the poor of the area, the Borough and District Councils had a similarly important role to play in the housing of the community. Consequently both bodies were popular and enjoyed an unusually high number of candidates, in the face of such opposition the poor returns of the mining candidates was to be expected.

The reverse appears to have been the case at the school board elections. There was a general lack of interest in the boards and on occasions there were not enough candidates to fill the vacancies let alone to necessitate an election. The miners appear to have been just as guilty of this apathy as anyone, the one exception being in Crook, where a miners' group did take a real interest in the school board and gained considerable electoral success.

One important reason for the miners' success in local elections concerns the structure of the political parties in the county. Both the Liberals and Conservatives had party organisations for the Parliamentary constituencies, but they did not have strong well established parties in the

local constituencies. The increase in the number of local elections after 1888 thus left both parties heavily orientated to Parliamentary elections but lacking a strong organisation at local elections. Partly as a result many of the local elections were not conducted on purely party grounds, and the candidates were forced to deal with local issues rather than national policies. The absence of local party structures and the lack of interest by the D.M.A. in these local elections gave the miners the opportunity to step into the political void and put their union lodges to use as part of a new political grass roots organisation, helping the Liberals before 1901.

By 1901 the first splits between the miners and the Liberal Party were becoming apparent. The formation of several I.L.P. branches in the coalfield in the late 1890's were the first fruits of the 'socialist missionaries' such as Fred Hammill. Although the socialists enjoyed only minimal successes in the local elections they contested they had one crucial advantage over the larger political parties. This was that they were building up an organisation at the grass roots, they were in touch with the demands and needs of the rank and file miners. This factor, linked with the ill-feeling towards the Liberals over the number of D.M.A. M.P.s and the apparent decline in the Liberals' fortunes having been out of office for a decade and experienced a crushing defeat in the 1900 General Election make it apparent that there was ample opportunity for a new political party to gain ground in the Durham coalfield. The miners had made a sound start in the political arena, but after 1901 they were to overcome the problems which still held them back.

### Parliamentary Elections after 1900

The political climate of Durham witnessed considerable change after 1900. The Parliamentary seats situation in 1900 was ten Liberals (one a miner) and five Conservatives in the county. The first change came in 1903 following the death of Sir J A Pease at Barnard Castle. The new candidate Arthur Henderson was the former Liberal Agent, who now, due to the association of his union, the Society of Ironworkers, with the Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.) was persuaded to stand as a Labour candidate. The D.M.A. were initially reluctant to give him their support, and only after he had agreed to support future D.M.A. candidates did they endorse his candidature. The story of Henderson's victory is well known;<sup>1</sup> his own knowledge of Liberalism proved far superior to that of his Liberal opponent, and consequently he gained support from both Liberal and radical electors, winning by forty seven votes in a three cornered contest.

Henderson's election was a great boost for the local radicals, bringing much needed publicity and a degree of respectability to the movement in the North East. Henderson was not, however, a miner, and even though the Barnard Castle constituency contained a large mining vote the seat was not a miner's one. The next by-election in 1904 provided a second Lib-Lab M.P. for the county. The death of the Liberal William Allan at Gateshead allowed the D.M.A. to press its claims for a second miner's seat. The seat, although consistently Liberal for the previous twenty years, was not a safe one.

1. P. Poirier, 'The Advent of the Labour Party' (London 1958) pp. 198-203.



the previous three elections had all produced Liberal majorities of under 1,000 and it was possible that the abstention of the miners' vote could jeopardise the outcome. Eventually the Liberals adopted the D.M.A. candidate, John Johnson,<sup>1</sup> and he won a straight contest by 1,205 votes.<sup>2</sup> His victory was one for the Lib-Labs, and in particular for John Wilson, a close friend. Johnson was a typical Lib-Lab M.P., a methodist preacher, teetotaler, a union official in no way associated with the radical groups in the coalfield.

### The 1906 General Election

There were no further changes in the county before the 1906 election. In the election the Liberals won nine seats (including the two Lib-Labs), the L.R.C. won three, and the Conservatives won three. This represented a swing to the Liberals similar to the rest of the country, but the Labour group received a higher degree of representation than elsewhere. The Labour M.P.s are worthy of further study.

The leading Labour M.P. was Arthur Henderson. Now established as a leading L.R.C. man, Henderson had become popular amongst the miners due largely to his frequent appearances at local meetings and demonstrations, and hard work in his constituency. Unopposed by a Liberal Henderson had a straight fight with a Conservative, Bell, which he won with a 1,652 majority.<sup>3</sup> Henderson's programme was distinctly Liberal in character, but he laid great emphasis on the need

1. F.R. Manders, op cit. p277

2. Durham Chronicle, 29.1.04.

3. Durham Chronicle, 15.7.04.

to repeal the Taff Vale judgement.

J W Taylor only secured the nomination to the Chester le Street division a month before the election, having previously been the L.R.C. candidate for North West Durham.<sup>1</sup> Taylor was a staunch Socialist and refused to compromise his beliefs in order to come to an electoral agreement with the Liberals. The Liberals wanted him to stand as a Lib-Lab candidate, but Taylor bluntly refused, stating that he had resigned from the Liberal Party and under no circumstances would he accept the Liberal whip.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly the Liberals then put forward a candidate of their own, a local minister, the Rev P Tebb. With a Conservative, S D Shafto, also standing, it appeared likely that the Liberal and Labour candidates would weaken each other to the point of letting the Conservative in. Taylor openly declared his views.

"There were many things that wanted amending. Take the Compensation Act. There were many principles in it which must be made more clear and distinct. No good workman was in favour of the coal tax..... He had been a Home Ruler since 1878.... From that time since he had held the view that Ireland should be governed by Irishmen... He was in favour of a distinctly national system of Education. He would not deceive them he would rather that religion was taught outside the schools than in."<sup>3</sup>

In the end Taylor, who had D.M.A., L.R.C. and I.L.P. backing, found that this large mining following remained loyal.

1. R.Gregory, op cit, p70
2. Durham Chronicle, 30.12.05.
3. Durham Chronicle, 5.1.06.

Every colliery in the constituency passed a vote of confidence in him and he was returned with a 3,100 majority over the Conservative.<sup>1</sup>

The third Labour M.P. Tom Summerbell was elected in the twin seat of Sunderland with a Liberal J Stuart. Summerbell was well known for his radical views. The son of a miner, Summerbell became a grocer and was the secretary of the Sunderland Trades Council from 1897 to 1910.<sup>2</sup> He was prominent as an I.L.P. lecturer in the county especially in the coalfield.<sup>3</sup> Much of his work in Sunderland was tied up with the local co-operative society of which he was on the board. His electoral programme was mainly Liberal in character, being shared with his Liberal running-mate but his popularity amongst the miners, who totalled 20% of the electorate, undoubtedly contributed to his majority of 5,551.

At Jarrow the Labour candidate was Pete Curran, a hardened I.L.P. candidate who had already fought elections in Barnsley and Barrow in Furness. Curran was a typical Irish working man, an important factor in an area with a large Irish community. He resolutely opposed the Liberals, stating:

"The Tories would at least give the workers promises, but the Liberals would give them nothing."<sup>4</sup>

Curran was active in the community for several months before the election, but a poll 5,093 when running second to Sir Charles Mark Palmer was a considerable achievement. The Hebburn miners appear to have been a key factor in the large

1. Durham Chronicle, 2.2.06.

2. P. Darvill, op cit. p280

3. Durham Chronicle, 6.9.07.

4. E. Wilkinson, op cit. p113.

Labour vote.<sup>1</sup>

The other mining seats in the county remained unchanged. At Mid Durham John Wilson was returned unopposed without delivering an electoral address. At Gateshead Johnson was opposed by a Conservative, and standing as an orthodox Liberal he increased his majority by 3,000 votes.

The 1906 election thus witnessed the Durham miners' return their first Labour M.P. J W Taylor and it saw both Wilson and Johnson returned with no real difficulty. The two other Labour M.P.s both owed some of their vote to the miners, but neither were mining M.P.s. Similarly Curran, although more concerned with the shipyards in Jarrow, owed many of his votes to the D.M.A. members.

This state of affairs was primarily due to the D.M.A.-Liberal link. The Liberals, intent on holding their seats for their own candidates, failed to allocate the D.M.A. the number of seats their numbers merited. Since Wilson and Johnson were closely linked to the Liberals, they were unwilling to pressurise them because of this and as early as 1900 moves had been made in council to end the D.M.A.-Liberal alliance, although without success.<sup>2</sup> In October 1906 the radicals managed to carry a resolution committing the D.M.A. to running all its candidates independent of political parties, but correspondingly failed to carry a motion linking the D.M.A. with the L.R.C.<sup>3</sup>

The next by-election in Durham came in 1907 following the death of Sir C M Palmer at Jarrow. Curran having worked hard in the constituency since the 1906 election won the seat for

1. Ibid. p112.

2. G.Metcalf, op cit. p445

3. Durham Chronicle, 12.10.06.

the Labour Party. A major factor in the victory was the large number of candidates at the election, besides Curran, a Conservative a Liberal and an Irish Nationalist all contested, Curran winning by 768 votes.<sup>1</sup>

Spurred on by this victory the I.L.P. redoubled its efforts within the county during 1908. The most significant change, however, was the joining of the Labour Party by the M.F.G.B. in 1908, a move which resulted in the D.M.A. becoming linked with the Labour Party. Durham did not vote on the matter due to a legal technicality put forward by John Wilson.

The D.M.A. leadership was now in a difficult position. Wilson and Johnson, staunch Liberals, could technically only be put forward as D.M.A. candidates if they joined the Labour Party, something both refused to do. In the end both stood as Lib-Labs, but the situation had changed. In 1909 the Gateshead Liberals decided to run their own candidate when it appeared Johnson might have to stand as a Labour candidate. They had never been fond of Johnson and the Labour dilemma gave them the excuse they were looking for.<sup>2</sup>

#### The January 1910 General Election

The January 1910 election resulted in ten Liberals, three Conservatives and two Labour candidates being returned in the county. The issues in the election were sharply divided into two groups: for all the candidates involved in the D.M.A. the sole issue of the election was the eight hours agreement; for the remainder the Parliamentary position of the House of Lords was the key.

1. Durham Chronicle, 12.7.07

2. R. Gregory, op cit. p70.

The two Labour victors were A Henderson and J W Taylor. Both were in straight fights with Conservatives. J W Taylor at the start of the campaign issued the following statement:

"Mr Taylor was not one of the men who had signed the agreement under the Eight Hours Act."<sup>1</sup>

Having extracted himself from the disastrous agreement Taylor went on to state his policies in an open letter.

"Social Reform is urgently needed including alteration in the Old Age Pensions Act.... reducing the qualifying age. The Poor Law ought to be broken up and pauperism abolished. Restrictions upon the Franchise ought to be removed and adults including women admitted to the full rights of citizenship. Unemployment with its consequent evils ought to be dealt with at once. The right to work must be won."<sup>2</sup>

Coupled with these policies both Taylor and Henderson indulged in long attacks upon the House of Lords. Both were successful. J W Taylor increased his majority by 2,500, Henderson had his reduced by 62 in a very high poll.

The other two Labour M.P.s were unsuccessful; T Summerbell lost Sunderland, having his 5,551 majority turned into a 1,000 deficit. In a complete reversal of the previous election the Conservatives won both seats. Similarly at Jarrow Pete Curran lost his seat by 67 votes to a Liberal.

The D.M.A. backed two Lib-Lab candidates and two Labour Party candidates. Wilson was fortunate and was returned unopposed, but John Johnson finished bottom of the Gateshead poll, over 3,000 votes behind the Liberal victor. Of the Labour candidates Taylor won easily, but Wm House, the D.M.A.

1. Durham Chronicle, 7.1.10.

2. Durham Chronicle, 14.1.10.

President, unable to get his campaign off the eight hour issue, finished bottom of a three cornered contest at Bishop Auckland, 1,812 votes behind the Liberal.

To some it would appear that the Labour Party, having had the wind taken out of its sails by the Liberals' 1906 Trades Disputes Act, had lost its momentum, the lack of a definite party policy resulting in the poor election results. Simple though the argument appears a study of the individual contests proves illuminating.

The defeat of the two D.M.A. candidates can be in large part explained by the discontent in the county caused by the Eight Hours Agreement. The unrest was directed against the D.M.A. leadership for signing an agreement with which the majority of the rank and file disagreed. Since the start of the unofficial county strike co-incided with the run in to the General election, the widespread hostility felt towards the miners' leaders by many of the rank and file manifested itself in a large anti-D.M.A. vote. Both House and Johnson tried desperately to divert the miners' attention, but to no avail. In the end they had to stress the men's responsibility for the agreement. House stated that:

"He hoped the agreement would be better understood than it was at present. The Durham miners should remember that for years and years they and their leaders had opposed an eight hour day by legislative enactment...But there came a day when Durham miners with their eyes wide open rejoined the Miners' Federation...that action meant that they must cease opposing an eight hour Bill.....The Act must be accepted in Durham as elsewhere, there was no getting away from it."<sup>1</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle, 6.1.10.

House spent the entire campaign being jeered and heckled and Johnson fared little better; opposed by the local Liberals he also found himself opposed by the local miners who marched through Gateshead with banners decrying "Johnson the miners' enemy".<sup>1</sup> The scale of his defeat indicates that he received few miners' votes.

The loss of Curran's seat cannot be attributed to the eight hours dispute. The Liberals put up a candidate with the magical name of Palmer, a factor of no small significance considering Curran's small majority.<sup>2</sup> The absence of the Irish Nationalist candidate who polled over 2,000 votes in 1907, appears to have benefitted the Liberals and Conservatives more than Curran. Probably the key factor was Curran's health. His dynamic personality and drive were invaluable in elections, but since early 1909 illness had weakened him. His election agent, Jack Lawson, said that it was obvious to all he was dying.<sup>3</sup> Hampered by the illness Labour lost the seat, and a week later Curran died.

At Sunderland T Summerbell finished bottom of the poll, although his 11,058 votes were the highest for a Labour candidate in the county. The reasons for this totally unexpected reversal are difficult to pin point. The Sunderland electorate appears to have been unusually fluid in their voting habits, one or both seats changing hands in 1892, 1895, 1900 and 1906. Coupled with this, Summerbell himself was also in poor health and died shortly after the election.

1. Durham Chronicle, 13.11.10. Also, N. Blewett, 'The Peers, the Parties and the People. The British General Elections of 1910.' (London 1972) p. 254.
2. E. Wilkinson, op cit. p114.
3. J. Lawson, "A Man's Life". (London 1932) p110.



Without doubt the January 1910 election dealt a harsh blow to the radical miners. There were now only two mining M.P.s, one a staunch Liberal, the other an ardent socialist. Financial difficulties relating to the 1909 Osborne Judgement prevented the D.M.A. from sponsoring candidates throughout the county, and the fate of House indicated that such a move might still be premature. The long lives of the members for North West Durham, L A Atherley-Jones, and Houghton le Spring, R Cameron, deprived the D.M.A. of the two areas which were sufficiently dominated by miners that a moderate miner might have been successfully returned.

#### The December 1910 General Election

The election of December 1910 gave the Labour Party a chance to redeem itself. The strain of two elections in the same year told on all the parties' finances, resulting in the unopposed return of five candidates in the county, including both J Wilson and J W Taylor. At the election ten Liberals, three Labour and two Conservatives were returned. The sole issue was the conflict between the Commons and the Lords, although Wm House made reference to the Osborne judgement.<sup>1</sup>

The three Labour members were Taylor, A Henderson, returned with a reduced majority and F Goldstone who won one of the Sunderland seats with a majority of 991. The D.M.A. had three candidates in the field, Wilson as a Lib-Lab and Taylor and House as L.R.C. candidates. House at Bishop Auckland was the only one to be opposed: by both a

1. Durham Chronicle, 112.10.

Conservative and a Liberal. A West Auckland man<sup>1</sup> he again failed to win the seat, finishing 537 votes behind the Liberal victor. The defeat was in many ways very creditable, Bishop Auckland was the safest Liberal seat in the county, safeguarded by the large agricultural and ecclesiastical elements in the town and surrounding area.<sup>2</sup> It would appear that the seat was not one where an early Labour candidate would do well. The D.M.A. thus remained with its two contrasting M.P.s.

Two by-elections followed in the county in the pre-war period. The death of R Cameron at Houghton le Spring in 1913 gave House another chance to stand. Problems began from the start, the local Liberals refused to come to any arrangement with the D.M.A. and put forward their own candidate, T Wing, and some of the miners in the division opposed House and heckled his meetings. This was particularly true at Murton, where feelings concerning the eight hours problem still ran high.<sup>3</sup> House finished last in the election, 2,800 behind the Liberal, obviously having only received a low percentage of the mining vote.

In 1914 the death of L A Atherley-Jones left the North West Durham seat vacant. House was approached but refused to stand so the local L.R.C. nominated G Stuart, the little known secretary of the Postman's Federation as their candidate. The miners' lodges were openly critical of the selection of a non-mining candidate,<sup>4</sup> but Stuart persisted with the candidature. The miners registered their

1. Appendix F, Local Leaders. Wm House.

2. H. Pelling, 'The Social Geography . . .' (London 1962) p337

3. Durham Chronicle, 14.3.13.

4. Durham Chronicle, 9.1.14.

disapproval at the polls where Stuart finished bottom, over 2,000 votes behind the victorious Liberal.

The post-1910 by-elections make it very difficult for us to gauge the advance of Labour. In both elections the choice of candidates appears to have cost the party large numbers of votes. It is consequently unwise to place much significance on these elections, although they do obviously show that the Labour Party was not enjoying a very successful period of growth at this time.

TABLE II

Parliamentary Boroughs

	<u>1904</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>Jan 1910</u>	<u>Dec 1910</u>
Durham City		Cons	Cons	Cons
Sunderland 1		Lib	Cons	Lib
2		Lab	Cons	Lab
Darlington		Cons	Lib	Cons
Gateshead	Lib/Lab	Lib/Lab	Lib	Lib
Hartlepool		Lib	Lib	Lib
South Shields		Lib	Lib	Lib

County Constituencies

	<u>1906</u>	<u>Jan 1910</u>	<u>Dec 1910</u>	
Mid Durham	Uncontested Lib/Lab	Uncontested Lib/Lab	Uncontested Lib/Lab	
N W Durham	Lib	Lib	Lib	<u>1913</u> Lib
S E Durham	Lib	Lib	Lib	
Bp Auckland	Lib	Lib	Lib	
Bnd Castle	<u>1902</u> Lab	Lab	Lab	
Chester le St	Lab	Lab	Lab	
Jarrow	Lib	<u>1907</u> Lab	Lib	
Houghton le Spring	Lib	Lib	Uncontested Lib	<u>1912</u> Lib

	<u>1906</u>	<u>Jan 1910</u>	<u>Dec 1910</u>
Lib	8	9	9
Lib/Lab	2	1	1
Cons	2	3	2
Lab	3	2	3

#### The Lib-Lab - I.L.P. Debate

The debate over the relative decline of the Liberal Party and the growth of the Labour Party before 1914 still continues. It would appear that politics had not yet become dominated by national issues, and that there were considerable differences in political behaviour in differing parts of the country. In Durham the Liberals were traditionally strong; between 1885 and 1913 they held every seat at least once, the Conservatives winning only six of the fifteen seats and the L.R.C. four.

A brief study of the tables summarising the county's election results between 1885 and 1914 reveals the changing fortunes of the parties. The Liberals were very successful up to and including 1892 when they won every seat in the county. The Conservatives' high point came in 1900 when they won five seats to the Liberals' ten.

The entry of the L.R.C. into the elections did not appear to greatly harm the Liberal position. In 1906 the Liberals increased their numbers to eleven, while the L.R.C.'s three seats were won at the expense of the Conservatives. In 1910 the Liberals maintained their total of eleven seats in both elections while the L.R.C.s and Conservatives' totals changed.

It would appear at first sight therefore that the Liberal

position was not significantly affected by the L.R.C.'s entry into the field, the Conservatives being the ones who suffered. However, if one splits the results into the boroughs and county constituencies a different picture emerges. In the boroughs (see Tables I and II) the Conservatives did well. Only Gateshead and South Shields were not won by them at some time during the period. The mining vote was low in these areas and not surprisingly the L.R.C. only won one seat, Sunderland in 1906 and December 1910. The Conservatives actually held the majority of borough seats in 1900.

In the County constituencies (see Tables I and II) the Conservatives fared badly, only in South East Durham (three times) and in Houghton le Spring (once) did they manage to win seats. The county constituencies were the miners' strongholds. It was here that the L.R.C. enjoyed most success. Barnard Castle (after 1903) and Chester le Street (after 1906) regularly returned L.R.C. men and Jarrow was also won between 1907 and 1910. These Labour gains were made at the expense of the Liberals.

It would appear that after 1900 while the Liberals were increasing their control over the boroughs, their grip over the county constituencies was being tested by the L.R.C. After the loss of the Barnard Castle and Chester le Street seats the Liberals stabilised the situation, but were either unable or unwilling to unseat Henderson or Taylor, both of whom had no Liberal opposition in December 1910.<sup>1</sup> In the boroughs three of the five Liberal seats held were marginal

1. N. Blewett, 'The Peers, the Parties and the People.'  
pp246-7.

by December 1910 (held with under a 10% majority), while only one of the county constituencies (South East Durham) was a marginal seat.

The emergence of the L.R.C. in the North East caused considerable concern amongst the Liberals. The Northern Liberal Federation was formed by Samuel Story "to defeat the advance of the I.L.P. in the North East".<sup>1</sup> This fear appears to have been very real,<sup>2</sup> with many Liberals expecting to be swamped by the rising Labour tide.

It is perhaps significant that in 1903 when Herbert Gladstone and Ramsey MacDonald were making an electoral arrangement between the L.R.C. and the Liberal Party, the Durham constituencies were largely ignored. Only in Sunderland, where with twin seats the opposition of a Labour candidate would probably have cost the Liberals one seat and possibly two, was an arrangement made. Significantly the seats had both been won by the Conservatives in 1900.

The three cornered Liberal - L.R.C. - Conservative contests did not follow any particular pattern. The L.R.C. won at Barnard Castle, Chester le Street and Jarrow (once), the Liberals won at Bishop Auckland, North West Durham and Houghton le Spring, the Conservatives failed to win any. This suggests that the great Liberal fear of the L.R.C. and Liberal candidates sharing the miners' vote and enabling the Conservatives to win the seat was unfounded.

It has been suggested that by 1910 the Liberals, having

1. F. Bealey, 'The Electoral Arrangement between the Labour Representation Committee and the Liberal Party.' pp. 367-8. Journal of Modern History No 28, Dec 1956.
2. For Wales see K. O. Morgan, 'Wales in British Politics 1868-1922'. (Cardiff 1963) pp. 240-274.

overcome the main threat of the L.R.C. attack were moving towards a situation where they could unite the L.R.C. with their own Lib-Lab members. The Liberal candidates standing in harness with both Summerbell and Goldstone at Sunderland can be seen as evidence of this.

This does not appear to have been the case throughout the coalfield. The I.L.P. had not succeeded in gaining thousands of mining converts to socialism, of that there can be little doubt, the majority of support for I.L.P. and L.R.C. candidates did not come for their socialist platform, but for their general industrial and social policies, some of which undoubtedly appealed to the rank and file. Similarly only a small percentage of miners were ardent Liberals, but before 1900 the Liberals' policies had appealed to them more than any other party's.

In Durham the great Labour rallying point was the demands for a legal minimum wage. After the hardship of the sliding-scale and conciliation board some miners had been agitating for a minimum wage since 1892. The D.M.A. had been forced to adopt this stance when it joined the M.F.G.B. in 1907. When the Minimum Wage strike in 1912 produced only a very toothless act the Durham men voted overwhelmingly to continue the strike until their demands were met.

The introduction of the Minimum Wage Act by the Liberal Government highlights the difficulties which the Liberals faced in trying to accommodate the L.R.C.'s more radical demands. Any sort of wage bill was a contravention of the Liberal belief in 'laissez-faire' and many staunch Liberals were accordingly dismayed to find the Liberal leaders introducing a Minimum Wage Bill. For the L.R.C. the bill was an attempt by the Liberals

to gain their support which failed because it did not go far enough. As a result in Durham the Forward Movement gained support on an unprecedented scale when it attacked the Act, and numerous independent meetings were held throughout the county before the outbreak of war.

Failure to gain the miners' support on this one issue was to prove a major factor in the Liberals' inability to overpower the Labour Party. With so much Labour support dependent on this one demand, Liberal failure emphasised that the Liberals no longer served the needs of the miners best.

A second major factor in the emergence of the Labour Party as a permanent group in the North East concerns the allocation of seats to miners' candidates. The Liberals owed much of their domination of the county to the support of the miners and yet they consistently failed to give the miners' candidates a chance to contest seats for the Liberals. For much of the period John Wilson was the only miners' Liberal M.P. in the county. After 1900 it became increasingly apparent that if the miners were to gain increased representation at a Parliamentary level this could only be achieved through actively opposing Liberal candidates rather than supporting them. The formation of the L.R.C. at this time provided them with a political party through which this challenge could have been made. Had the Liberals allocated more seats to miners' candidates before 1906 the L.R.C. would have experienced far greater difficulty in gaining a foothold in the parliamentary elections.

The extent of the swing within the D.M.A. away from Liberalism was shown in 1914 when a lodge ballot was held for



the election of five prospective Parliamentary candidates. The result of the ballot was that the following five men were selected: J Robson 314 votes, J Gilliland 313, J Batey 287, J Lawson 281 and W P Richardson 273.<sup>1</sup> All five had been very active in the L.R.C. and the I.L.P. during the previous decade and showed no sympathy with the Liberals; the Liberals who stood both finished well down the poll with few votes. By 1914 the full weight of the D.M.A. was behind the Labour Party and the Liberals were no longer a major force in the union.

1. Durham Chronicle, 20.3.14.

## County Council Elections after 1901

### The 1904 Election

After their limited success in the 1901 elections and spurred on by the more radical lodges, the miners once again increased their efforts in the 1904 elections. They had eleven men returned unopposed, J W Taylor (Collierley), J Robson (Elvet), J Johnson (Edmondsley), J Errington (Felling), T Robinson (Ferryhill), C Barker (Hunwick), T Forster (Sherburn), T Davies (Teesdale), J Rudd (Witton le Wear), T Elliot (Spennymoor) and J Davison (Lambton). Of these, Taylor, Johnson and Elliot were union officials, Robinson an overseer and the remainder checkweighmen. Only Taylor and Rudd can be classed as I.L.P. men in 1904.

In the contests the election was fought on the Education Act. The Liberals opposed it, and Conservatives supported it and the I.L.P. view was stated by<sup>T</sup> Richardson:

"I am not a believer in it, but recognise that now it is a law upon the statute book it must be assisted in the working of it to the best advantage of all parties."<sup>1</sup>

Of the fourteen miners' candidates in contested divisions ten were returned.<sup>2</sup> They were J Bruce (Chester le Street), S Mawson (Coundon), T Armstrong (Easington), B Potts (Eldon), R Barron (Esh), J Lazenby (Hebburn), J Husband (Rainton), R Richardson (Ryhope), T Hopper (Thornley) and T Richardson (Washington). All bar Hopper were checkweighmen, bringing the number of checkweighmen up to fifteen. The I.L.P. was well represented with R Richardson, T Richardson and J Bruce all prominent members.

1. Durham Chronicle, 26.2.04.

2. Durham Chronicle, 26.2.04. 4.3.04.

The four unsuccessful candidates were F Robinson (Wolsingham), J Reece (Lanchester), J Gowland (Crook), and S Whitely (Brandon), Gowland being a known I.L.P. man. The overall 1904 election proved very successful for the miners, with four Aldermen they had a total of twenty five seats on the council, 25% of its total. Of these the I.L.P. had six members.

#### The 1907 Election

The 1907 elections were the first of any significance in the county since Labour's Parliamentary successes of 1906. The miners campaigned on housing, sanitation and health, relating all three to the high death rate in mining areas.<sup>1</sup> Ten miners were returned unopposed, J Robson, J Davison, R Barron, T Elliot, T Bell (Tudhoe), J Herriotts (Coundon), T Richardson, J Lazenby, R Richardson and J Errington. The I.L.P. did well, with both Richardsons returned, Elliot having joined, and Bell and Herriotts being branch Presidents, bringing the I.L.P. representation to over 40% of the miners' seats.

In the contests the miners put forward a record eighteen candidates in the twenty seven contests.<sup>2</sup> The results were disastrous, with only two of the miners' candidates being returned. The two men who won were G Robson (Bishopwearmouth) and T Husband (Houghton le Spring); Husband was an I.L.P. man. The men who lost were S Whitely, W Kidd (Shildon), J Bell and T Robinson (both Ferryhill), J Storey (Birtley), J Swan (Collierley), J Bruce, T Hughes (Edmondsley), R Hunter (Rainton), E Stoker (Ryton), T Davies (Teesdale), S Armes,

1. Durham Chronicle, 22.2.07.

2. Durham Chronicle, 1.3.07. 8.3.07.

T Leonard (Witton le Wear), C Barker, R Stubbs and C Daley (Lanchester). Of these, Kidd, Bell, Storey, Swan, Hughes, Bruce, Armes, Leonard and Whitely were all I.L.P. members.

The reason for the catastrophic defeat of the miners' candidates is not immediately obvious. Besides the I.L.P. men several prominent Liberals, including R Stubbs and T Robinson were defeated. The Liberals still held control of the council and the miners held seventeen seats, so it would appear that neither a mass rejection of Liberalism nor of miners' candidates took place. The loss of the Ferryhill and Collierley seats can be attributed to three cornered contests, and the Westoe seat to the candidature of the highly popular Canon Moore Ede. The growing number of ministers of religion, general practitioners and tradesmen standing for election may have been partly responsible for the miners' lost ground.

#### The 1910 Election

In the 1910 election the miners reduced the number of candidates they put into the field. Out of thirty nine uncontested seats the miners had only nine, a far lower figure than usual.<sup>1</sup> The election was dominated by one issue, the eight hours agreement, particularly keen contests taking place at Brandon, Haswell and Esh.<sup>2</sup> The nine unopposed candidates were F Blackwell (Easington), J Robson, G Robson, T Richardson (I.L.P.), R Richardson (I.L.P.), T Forster, J Elliott (I.L.P.), J Errington and J Herriotts (I.L.P.).

1. Durham Chronicle, 25.2.10.

2. Durham Chronicle, 18.2.10.

The miners had candidates in eighteen of the twenty six contested elections, but despite improving on the 1907 total they had only seven men returned. The seven were F Chapman (West Auckland), J Adair (Brandon)<sup>1</sup>, J Bell (Ferryhill), J Tate (Herrington), P Lee (Thornley), J Lazenby and W Bulmer (Tanfield). Bell, Lee and Adair were I.L.P. members. The eleven who were defeated were S Whitely (I.L.P.), J Gilliland (Birtley + I.L.P.), T Davies, T Herriotts (I.L.P.), R Barron, M Stephenson (Chester le Street + I.L.P.), T Bell (I.L.P.), J Peacock (Shildon + I.L.P.), R Neal (Lanchester), R Murraty (Houghton) and J Franks (Westoe + I.L.P.).

The election left the miners with twenty members of the council, about 20% of the total, and of the twenty, seven were I.L.P. members. This indicates the growing influence of the I.L.P. amongst the miners. The defeat of seven I.L.P. men in the election was probably due in part to the I.L.P.'s advocating an eight hours act, against which the Durham miners struck in 1910.

#### The 1913 Election

The 1913 election was the last of the pre-war era. The miners put forward a total of twenty eight candidates for the seventy eight seats. The election proved to be a non-event, campaigning was on a very low key and no significant issues emerged throughout the county.<sup>2</sup> Eleven of the miners were returned unopposed: T Forster, J Bell, J Davison, W Bulmer, G Robson, J Tate, R Richardson, J Lazenby, T Richardson, T Davies (Westoe) and W Johnson (Blaydon). Only Bell and the two

1. Appendix F, Local Leaders. J Adair.

2. Durham Chronicle, 28.2.13. 7.3.13.

Richardsons were known I.L.P. men.

Only eight of the seventeen miners' candidates involved in elections were returned. The eight were J Lund (Elvet), F Tucker (Stanley), J Lawson (Pelton), J Peacock (Shildon), T Bell, P Lee, M Brown (Eighton Banks) and W Brown (Lamesley). The most interesting aspect of the election was that the first seven men were all active I.L.P. members. The defeated candidates were W Cook (Chester le Street), J Adair, F Chapman, T Owen (Cornforth), T Davies, J Corrigan (Houghton), H Mason (Shotton), F Blackwell (Easington) and J Williamson (Thornley). Only Cook and Adair were known I.L.P. men. J Errington had been made an alderman before the election bringing the number of miners' aldermen to five, and the total miners' representation to twenty four.

The miners had twenty five seats on the council (T Forster became an Alderman during 1913) at the outbreak of war, of these the I.L.P. could claim at least eleven, or nearly fifty per cent of the miners' members. The highest previous number of seats held by the miners had been in 1904 when twenty four seats were held, but only six of them had been I.L.P. men. The post 1904 period was thus one of fluctuating mining representation coupled with the growth of the I.L.P. within it. During the entire period only Sherburn was continuously represented by a miner, nine elections in all.

At the county level it appears that the socialists did better than at a Parliamentary level. A fifty per cent representation of mining seats was a highly commendable performance. Since only twenty electoral areas in 1888 had over 1,000 miners, twenty five seats held in 1913 indicates a

reasonable record of achievement by the miners.

The Miners' Political Representation on the County Council 1904-13

<u>Those Elected</u>	<u>1904</u>	<u>1907</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1913</u>
Nos of Uncontested I.L.P. miners	2	5	3	3
Nos of Contested I.L.P. miners	3	1	3	7
Nos of Uncontested Liberal miners	9	5	6	8
Nos of Contested Liberal miners	11	1	4	1
Nos Aldermen	4	5	4	4 (5)
<u>Those Not Elected</u>				
Nos of I.L.P. miners' candidates	1	9	7	2
Nos of Liberal miners' candidates	3	7	4	7
Total nos of miners' candidates	29	28	27	28

# The Interests of the Miners on the County Council

The growth of the I.L.P. had a marked effect on the activities of the miners on the county council. The absence of attendance figures during the later part of our period prevents us from comparing the I.L.P. members' attendances with those of the Liberal miners, but a study of the committees allows us to see where their main fields of interest lay.<sup>1</sup>

## Number of miners on each Committee

Committee	Size of Committee	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907
Local Government	25	3	3	4			6
Allotments	24	4	4				6
Works	26	2	2	3			3
Contageous Disease	24	0	0	3			3
Finance	24	3	3	4			4
County Rates	13	0	0	0			2
Health	26	5	5	6			5
Asylum	24	5	4	4			4
Earls House	22	3	3	6			7
Standing Joint	12	4	4	4			4
Education	26	5	5	7			6
Midwives	-	-	-	-			-

1. County of Durham, Minutes of County Council Meetings  
Nos 9-14. D.C.R.O./D.C.C.



Committee	Size of Committee	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913 <sup>1</sup>
Local Government	25	6	6	6	6	6	8
Allotments	24	9	9	8	8	8	10
Works	26	3	3	3	3	3	5
Contageous Disease	24	3	3	5	5	5	5
Finance	24	4	4	3	3	3	5
County Rates	13	2	2	0	0	0	2
Health	26	5	5	6	6	6	6
Asylum	24	7	7	5	5	5	4
Earls House	22	7	7				
Standing Joint	12	4	4	5	5	6	4
Education	26	6	6	9	9	9	4
Midwives				3	3	3	4

The only other minor committee was the electoral Supply Committee set up in 1904 and had four miners on it.

It became very obvious when studying the committees where the I.L.P. men put their priorities. The I.L.P. was represented on every committee almost throughout the period. The representation on the Local Government, the Works, the Finance, the County Rates and the Standing Joint Committees was minimal consisting of one or at most two members. There were, however, a correspondingly large number of I.L.P. men on all the committees dealing directly or indirectly with health. These were the Contageous Disease, the Health, the Earls House, the Midwives and - most represented of all - the Asylum Committees.

1. County of Durham, Minutes of County Council Meetings.  
Nos 9-14. D.C.R.O./D.C.C.

The Education Committee remained the main goal of I.L.P. members, it contained several top I.L.P. men, including T Richardson, R Richardson and Jack Adair, usually having four I.L.P. men on it at any one time. The only other committee to be unusually popular amongst the I.L.P. men was the Allotments Committee which included both Richardsons, Peter Lee, J Lawson and T Herriotts amongst its members.

The I.L.P. and L.R.C. mining members appear to have been on more committees than their Liberal counterparts. The D.M.A. Liberal leaders, Wilson, Galbraith and Johnson, were on four, three and two committees respectively. Three long standing rank and file Liberal members did better, T Forster being on four, W Palmer on five and J Errington on three. The L.R.C. group containing Labour members who had not joined the I.L.P. was more active. Wm House was on six committees including the Education and Health Committees, and Jas Robson was on five. But the I.L.P. group, most of whom were only elected for a period between 1901 and 1913, and not the whole span, were best represented of all, with T Richardson on seven, R Richardson, J Elliott and T Bell all on five and J Herriotts on four.

The industrious attitudes of the new I.L.P. members on the committees was partly counteracted by the greater influence of the long serving non-socialist miners. On five committees the older mining members had served for over fifteen years. Inevitably they had come to fully understand the working of the committee and were treated with due appreciation. The Health Committee was dominated by three members, Wm House (1893-1913), T Forster (1895-1913) and Wm Palmer (1896-1913). Two other bodies had two long serving members, the Local Government Committee with J Wilson

(1894-1913) and T Robinson (1896-1913); and the Standing Joint Committee with Wm House (1892-1913) and Wm Palmer (1899-1913). Wm Palmer also sat on the important Education Committee (1895-1912) and S Galbraith sat on the Finance Committee (1889-1913).

The I.L.P. group although lacking the influence of the long serving members, displayed a sustained interest in the running of the council which was not apparent amongst the Liberals. The attendance records of the I.L.P. members were somewhat exceptional with very few absentees from council or committee meetings. The Liberals appear to have been lax in this field, the worst offender being John Wilson, who was actually replaced as the council chairman in 1910 partly due to his irregular attendance. Between 1908 and 1913 he managed to attend only three of the quarterly meetings of the council.

The miners' group was still a minority in the council, but their division into socialists and non-socialists was not as serious as might be expected. This was partly due to the fact that the majority of work was done in committee and council business tended to be of a non-political nature. In 1904 the united miners' vote was largely responsible for the rejection in general council of a scheme to introduce an educational efficiency test for all county council employees. In the immediate pre-war years the I.L.P. members began to exert considerably influence in committees, the extent of this influence was demonstrated in 1913 when the I.L.P.-dominated Usworth and Washington Parish Councils petitioned the Durham County Council's Schools Buildings Sub-Committee.<sup>1</sup>

1. Durham County Council Minutes, School Buildings Sub-Committee, 3.10.13. et subs.

The Usworth Council demanded that the present boys' school be replaced by a new one, and that the planned girls' school be increased in size by 100 places. The Washington Council requested that a new infant school be built in the area rather than the proposed enlargement of the old one. The I.L.P. members on the committee supported these demands and managed to have them accepted by the remainder of the committee. As a result of this pressure a new school was being built in Washington and the Usworth Girls' school enlarged the following year, and negotiations concerning a new boys' school in Usworth were underway.

Concrete gains such as these, made by the I.L.P. members in council, highlighted the possibilities of the movement. The lack of interest and drive of many of the older D.M.A. leaders (bar House) effectively prevented them from leading the miners' group in the council. The gradual emergence of a young, active and hardworking I.L.P. group inevitably attracted other miners' support. Consequently this relatively inexperienced group came to have a greater say in the miners' activities on the council than their numbers merited.

### The R.D.C. Elections

The Rural District Council elections provide an interesting contrast between the concentrated mining vote within the Chester le Street area, and the more diluted mining vote within the Durham area.

#### Number of Miners returned

	<u>1904</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>1907</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>1910</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>1913</u> <sup>4</sup>
Durham R.D.C.	5	4 (9)	6 (8)	8 (10)
Chester le Street R.D.C.	8 (18)	7 (19)	8 (13)	10 (13)

Brackets denote total number of miners' candidates.

The rise in numbers, small though it was, covered considerable changes within the R.D.C.s. The Durham R.D.C. proved a difficult area for the I.L.P. to make advances into, J Lund was the only known I.L.P. man to hold a seat in any of the four elections. In 1907 T H Richardson was defeated at Sherburn standing as an I.L.P. candidate, as was J Wignall in 1910 and 1913. The paucity of material on the political affiliations on the council could, however, conceal greater I.L.P. advances.

In Chester le Street the I.L.P. enjoyed considerable success. In 1904 five I.L.P. men were returned, E Cook for Pelton, Wm Bottoms and R Bolam at Usworth, and T Richardson and P Sweeney at Washington. <sup>5</sup> A further three I.L.P. men were amongst those defeated. The election of Tom Richardson as vice-chairman of the R.D.C. was another major advance for the I.L.P., Richardson thus became the first local I.L.P.

1. Durham Chronicle, 18.3.04.
2. Durham Chronicle, 15.3.07.
3. Durham Chronicle, 18.3.10.
4. Durham Chronicle, 14.3.13.
5. Durham Chronicle, 22.4.09.

member to hold an important council post.

In 1907 five I.L.P. men were elected in Chester le Street, M Handy being the only new member; of those who were unsuccessful seven were I.L.P. men. In 1910 Richardson stood down, being elected as Labour M.P. for Whitehaven, but the I.L.P. increased its numbers to six. Those defeated included two more prominent I.L.P. men, J Gilliland<sup>1</sup> and J Curtiss.

The 1913 election proved to be the pre-war high point of the I.L.P. Of the ten miners' candidates returned seven were I.L.P. men, and one of them, E Cook, was elected Chairman of the R.D.C. Since two of the defeated candidates were I.L.P. men, the I.L.P. sponsored or endorsed nine out of the thirteen mining candidates.

1. Appendix F, Local Leaders. J. Gilliland.

### Town and District Council Elections

The town and district council again reflected the variations between the different areas of the coalfield. Durham City, despite its small mining population, did not have a mining candidate before 1918. The closest it came to having a working class councillor was in 1904 when a co-operative nominee was defeated by 31 votes in a by-election.<sup>1</sup> Similarly at Gateshead the miners failed to secure a seat on the local town council despite the L.R.C. putting forward candidates at each election.<sup>2</sup>

The U.D.C. results for three areas, Houghton, Brandon and Willington are given beneath.

#### Numbers of Miners returned

	<u>Size of body</u>	<u>1904</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>1907</u> <sup>4</sup>	<u>1910</u> <sup>5</sup>	<u>1913</u> <sup>6</sup>
Brandon U.D.C.	15	2 (6)	4 (8)	7 (9)	7 (7)
Willington U.D.C.	11	4	3 (3)	4	3 (5)
Houghton U.D.C.	12	5 (9)	5 (6)	5	6 (10)

Brackets denote the total number of miners' candidates.

If we take each district in turn we can assess any important changes which took place. In Brandon there is little evidence of any great I.L.P. advance. Only G Luke, elected in both 1910 and 1913, was definitely an I.L.P.

1. Durham Chronicle, 25.11.04.

2. F.R. Manders, op cit. p49

3. Durham Chronicle, 18.3.07.

4. Durham Chronicle, 8.3.07. 15.3.07.

5. Durham Chronicle, 25.3.10.

6. Durham Chronicle, 14.3.13.

candidate. With two strong I.L.P. groups in the area this is surprising. The significant change in the elections came in 1910 when for the first time the miners appear to have been organised. Whereas in earlier elections as many as four miners had contested one seat, in 1910 there were two miners' candidates for each ward; immediately the numbers of miners' candidates failing to secure election fell. Whether this organisation was done by the local lodge, the D.M.A., the L.R.C. or an I.L.P. group cannot be determined, what is obvious, however, is that all these groups must have worked together or else their candidates would have opposed each other. It is a definite indication of the growing political consciousness in the area.

The Willington miners maintained a reasonable representation on the council throughout the period. J Strickland, the President of Willington I.L.P. held his seat throughout and G Lauder was elected Chairman of the council in 1907, a position he held until his retirement from the body in 1913.

The Houghton le Spring U.D.C. consisting of twelve members was strongly influenced by the miners, who held about half the seats throughout. Poor information on the local I.L.P. groups makes it impossible to assess the full I.L.P. strength on the council, but in 1913 two I.L.P. men, T Hunter, the President of Houghton I.L.P. and T Husband, an I.L.P. lecturer, were elected. That there may have been more I.L.P. men amongst the miners is suggested by the fact that Husband was elected vice-chairman of the Council.

Thus by 1914 both on the Willington and Houghton U.D.C.s the miners had gained a considerable degree of representation. On one a miner was Chairman, on the other the vice-chairman, and on both the I.L.P. was well represented.



The Board of Guardians

The Board of Guardians presents us with several of the usual problems concerning the identification of candidates and their political views. While the Durham Board was relatively easily identified the Sedgfield Board caused many difficulties, not least being the total absence of any material on the 1910 elections. This was due largely to the coverage of the Eight Hours dispute by most newspapers. The material for the other elections is sparse and proved almost unworkable. Beneath are the Durham and Sedgfield results that are available.

Numbers of Miners returned

	<u>1904</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>1907</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>1910</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>1913</u> <sup>4</sup>
Durham	7 (9)	7 (10)	5 (8)	6
Sedgfield	2	2		2

Brackets denote the total number of miners' candidates.

The growth of the I.L.P. in most other areas of local government was not matched on the Board of Guardians, T Bell at Tudhoe was the only known I.L.P. man on the Durham Board in 1904 and 1907, and T Kidd of Willington the only known I.L.P. man in 1910 and 1913. The failure of the I.L.P. to gain election to this body may well be related to the declining role played by the Guardians, particularly after the 1908 Old Age Pensions Act and the 1911 National Insurance Act.

1. Durham Chronicle, 18.3.04.
2. Durham Chronicle, 15.3.07.
3. Durham Chronicle, 25.3.10.
4. Durham Chronicle, 14.3.13.

### Parish Councils

The Parish Council elections after 1900 provide us with the most detailed picture of the growth of the miners' political activities. The miners having gained a foothold on every parish council in our sample before 1900 in the annual elections, tried to improve on their position in the new triennial elections. The results are tabulated beneath.

### Number of miners returned

<u>Area</u>	<u>1901</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>1904</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>1907</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>1910</u> <sup>4</sup>	<u>1913</u> <sup>5</sup>	<u>Comment</u>
Sherburn	2	1	2	2	2	
Tunstall	1	0	3	-	8	Miner Control 1913
Croxdale	1	4	3	2	2	
Gt Lumley	5	5	5	3	1	
Trimdon	3	2	4	3	-	
Wingate	3	-	-	-	-	
Washington	3	4	6	5	-	Miner Control 1907+1913
Usworth	8	9	11	14	15	Miner Control 1901-1913
Cornforth	-	-	-	10	8	Miner Control 1910-1913

As can be seen from the table, several of the existing areas changed after 1901. Wingate was split into three councils which made it impossible to complete the study; a study of Cornforth in 1910 and 1913 takes its place. In 1913 Trimdon Parish Council involved only three men being elected for the old

1. Durham Chronicle, 8.3.01.
2. Durham Chronicle, 11.3.04.
3. Durham Chronicle, 8.3.07.
4. Durham Chronicle, 18.3.10.
5. Durham Chronicle, 21.3.13.

Trimdon parish. In 1910 there is no record of the election in Tunstall in any local newspapers, and similarly with Washington in 1913.

The material which is left enables us to study the changing relationship between the numbers of miners elected and the numbers belonging to the I.L.P. The 1901 and 1904 elections were setbacks for the miners, losing seats on both occasions. In 1901 no-one stood as an official I.L.P. candidate although some of those elected for Usworth were I.L.P. men. In 1904 thirteen I.L.P. men were elected, three were returned in Washington, two at Croxdale and eight at Usworth. This turnabout reflected the rapid growth of the I.L.P. in the county after 1901.

In 1907 the miners made a gain of nine seats over 1904. Twenty one I.L.P. men were returned, the I.L.P. contesting every election and being unsuccessful only at Croxdale and Lumley. The I.L.P.'s most successful elections were at Usworth where eleven I.L.P. members were returned and at Washington where five were elected. They also appear to have been influential at Tunstall where three I.L.P. miners contested the seat for the first time and were successfully returned.

The 1910 election witnessed further I.L.P. gains despite the obvious backlash of the Eight Hours dispute on their candidates. Twenty one I.L.P. men were returned (the Tunstall figures are absent) and only Trimdon and Lumley did not have an I.L.P. member, Lumley having a radical, W Hawking, but there is no definite evidence that he was an I.L.P. member. In Trimdon the I.L.P. lecturer Wm Moore did not seek re-election.

After the 1913 election the miners were still in a strong position on the councils. Only at Lumley did their representation fall markedly, which is surprising since the number of pits in the area was increasing. At Tunstall all eight miners elected were I.L.P. men, and at Usworth all fifteen miners, the entire council, were I.L.P. members. The Usworth success was a sign of the pattern of the post-war elections.

By 1913 although the miners only controlled the Usworth Tunstall and Cornforth councils there had already been much to indicate their potential strength. Of the nine councils studied (excluding Cornsay after 1898) the miners had won control of seven of them at some point: Wingate, Usworth, Washington, Great Lumley, Cornforth, Croxdale and Tunstall. Of the seven the first five had experienced large miners' majorities. In the two non-miner controlled councils the Sherburn miners had secured three seats out of ten, and at Trimdon four out of fifteen.

One surprising aspect of the parish council elections is the lack of consistency of the miners in returning their candidates. At Wingate, Lumley, Croxdale and Washington drops of up to six seats by the miners at a single election were not uncommon. Excepting Usworth a degree of this unpredictability was present in all the areas studied.

The fortunes of the I.L.P. are somewhat easier to gauge. They gained representation on all the councils bar Cornforth, about which we know very little. They were a majority on the Washington Council (1907-10), the Usworth Council (1904 onwards) and Tunstall (1913 onwards), and in every election after their advance of 1904 there was an undoubted trend towards

an increasing number of miners' candidates being L.R.C. nominees or I.L.P. members. The movement appears to have become very strong at this grass roots level by 1914.

During the entire period only three miners were returned at every election; these were Wm Bottoms, M Handy and W Shaw, all of Usworth. Two men's careers spanned the period but did not contest every election; they were R Bolam at Usworth who missed the 1896 election and R Smith at Croxdale who missed the 1896 and 1897 elections. The only other member of unusually long duration was Jas Laird of Washington, elected in 1898 and returned until 1904, whereafter he was elected for Usworth.

The Growth of the I.L.P. after 1900

The success of the I.L.P. in the local government elections before the war suggests that the party had built up a strong grass roots organisation in the county. In Durham the I.L.P. appears to have had several main focal points, the most prominent being Usworth, Bishop Auckland, Sunderland and Consett.<sup>1</sup> The Bishop Auckland I.L.P. was a centre for the South Durham I.L.P. branches including the strong Darlington, Crook and Shildon groups. Similarly Consett was the centre for the North West Durham I.L.P., including the large Stanley, Annfield Plain and Spen branches. Sunderland remained apart from the adjoining I.L.P. branches concentrating on her own large populace, but several of their leaders, notably Summerbell and Naysmith, did lecture frequently in the coalfield.

The driving force behind the I.L.P. in the county was Usworth. The local branch was formed in 1902 by Tom Richardson together with J Bruce Glasier, becoming one of the first large I.L.P. bodies in the county. Richardson's personal enthusiasm stimulated the branch to become one of the most active in the coalfield. He was well regarded by the I.L.P. hierarchy and many leaders came to Usworth to speak including Philip Snowdon, Keir Hardie, Mr and Mrs Glasier, Bob Smillie, Mrs Pankhurst, J W Taylor and J Parker (M.P. for Halifax).

As early as 1903 Usworth's radicalism was well known.

"A flourishing branch of the I.L.P. has its headquarters in the hall, and the chief spokesmen of that party are as familiar with Usworth as with Glasgow, for there is not a

1. Appendix D, List of known I.L.P. branches
2. Durham Chronicle, 17.1.02.

man of prominence who holds advanced views of political or social questions, or is connected with the I.L.P., the S.D.F., the L.R.C. or any other Socialist bodies with similar initial titles, but is booked for a night or two at Usworth when journeying from South to North or vice-versa."<sup>1</sup>

While Tom Richardson dominated the early years of the I.L.P. in the county, gaining election to most local bodies and encouraging others to do so, a number of local socialists kept interest up with regular lectures. One of the earliest and most respected of the I.L.P. lecturers was the Rev W E Moll of St Philips Church, Newcastle. Moll became active with the Durham I.L.P. early in 1904,<sup>2</sup> and was still lecturing regularly in 1914. He was particularly important because he was the leading non-mining I.L.P. member in the county. He was, however, very active in the collieries and a great favourite with the miners.

Apart from Moll and Richardson the early I.L.P. was heavily dependent on external lecturers, the only two local leaders of prominence before 1905 were the miners J W Taylor and John Storey (Birtley). In 1905 the appointment of Matt Simm as district organiser for the North East considerably lightened the burden on Tom Richardson. This appointment marked a distinct change in I.L.P. policy. Prior to 1905 the whole I.L.P. structure in the county was based on part-time organisation, the 1904 expenditure on organisation totalled £8.18s.4d. for the county, the second highest in the country.<sup>3</sup> Simm's annual salary alone easily exceeded that figure.

1. Durham Chronicle, 27.11.03.

2. Durham Chronicle, 13.5.04.

3. I.L.P. National Administration Council Report, 24/25.4.05. p15

Matt Simm, a Northumbrian of mining stock, was accepted into the mining communities without difficulties. He had three main tasks, the extension of the I.L.P.'s activities to new areas, the organisation of large I.L.P. gatherings in the county, and lecturing to existing I.L.P. bodies. Simm achieved considerable success in his job. There were a reported sixteen I.L.P. branches active in Durham on his appointment in 1905.<sup>1</sup> By the outbreak of the first world war, the figure had risen to well over one hundred. He was personally responsible for the launching of a North East I.L.P. monthly paper, the Northern Democrat, in August 1906, and he acted as its editor. While Simm proved popular amongst the miners, lecturing regularly to large audiences, his wife played an important part in stimulating the women within the movement. She lectured regularly on topics such as 'Women and the Labour Movement'<sup>2</sup> and became the organiser of Durham's 'Women's Labour League'<sup>3</sup> which proved popular amongst the miners' wives.

As Simm gained increasing control over the county I.L.P. a number of prominent local speakers joined Richardson, Storey, Taylor and Moll. Arthur Henderson became a popular speaker with the miners after his election as M.P. for Barnard Castle in 1902; Tom Summerbell the Sunderland M.P., and Pete Curran, the Jarrow I.L.P. candidate, both began to take an increasing interest in the coalfield during 1906 and lectured regularly; R Nagsmith, the leader of the Sunderland unemployed, became very popular with the miners after 1907. Two young I.L.P.

1. R. Gregory, op cit. p69.
2. Durham Chronicle, 1.3.07.
3. Durham Chronicle, 21.8.08.



speakers later to achieve national prominence were Jack Lawson, who first became a noted speaker in 1909,<sup>1</sup> and Jack Gilliland, who achieved I.L.P. prominence when he became the Chester le Street division organiser in 1907.<sup>2</sup>

The most significant change after 1905 appears to have been the shift away from national celebrity speakers to local men. The I.L.P. allowed young members to preside over meetings, and then if they did well invited them to give a short speech. In this way the younger members had an opportunity to become known within the movement. Coupled with this was the break away from having only male speakers made by the I.L.P.; in Durham the local women, encouraged by Mrs Simm and Mrs Glasier, who was one of the most popular I.L.P. figures amongst the miners, gradually asserted themselves within the movement. In 1907 the first female I.L.P. candidate in Durham, Mrs Amy Walker Black was defeated in the Chester le Street R.D.C. elections.<sup>3</sup> By 1914 there were ten or more well known local women I.L.P. lecturers in the county.

Another distinctive element of the Durham I.L.P. was the exceptionally high number of ministers of religion involved in the movement. Besides the Rev Moll there were fifteen other ministers who played prominent roles in the county I.L.P.<sup>4</sup> At least four of these, Rev D Pugh at Willington, Rev G West at Sunderland, Rev W Bull at Esh, and Rev W Hodgson at Houghton le Spring, were the leaders of their local I.L.P. groups.

1. South Durham and Auckland Chronicle,<sup>10:6:09</sup> see also Appendix F, Local Leaders. J Lawson.
2. Durham Chronicle, 7.6.07. See also Appendix F, Local Leaders. J Gilliland.
3. Durham Chronicle, 15.3.07.
4. Appendix E, Local Ministers involved with the I.L.P.

In 1908 a flourishing branch of the Church Socialist League was founded in Durham,<sup>1</sup> encouraging activity in local socialist groups and in Jarrow the C.S.L. was to play a prominent part in local elections.<sup>2</sup>

The prominence of the churchmen may well have reflected the need for well educated leaders amongst the county I.L.P. The majority of the early I.L.P. lecturers had been from outside the county. Between 1905 and 1908 the churchmen came to the fore in the movement, and only after this did a large number of local men come to dominate the I.L.P. branches. The dominance of the ex- Ruskin College students in this field would appear natural in the circumstances. Of eight young miners who attended Ruskin from the coalfield between 1907 and 1912 six are known to have become active I.L.P. lecturers. The best known were J Lawson who went in 1907 and was later to become a Cabinet Minister, and J Swan of Dipton who went in 1908 and later became an M.P.

G Armstrong, a token man from Randolph Colliery and R Shotton of Bearpark went in 1907. Both appeared as prominent I.L.P. lecturers during 1913.<sup>3</sup> A third miner, J Wilkinson, who went in 1907, confined himself to talks to his local I.L.P.<sup>4</sup> The other major figures to go was A Temple of Twizzel Colliery in 1912. Already a member of the D.M.A. executive and the Durham Forward Movement Temple went to Ruskin for a year. By late 1913 he was back lecturing to

1. Durham Chronicle, 26.3.08.

2. I.L.P. Year Book 1912, p12

3. Durham Chronicle, 25.7.13 (Armstrong) 26.6.13 (Shotton)

4. Durham Chronicle, 14.3.13.

to I.L.P. branches throughout the county.

One of the problems which must be studied is why the people were attracted to the I.L.P. There can be no doubt that in the early 1900's the I.L.P. grew very rapidly in the county, particularly in the mining areas. The early 1900's was a period of depression in the Durham coalfield, many wages fell while prices rose. Such economic difficulties are bound to have increased the amount of support for the I.L.P., particularly for its minimum wage demands.

The I.L.P.'s real electoral strength had, by 1914, been demonstrated mainly in local elections. One key factor for the success of the I.L.P. at this level was the absence of organised opposition. The formation of the I.L.P. in 1893 came at the same time as the local elections were first being started; the county councils in 1888, the parish councils in 1894. Thus, by the time that the I.L.P. began to compete in the local elections neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives had built up strong local branches with which to contest the elections. In fact, neither of the main political parties showed particular interest in the local elections, concentrating instead on the Parliamentary elections. The well organised I.L.P. was thus able to make large gains at the local level, and establish itself without having to face any real opposition.

The I.L.P. in the North East fought on three main demands, improved housing, better sanitation and for a cure to unemployment. These three demands were directly

applicable to the majority of Durham miners. Unemployment was low after 1900, but many of the men had suffered from lengthy lay offs following disputes with the management, most notably in 1892 when at one point nearly half the miners were out of work following the county strike.

The housing in the county was renowned throughout Britain for its substandard building, chronic overcrowding and severe sanitary problems. Naturally the I.L.P. speakers made considerable use of this.

"The I.L.P. was not afraid to tackle Durham....He did not think the beauty of Durham would suffer by the removal of some of the slums...if by socialism they could bring that about, the health of Durham would improve. He knew that the city council said there were no slums.... but he dare say he could find slums within a five minute walk of that hall."<sup>1</sup>

The lecturers proved very successful in the North East. They always drew large crowds and discussion was usually very lively. They repeatedly put forward the socialist demands for equality and a few demanded nationalisation. Both ideas were well received by audiences of miners who had come into more direct conflict with wealth in the form of coalowners, than many groups. The speakers always stressed the need for the Labour Party.

"He ventured to say that no-one could look round England today and be satisfied with the economic and social conditions of the people. The remedy was not to be found either in the Liberal or the Tory parties, but if the wrongs were to be

1. Durham Chronicle, 20.3.08. N Wood, Speaking in Durham.

righted then the principles of the Labour Party were essential."<sup>1</sup>

There would appear to have been an appreciable shift in lecturing policy before and after 1906 in the I.L.P. The pre-1906 lecturers were national figures who naturally drew large audiences, the majority of their speeches explained the beliefs and goals of the Labour Party. A convert of this period, T H Richardson, explained his change from the Liberals to the I.L.P.:

"Until 2-3 years ago....he was a strong Liberal and gave his best to that party in electing men who came somewhere near to the views he held...But we were living in a world of development and he was pleased to say that his views had been broadened and he was now identified with the I.L.P. simply because he had come to the decision that Labour could do better for itself without any help from the Liberal or Tory parties."<sup>2</sup>

Richardson previously a Liberal councillor seems to have found that the early I.L.P. beliefs suited him better than the Liberals' policies and was prepared to change his political allegiances accordingly.

With the advent of the Liberal government and its radical social policies in 1906 the I.L.P. was made to justify its continued existence in order to survive. The result was a change in emphasis. Since most people who were interested had already heard the I.L.P.'s views and its aims, after 1906 far greater stress was placed on what could

1. Durham Chronicle, 1.3.07. M.Simm lecturing in Durham.

2. Durham Chronicle, 1.3.07.

be and what had been achieved at a local level. The emphasis was placed firmly on the party's achievements. After 1906 the following justification of the I.L.P. at a national level became common:

"Every man who observed the trend of political affairs knew that every party was bound to pay serious attention to the economic and social questions. It was complained that Mr Lloyd George and others were adopting the Labour Party clothes and it was no doubt true that the Government of the day were paying more attention than they had done in the years that were passed. He believed that the Liberal Party would not have moved in that direction had there not been some independent force like the I.L.P. using its influence and compelling attention to social questions."<sup>1</sup>

Inevitably, however, there were several areas in which the I.L.P. was not imitated by the Liberals. The persistent I.L.P. link with the suffragettes probably gained the I.L.P. support in the mining areas, particularly since women had the vote in local elections. The I.L.P. policy of nationalisation was another policy left untouched by the Liberals.

"The very fact that Parliament had discussed the unemployed bill was a confession that the present social system was a failure.....The problem of unemployment should be dealt with on the principle that the state was responsible for the well-being of the citizen. As socialists they were

1. Durham Chronicle, 22.9.12. M.Simm in Durham

representing a cause that was going to win. One of the planks of their programme was land nationalisation."<sup>1</sup>

Despite these efforts by the more devout socialists to convert the rank and file to socialism, one of the most important reasons for the increasing attractiveness of the I.L.P. remained the social side of the movement. The regular social activities proved to be a focal point which neither the Liberals nor the Tories could rival in the coalfield. These activities did a great deal towards attracting people towards a movement with which they would otherwise have had little in common.

One very important side of the I.L.P.'s social activities was the great stress which the branches laid on adult education, Dipton branch being very prominent in building up the early Workers' Education Association.<sup>2</sup> Even at a very basic level communal readings of socialist literature improved literacy in the mining villages,<sup>3</sup> and this start was then built upon. The I.L.P. had an important part in the life of the whole family, not just the miners. The open air meetings in the summer were essentially a pleasant day out for most families, the speeches were perhaps of secondary importance. During the winter months large teas were frequently provided by members, and the socials continued into the evenings. Other forms of

1. Durham Chronicle, 20.3.08. Rev. Bull in Durham

2. Durham Chronicle, 25.5.11.

3. R. Moore, op cit. p230. See also J. Lawson, op cit. p74

entertainment included dances, lantern shows,<sup>1</sup> carol singing,<sup>2</sup> musical evenings<sup>3</sup> and concerts.

In this area the I.L.P. supremacy was unchallenged, and it was from this base that the movement grew. By 1914 these social groups had been in existence for over a decade, already one generation had grown up with them. For these people the I.L.P. had become part of a way of life, with which neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives could hope to compete. When an I.L.P. candidate stood for election everyone who had any connection with the party, either political or social, knew him as a friend, taking out much of the impersonal element of elections.

The social side of the I.L.P. can, however, be misleading. Several apparently prospering I.L.P. groups failed from lack of monetary support and active interest. The Langley Moor branch first founded in 1905 enjoyed a seemingly active existence, attendances were always good, members active on local councils and two prominent local leaders, D Pearson and J Adair, were in control. After 1909 there is no mention of Langley Moor I.L.P. until its reformation was announced in 1911,<sup>4</sup> in the meantime Adair had secured election to the county council. The Chester le Street branch followed a very similar pattern. Founded in 1905 the group appeared to do well, attendances were described as very large and speakers included Philip Snowden. Then after a meeting in May 1911 the group was next mentioned at its reformation in November 1911.<sup>5</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle, 7.2.08
2. Durham Chronicle, 6.1.11.
3. Durham Chronicle, 6.6.13.
4. Durham Chronicle, 21.7.11.
5. Durham Chronicle, 10.11.11.



Two branches formed in 1906, Murton and Washington Station, were both well supported at early meetings, although neither branch was frequently reported. Murton was last mentioned in 1909<sup>1</sup> before the reformation of the branch was announced in 1912<sup>2</sup> and similarly the Washington Station branch was reformed in 1913.<sup>3</sup> The subsequent success of both branches raises questions as to why they failed initially.

Some I.L.P. branches failed from a lack of sustained interest in the local community. In Durham City an early attempt to form a branch failed in 1904. The second attempt in 1907 was made by Matt Simm and the opening meeting attracted an audience of thirteen.<sup>4</sup> In 1908 a further effort had an audience of fifty people, but no branch was formed.<sup>5</sup> A final attempt was made in 1912<sup>6</sup> when Simm and G Oliver of Newcastle I.L.P. held a lively outdoor meeting. Despite several critical questions the meeting was seemingly a success, a committee and group of officials were elected, and arrangements made for regular meetings to be held. Nothing was heard of the branch again.

A study of the finances of the Croxdale I.L.P. branch in 1912<sup>7</sup> indicates the problems which these groups faced.

1. South Durham and Auckland Chronicle, 8.8.09.
2. Durham Chronicle, 17.5.12.
3. Durham Chronicle, 25.7.13.
4. Durham Chronicle, 1.3.07.
5. Durham Chronicle, 20.3.08.
6. Durham Chronicle, 20.9.12.
7. Durham Chronicle, 13.9.12.

All outward signs indicate that the Croxdale branch was typical of most in the county. Formed in 1908 in a predominantly mining community its members secured a degree of representation on most local bodies. Its meetings were always well attended and it had a prosperous Women's Labour League. In September 1912 the branch had fourteen shillings and seven pence in hand. The group had a quarterly income of nine pounds eight shillings: two pounds and nine pence from members' subscriptions, two pounds seven shillings collected from meetings and sixteen shillings and eleven pence from the sale of literature. The basic I.L.P. membership fee was sixpence to join and then one penny per week,<sup>1</sup> and suggests a membership of thirty assuming there was no great increase in the numbers of the group. The literature sales were high, all basic I.L.P. pamphlets cost 1d each, suggesting a sale of 143 copies. The collections at meetings totalled £2. 0s. 9d, a very high figure suggesting that a lot of non-members attended the meetings.

The majority of these I.L.P. finances went on local elections and propaganda. Most local lecturers asked no payment, and only those who came from far afield received any travelling expenses. Food, lodgings, entertainment were all provided by the members of the I.L.P. branches themselves. These sacrifices by the hard core members enabled the movement to continue.

Besides the social side of the I.L.P. the minimum wage policies of the party appear to have attracted the most support in the coalfield. The local I.L.P. leaders in Durham,

1. H. Pelling, 'The Origins of the Labour Party' p120.

in particular T Richardson and J Batey, had, through the medium of the Durham Minimum Wage Movement, been explaining the need for a minimum wage since 1898.<sup>1</sup> Batey had followed this up by writing a book on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

From the very start there was a very high degree of interest in the minimum wage issue. After the M.F.G.B. began to demand it with increasing vigour in the early 1900's it is unlikely that many miners did not know the case for a minimum wage. The I.L.P. also had regular speakers on the subject at all their branches.

Support for the minimum wage placed a Liberal in a difficult position. The Liberal Party was normally hesitant to sponsor greater government intervention in the economy, and the introduction of a statutory minimum wage constituted exactly that. Consequently the I.L.P. may have gained a great deal of support from men who were only interested in this one policy.

Following the passage of the Minimum Wage Act the situation was not greatly clarified. This was largely due to the failure of the Liberal government to stipulate that a minimum wage level of x shillings per shift was to be introduced, instead they allowed the coalowners to negotiate with local unions which resulted in an unacceptably low minimum wage level being set. In Durham opposition was widespread to the act and discussion of it became the central theme of I.L.P. and other meetings in the county.

1. Durham Chronicle, 17.6.98.
2. J. Batey, 'The Present System Condemned, The need for a Minimum Wage.' Private Issue. Copy in the hands of G Metcalfe.

The other major industrial policy of the I.L.P., their demand for a statutory eight hours day for miners, was initially a considerable disadvantage in a coalfield so vigorously opposed to such a measure. The demand was played down by the I.L.P. in Durham, but it is obvious that local I.L.P. branches did study it. In the 1910 strike none of the collieries with large I.L.P. branches came out on strike, a reasonable indication that they had expected the 1908 Act to result in such an agreement. It is possible that several smaller branches were affected, Murton colliery remained on strike for four months over the agreement, and, since there is reason for believing that the Murton I.L.P. branch folded in 1910, it is probable that the two incidents are related. After 1910 there is no mention of the Eight Hours Act at any I.L.P. branch meeting in the coalfield.

It is probable, therefore, that much of the early support for the I.L.P. was derived from the minimum wage agitation, and had little or nothing to do with the wider socialist goals of the movement. The length of time during which the minimum wage agitation continued meant that many people attracted into the movement by that one issue started to attend I.L.P. meetings and continued to do so up until 1914, becoming experts on the minimum wage, but also reasonably well informed on other I.L.P. issues.

By 1914 it would appear that the I.L.P. was firmly established in the Durham coalfield, at the grass roots level of local politics. A combination of social activities, minimum wage agitation, demands for improved housing and sanitation, coupled with the success of those elected to councils and boards, had attracted an ever increasing number of miners to the party. The strength of the movement in the coalfield was clearly indicated in the 1914 D.M.A. poll to elect five prospective M.P.'s for local constituencies, the five I.L.P. candidates headed the poll, well ahead of any Liberal challengers.

Despite this obvious success the I.L.P.-L.R.C. group already held the seeds of a split which was to threaten the party for the next sixty years. The Labour party encompassed working class politicians of greatly varying beliefs. On the left of the group were the ardent socialists who had been instrumental in the growth of the I.L.P. They believed strongly in policies of nationalisation and complete equality. On the other extreme were those who had been attracted into the party solely by its minimum wage, or housing policies, seeing in it the chance of improving the position of labour in the existing framework of society.

The continued existence of the I.L.P. as a distinct body suggests that some of the early I.L.P. members were well aware of the split before 1914.

### Conclusion

Just as in terms of industrial tactics the Durham miners increasingly abandoned the inward looking and isolationist policies which their leaders had adopted (perhaps necessarily) in the Union's early decades, so too their political interests and behaviour fell more and more into line with national trends. Indeed, the distinction between 'industrial' and 'political' attitudes and activities becomes blurred, because the developments on both fronts tended to reinforce one another; in particular part of the appeal of 'Socialism' lay precisely in its industrial policies, particularly the minimum wage demands.

In the 1870's and 1880's when working men first got the vote and the opportunity to participate in both national and local elections, politics were still greatly influenced by special regional and local factors; and it is not surprising that the miners' political life - since they were essentially rural rather than urban workers - should have been characterised by limited objectives and a narrow perspective. In the circumstances of the 1880's and 1890's, to have their own leader in the House of Commons to defend their specific interests and to have a few representatives on various local councils would have seemed perfectly adequate.

Nationally, the thirty years before the First World War saw deep-rooted developments in working class consciousness from which even relatively isolated groups could not be immune. By 1914 this general class consciousness was rapidly imposing itself on the older 'local' interests and attitudes. Some of its characteristics did not affect the coal miners very much admittedly; taking the country as a whole it is perhaps fair to say that Great Britain had by 1914 a self conscious working class which was factory employed, town dwelling, literate and secular minded; and of these characteristics two - urbanisation and secularisation - made relatively little impact on coal mining communities. But if these two forces were comparatively weak - and their implications will be further developed in the studies of migration and methodism in the following chapter - the importance of the other two was enormous.

Socialist and other radical propaganda depended for its impact partly on the spoken word and personal contact, but in the last resort its influence would have been negligible without the pervasive impression left by the written word on the minds of an increasingly literate population. The 'world picture' suggested by



socialist writing - of societies fundamentally divided between a handful of wealthy capitalists and a mass of impoverished and insecure wage earners - was one which perhaps made sense to the miners, whereas it was probably less plausible in the more open and complicated society and economy of a big town. After all, the coal miner had no prospect of becoming a capitalist in his own industry; he and his fellows were doomed to toil as hereditary wage labourers for the great coalowning families, or the impersonal shareholders of the coal companies, apparently until the coal ran out. The miner had few opportunities of a different life. A lucky few might, with the benefit of education, find individual niches in more secure and attractive spheres, but the vast majority of the mining community was tied to the industry for ever.

It is hard to imagine a better breeding ground for simple, aggressive class consciousness, for few social and industrial situations fitted an uncomplicated socialist analysis so admirably as did the mining villages. The long term alternative to being a hereditary wage earner under private capitalism was ownership by the state; and to bring about that change, it was necessary for the miners to use their

latent political power more positively, and to come out of their isolation and collaborate with other wage earners elsewhere when necessary. The ground for both these developments had been well and truly laid by 1914: the proof was to come in the turbulent years between 1918 and 1926.

CHAPTER 3.

THE DURHAM COALFIELD.

## Introduction

The third section of this study deviates from the direction taken in the earlier chapters. Having completed a preliminary survey of the level of industrial unrest, and the impact of the radical political groups in the coalfield, it becomes necessary to try to determine why attitudes and policies among the Durham miners changed, and why they abandoned their traditional isolationist views and tactics in favour of a more national movement.

The first problem to be overcome concerns the choice of potential factors which could have played a part in bringing about these changes. When one is studying influences which affect the miners, it becomes apparent that the miners were in a very different position from that of other labouring occupations at this time. The nature of the mining industry was such that the majority of pits in the North East were set well apart from the large city conurbations. The miners lived in their small colliery villages with only a very limited degree of contact with those outside of the industry. There were many benefits from this enforced isolation; the level of unionisation among the miners was well above that of any other industrial workforce; the miners were able to return their own M.Ps. at a time that few other working class groups were even prepared to put up a candidate. On the other hand, this isolation meant that the miners were not subjected to the same influences as many other unionists, and they consequently pursued a very individual course in both industrial and political matters before 1900. Thus, a study of the influences on the miners is important because they acted independently of the other late nineteenth century unions.

In order to see both the industrial disputes and the political changes in context, it is important to study the economic development of the coalfield during the period. The longterm pattern of economic development was brought about by the changing world demand for coal, the number of suppliers, the productivity of the Durham miners, the level of technological innovation in the coalfield, and the level of investment in new mines, modernisation and mechanisation. These longterm changes played an important part in the short-term reactions to situations: the movement in the price of coal, the owners' profit margins, the level of unemployment and the level of wages. The Durham miner felt the direct effect of these changes in two areas, through the level of employment and through the level of wages. Both these factors played a major role in determining his industrial attitude, the action he would take because of certain industrial developments.

Whereas industrial militancy can be seen largely in terms of the prevailing economic climate, political changes tend to incorporate an ideological dimension. Many of the miners' political leaders, both liberal and 'labour' men, believed strongly in certain political ideologies and acted accordingly. In this study it is desirable therefore to look at the dominant ideology and value-system operating in the coalfield at the turn of the century. There is little doubt that Primitive Methodism exerted the greatest ideological influence over the Durham miners throughout the period, the grassroots' strength of the entire movement being found in the colliery villages. The Primitive Methodists held an almost total control over the D.M.A. hierarchy during its first forty

years, and groups of Primitive Methodists were active on most local bodies, in particular parish and district councils and co-operative movements.

The major difficulty in any study of Methodism is that the Primitives did not have any coherent body of 'methodist' beliefs, instead the religion was based on the individual preachers' circuits, all of which evolved their own particular brands of Methodism within the overall framework. As a result, a survey of the ideological significance of Methodism in the coalfield is fraught with difficulties. Fortunately, it is possible to discern some major ideological changes which occurred during the period which affected the entire Primitive Methodist sect, and these can be related to the miners' political stances. Methodist ideology can also be related to the miners' industrial attitudes. Since it gave its members very strong views on what was right and wrong, it was of considerable importance when related to strike activities.

The third major area of approach concerns the problem of migration. In the coalfield the migrant had an important role to play, both in the miners' industrial attitudes and his political stance. In the older well-established communities with little need of migrant labour, there was usually a well-established leadership structure and social interaction network. Thus the older members of the community tended to dominate the attitudes and policies of the men, often erring to the side of moderation. This settled environment was often reflected in the industrial relations of the colliery; the men had known the manager all their lives and a good rapport had been set up. In a colliery which had been more recently opened and which depended on migration to provide a

workforce, there was inevitably a far less settled lifestyle, the leaders were those who attracted attention, often by preaching extreme policies. The good rapport between managers and men, so apparent in the older collieries, was far more difficult to establish, particularly in the larger collieries. Consequently the migrant may have faced a very different situation in both the community and the place of work, to that facing the miner in a more settled environment. It is one aim of this work to consider how important these differences may have been.

The role of the migrant in the political arena is also of considerable importance. Because of electoral registration difficulties, the migrant was unlikely to have had a vote until he had settled in a new area for over two years, hence he had little voting importance. The real significance of the migrant in political terms stems from his special position of being a potential carrier of ideas from one colliery to another, particularly in the case of the more isolated mining communities. The lack of any entertainment was partly responsible for the popularity of discussion groups, and the presence of any person with unusual or unknown ideas is sure to have attracted attention and resulted in further discussion of these 'new' views. The constant presence of such a person is more likely to have been the reason for the start of a new political group or a new industrial attitude, than the limited influence which could be achieved at one or two mass meetings.

The last area to be dealt with in this section again deals with the industrial aspect of the debate: the leadership of the D.M.A. Because the leadership held itself aloof from

the rank and file and on several occasions virtually lost touch with grassroots' opinion, there was an inevitable feeling of frustration, amongst rank and file members. Initially this frustration manifested itself in unofficial strikes, but on two occasions, in the late 1880's and after 1905, it came to challenge the D.M.A. leadership. The two most serious strikes of the period, in 1892 and 1910, both occurred when the leadership lost control and the rank and file voted independently.

Some mention must be made at this stage of the several topics which seem worthy of further attention, but for various different reasons have been omitted. One of the most obvious topics to be excluded has been housing. The conditions of the colliery houses throughout the century was generally substandard, and obviously did have some influence on the miners. When the parish councils and urban district councils were first set up, it became immediately apparent that the housing problem was brought up by miners in the election campaigns. The I.L.P. made the need for improved housing one of the main social demands in Durham, and probably gained considerable support on this issue. Unfortunately, the study of the housing question is hampered by several major problems: firstly, there is no comprehensive account of housing throughout the coalfield, just the occasional newspaper reports, and a few council meetings' minutes dealing with the problem in a few isolated areas. Secondly, it is impossible to try to assess how the housing problem affected different people. Some miners were quite happy to accept the housing they had, others felt a great need to improve it; lastly, there is the problem of being able to



talk about a general impact of housing on the miners, as in some areas conditions were doubtless far better than in others, particularly in the new collieries built after the 1875 Housing Act. To uncover sufficient material to make a study of housing worthwhile would thus demand far more time than is available in a preliminary survey such as this.

Two areas worthy of further study, in particular relating to political change, are education and sects other than Methodism. The study of education encompasses a vast number of aspects dealing with the general level of education in the coalfield. The gradual spread of literacy amongst the miners was one of the most important changes which took place in the nineteenth century. The literate miner was removed from his earlier position of being dependent on others for information, and of being unable to educate himself. With the ability to read came the possibility of great self-improvement, the ability to understand the running of the mine far better, if only through the circulars, and the exposure to the propaganda of political groups.

A study of the spread of education among the miners is not however so easy. The 1870 Education Act did ensure a certain basic level of education for the children in the school board schools, and this generation was to be working in the pits throughout our period. A study of the colliery employment books available indicates that after the late 1870's far fewer miners signed their contracts with a simple cross; most could write. For the older men there was the chance of joining the Workers' Educational Association (W.E.A.). There some were taught the basic skills, and others pursued more advanced courses.

Such a large study is obviously beyond the boundaries of this work, involving, as it would, so much detailed examination of schoolboard records and of the early W.E.A. But it must not be forgotten that the educational advances of the period played a major role in the political and industrial lives of the miners.

The need for a study of religion beyond that on Methodism is more open to debate. Although the Primitive Methodists constituted a very powerful force in the coalfield they were not the only religious sect to influence the miners. The most interesting group to study would be the Roman Catholics (comprised largely of Irish immigrants) who have come to dominate the D.M.A. in the second half of the twentieth century. The Catholics constituted a very high percentage of the work-force in certain collieries in the coalfield in Blackhall and Norton, and are something of an unknown force. As yet little work has been done on the Catholics' industrial and political aspirations in this period and consequently detailed studies of several Irish communities would have to be undertaken. Furthermore the insularity of the Irish communities suggests that the impact of their views may have been negligible on the remainder of the coalfield.

The last two topics which need further attention relate mainly to the problem of industrial militancy. This study has been a preliminary overall survey of developments within the coalfield as a whole, but it needs to be supplemented by detailed studies of social and economic change at the level of the individual colliery company and village to explain why some became more militant or radical than others. Related to this is the possibility of making a very detailed study of

the coalfield in order to find out the incidence of strike action, both official and unofficial, at each colliery during the forty year period. It would then be possible to make detailed comparisons between collieries in a similar area, and of a similar size, in order to see if any general overall pattern emerges. Obviously such a comprehensive large-scale undertaking is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is in this area that there is scope for further research.

To summarise this section discusses what appear to be some of the most important influences on the miners. The study of the coalfield's economic structure deals predominantly with influences on the industrial stance of the miners. But the sections on Methodism, migration and the D.M.A. leadership all relate to influences affecting both political and industrial alignments. There can be no claim that this section deals comprehensively with all the influences which affected the miners, nor even that those studied have been studied in any great depth; as has been indicated above there are many areas worthy of further study which a preliminary survey of this kind cannot follow up.

### The Durham Coalfield

The history of coalmining in Durham dates back nearly eight centuries. As early as 1180 the 'Boldon Buke' mentions that 'the smiths of London, Sedgefield and Bishopwearmouth all used local coals<sup>1</sup>.' The early exploitation of the coalfield was however severely limited by the difficulties of transporting coal over any distance. Water transport provided the only economical method of movement, and this remained predominant up to the eighteenth century. As a result of these limitations, the coalfield by 1700 was only being exploited by workings concentrated on the coasts and beside rivers.

After 1700 new methods of moving coal came increasingly into use. In Durham the wagonways became popular. The profits to be made from the sale of coal were high, and consequently there was considerable investment in transport facilities. In 1729 Causey Arch, the best known example of a wagonway in Durham, was built at a cost of £12,000 for the Grand Allies group.<sup>2</sup>

The advent of the railroads and the steam locomotive enabled the movement away from water transport to grow. This new form of transport dramatically altered the concentration of the collieries in the coalfield. Previously inaccessible parts of the county were now opened up, cheap links with large markets were established, and investment in the coalfield

1. M. Archer, 'A Sketch of the History of the Coal Trade' (London 1897) p3.
2. E. MacKenzie, 'History of Durham' (Newcastle 1834) p158 also J. W. White & R. Simpson, 'Jubilee History of West Stanley Co-operative Society Ltd. 1876-1926' (Pelaw on Tyne 1926) p66.

grew at an unprecedented rate. The numbers employed in the mines increased tenfold between 1820 and 1860, production rising at a similar rate. After this period of intense activity the coalfield rate of growth declined to a lower level which continued up until 1914.

The long uneven growth of the coalfield was reflected in the location and age of the country's collieries. The collieries based on rivers and the coast were usually the oldest in the county, having been sunk in a period when water was the main form of transport. These mines were usually quite small, few employing over a thousand men, and the miners enjoyed a settled structured way of life. The more recently opened pits were located further inland in the North West and South West of Durham, having been sunk only after the coming of the railroads. These pits were frequently larger than the older pits. With the improvements in the latter half of the nineteenth century in sinking techniques, pumping facilities, fans to keep the air circulating and later electricity, it became possible to sink a far deeper pit than it had been in the early 1800's. The last two decades of the century thus saw a number of large collieries built, particularly on the coast, which had been technically impossible before.<sup>1</sup>

A second factor which was responsible for further differences between collieries was the different types of coal which existed in the coalfield. In the northern areas the coal was predominantly household and steam coal of high quality.<sup>1</sup> The South Eastern part of the coalfield was renowned

1. A Garside, 'The Durham Miners' . . . p15.

for its exceptional gas coal, which was increasingly exploited after 1850. In West Durham the coal contained little gas, and produced good quality coking coal which was popular amongst the great ironworks. The best coking coal came from the South Western sector which became known as having the best coking coal in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Durham's increasing dependence on the export trade providing a market for the coal was another factor in creating differences between the pits. The collieries which produced for home consumption were subjected to influences on the home market. A large portion of the domestic consumption came from the iron and steel industries and for coking coal. If the iron and steel trade flourished, demand for Durham coal was high and vice versa. Much of the remainder of the domestic supplies went to the domestic consumer, a stable constantly growing market. The export or 'sale' pits on the other hand were dependent upon the state of the European coal markets for the price of their coal; if prices were high wages followed. But the Durham coal-owner was unable to dominate these European markets, which were subject to severe fluctuations.

Alan Wilson found this situation in the Consett Iron Companies collieries, with the 'domestic' producers being out of phase with the 'export' producers.

"Coal sales continued to grow uninterrupted, passing the one million ton mark in 1909... 1907-1908 was a peak for coal prices, whilst

1. S. Chaplin, 'Durham Mining Villages' (Univ. of Durham, Dept. of Sociology. Working Papers No.3 1972) p34.

...it proved a sharp recession in steel prices. The demands upon the home collieries were so small between the winter of 1908 and early 1909 that the Board, rather than lay in the pits, began to sell the coal and coke. Despite this attempt to keep the home collieries operational, working was irregular, and a certain amount of resentment developed between the pitmen of the home collieries and those of the more prosperous sale collieries." 1

## Coal Production

The level of output in the Durham coalfield reflects the relative prosperity of the mining industry. The output rose continuously throughout the period although the rates of increase were not constant. In that time Durham's share of national output fell from 18% in 1885 to 14.3% in 1913, an indication that the coalfield's output was not increasing as rapidly as more recently opened coalfields.

There is disagreement concerning the actual figures for the total production of the area. The D.M.A. figures from 1903 onwards are markedly lower than H.M. Inspector of Mines' figures for the same period. There were however several small pits which did not employ union men, and this may account for some of the discrepancy. The production figures for Durham are given below.

<u>Year</u>	<u>D.M.A.</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>H.M. Inspector</u> <sub>2</sub> <u>of Mines</u>	<u>National</u> <sup>4</sup>
1885	-	27,737,324 tons	159.4 mn.tons
1890	-	30,265,243 <sup>3</sup>	181.6 "
1895	-	31,131,253	189.7 "
1900	-	34,800,719	225.2 "
1905	29,861,080 tons	37,397,176	236.1 "
1910	32,982,036	39,431,598	264.4 "
1913	34,167,520	41,532,890	287.4 "

1. G. Metcalfe, 'The Durham Miners' Association.'  
Appendix Chart 6.

2. H.M. Inspectors of Mines' Reports 1885-1913.

3. H.S. Jevons, 'The British Coal Trade' (London 1915) p862.

4. J. Jones, C. Cartwright & P. Guenault, 'The Coal Industry' (London 1939) p168.



Durham's production rose steadily between 1885 and 1905, only 1890-1895, a difficult period for the coal industry generally, being slightly below average. Between 1905 and 1913 Durham's production increased at a lower rate than before, and Durham increased her total output only 4.3 million tons, while national output rose by 51.3 million tons. The reasons for this decline are not immediately apparent, although Durham's production figures for 1910 are below average due to the eight hours' strike.

### Numbers Employed in the Coal Industry

During the period with output rising, the numbers employed in the national coalmining industry rose by 125%.<sup>1</sup> The total British workforce rose by less than 40% during the same period, showing the disproportionately rapid growth of the coal industry as compared to most other industries. The rate of increase of numbers in coalmining far exceeded the natural rate of reproduction in the mining communities, resulting in the need for a constant flow of new workers into the industry.

There is again disagreement concerning the figures of those employed in the Durham coalfield, the Inspector of Mines suggesting a figure far below that of the D.M.A.

<u>Total Numbers Employed in Durham Coalfield</u>			
<u>Year</u>	<u>D.M.A. Figures</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>H.M. Inspectors</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>D.M.A. Members</u> <sup>4</sup>
1885	75,448	75,441	-
1890	86,803	-	-
1895	102,553	-	-
1900	112,816	85,889	64,563
1905	124,872	93,619	90,371
1910	155,060	112,881	103,273
1913	165,727	165,807	118,372

It would appear that the D.M.A. records are more accurate than those of H.M. Inspectors. One key reason for this can

1. A.J. Taylor, 'Labour Productivity and Technological Innovation in the British Coal Industry.' (Economic History Review XIV (pp48-67) p62.
2. G. Metcalfe, op.cit. Appendix 121.
3. H.M. Inspectors of Mines Reports 1885-1913.
4. G. Metcalfe, op.cit. p526.

be seen by looking at the respective 1905 figures. The H.M. Inspectors' figures for the total workforce are only 3,000 above the D.M.A. membership for 1905. Since the number of half members, members of the Colliery Mechanics' Association, the Cokemens' Association and the Engineers' Association was far in excess of three thousand<sup>1</sup>, it is obvious that the inspectorate figures are incorrect. The similarity between the two sets of figures in 1913 is only achieved by an increase in the H.M. Inspectors' figures of 32,916 since 1910. A rise of this number was equivalent to a 35% increase in the workforce, while at the same time production rose by only 6%.

Both sets of figures are in agreement that the numbers employed in the coalfield rose by 120% between 1885 and 1913, marginally below the national figure. This growth appears to have been reasonably steady at between 10-15,000 every five years. The only exception was the period between 1905 and 1910, when numbers rose by 31,000 at over double the rate of any previous growth. In the same period the D.M.A. appear to have suffered from a lower percentage of new arrivals joining the union than at any other time.

One result of this great rise in the numbers employed in the coalfield was the constant flow of migrants, studied elsewhere. It is important to note that despite the rapid growth of the pre-1850 period<sup>2</sup>, the rise between 1905 and

1. W.S. Hall, 'A Historical Survey of the Durham Colliery Mechanics' Association 1879-1929' (Durham 1929). The association had 4,356 members in 1908. p125.
2. R. Fynes, op.cit. p54 & p106.

1910, in the numbers employed, was the largest in absolute terms (but not in the rate of increase) in the coalfield's history.

One consequence of the longterm growth of the coalfield was that work was normally available for those prepared to search for it. This removed one of the two fears of the miners, the risk of unemployment and low wages. What unemployment there was, was of a very temporary or localised nature. A study of the unemployed relief figures from the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund indicates the scale of the problem<sup>1</sup>.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Unemployment Benefit Period</u>	<u>Average Payment per yr.</u>
1883-8	£1,474. 13s. 0d.	£ 294. 18s. 9d.
1888-93	355. 5s. 4d.	71. 1s. 1d.
1893-98	1,288. 6s. 0d.	257. 13s. 5d.
1898-1903	1,645. 19s. 11d.	329. 4s. 0d.
1903-08	4,368. 5s. 6d.	873. 13s. 1d.
1908-13	6,087. 19s. 8d.	1,215. 11s. 11d.

The scale of relief when the fund was started in 1883 varied between five and ten shillings per week<sup>2</sup>. At the lowest rate in 1913 only 400 miners could have been sustained out of work for the year. (One qualified for relief only after five days' unemployment). This figure was under 0.25% of the workforce, a negligible figure.

1908 appears to have experienced the worst unemployment of the period. The numbers employed in the coalfield rose by

1. W. Hall, op.cit. pl23.

2. J. Wilson, 'A History of the Durham Miners.' pl88.

only 5,100 during the year. Five pits, Beamish Apple, North Bitchburn, Elvet, North Woodhouse and South Woodhouse all closed, and only one pit, Bowburn, was opened. The numbers unemployed were just over 900<sup>1</sup>, or slightly under 0.66% of the workforce.

These figures show beyond any doubt that unemployment was not a problem which concerned the Durham miners. As a result they enjoyed a bargaining advantage over the coal-owners which they were to lack after the war.

1. G. Metcalfe, op.cit., p241-2.

## The Distribution of Coal

The North East was well-known as a major exporter of coal to the continent. Durham's geographical position gave her an advantage over most other British coalfields for exporting coal.

"Foreign coal exports rose at a rapid rate, the largest share of the exports going to Northumberland, Durham and South Wales. In 1895 foreign coal exports (including bunkers) from the Bristol channel and North Eastern ports, together accounted for 75% of total U.K. coal exports. In 1913 the figure was 71%.

1

The scarcity of individual figures concerning each coalfield's exports presents several problems in assessing Durham's reliance on her export trade. The national coal export figures were<sup>2</sup>:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount, inc. bunkers (tons)</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Amt. inc. bkrs.</u>
1885	30,766,674	1905	67,160,645
1890	38,160,272	1910	84,541,678
1895	42,907,302	1913	98,345,175
1900	58,405,087		

The few figures we have available enable us to see Durham's role in the export trade. In 1890 Durham exported six million tons of coal, less than both Northumberland (eight million tons) and South Wales (eighteen million tons)<sup>3</sup>. This figure represents about 20% of Durham's total production in 1890.

1. F. Gibson, The Coal Mining Industry of the U.K. The Various Coalfields Thereof and the Principal Foreign Countries of the World (Cardiff 1922) pp93-4.
2. D. M. Stevenson, 'Britain's Export Coal Trade' p103 in Diamond Jubilee Number, Iron and Coal Review 1867-1927 pp103-105.
3. J. Williams, op.cit. p387.

The figures for Durham's average coal exports between 1909 and 1913 are cited in Garside<sup>1</sup> and provide us with a further picture of the scale of Durham's exports.

Average Exports for Northumberland and Durham 1909-1913

Cargo	21.1 mn. tons.
Bunkers	3.6 mn. tons.
Coastwise cargo	8.1 mn. tons.
Bunkers	<u>0.3 mn. tons.</u>
Total Shipments	33.1 mn. tons.
Total Production	54.4 mn. tons. (Durham produced 41.53 mn. tons)
Local Consumption	20.4 mn. tons. (0.9 mn. tons goes out of the area by rail).

These figures can be compared with a 1905 figure given several assumptions. Since Gibson's estimates for 1895 and 1913 are so similar we can assume that the North Eastern and Bristol ports exported 70% of Britain's coal exports in 1905. Bristol exported 17 mn. tons of coal in 1905<sup>2</sup>, unbunkered, and 2 mn. tons, bunkered. The total national exports for 1905 were 67 mn. tons. It can easily be deduced that the North East exported 27.9 mn. tons in 1905. This figure is obviously open to doubt, but it does fall into the category which we would expect, indicating a constant growth of exports between 1905 and 1913.

These figures indicate that much of Durham's increased output between 1885 and 1913 went to the overseas market. From an 1890 figure of 20% of total production exported, by 1905 the figure was nearing 50% and by 1913 the figure was nearing 60%. During the period Durham was becoming increasingly dependent on overseas markets.

1. R. Garside, op.cit. p62.

2. R.P. Arnot, 'The South Wales Miners'. p113.

In 1912 four ports handled the majority of Durham's coal exports. They were:

South Shields	5,292,000 tons.	
Newcastle	8,000,000 tons.	
Sunderland	2,786,000 tons.	
West Hartlepool	1,304,000 tons.	1

The North East dominated the supply of coal to the Scandinavian markets, supplying 98% of Norway's coal, 93% of Denmark's and 95% of Sweden's in 1913<sup>2</sup>. Two other large importers were Russia, 2 m. tons in 1913, and Germany.

This increasing dependence of Durham on her export trade with its own particular conditions came at the same time that Durham miners were pressing for M.F.G.B. membership and an increasingly national union policy. In doing this the Durham men ran an increasingly high risk of losing their export markets and thus their jobs. In 1880 Durham had enjoyed a far higher level of productivity than her European rivals. During the three decades up to the war the decline in Durham's productivity coupled with rising productivity abroad served to greatly reduce the gap. By 1913 the advantage above France and Austria was down to 30% (with shipping costs still to be added) and the Germans had achieved a very similar level of productivity<sup>3</sup>. Any attempts by the M.F.G.B. to use its British monopoly to force wages up could only be achieved at the loss of large parts of Durham's export markets.

1. H. Jevons, op.cit. p3.

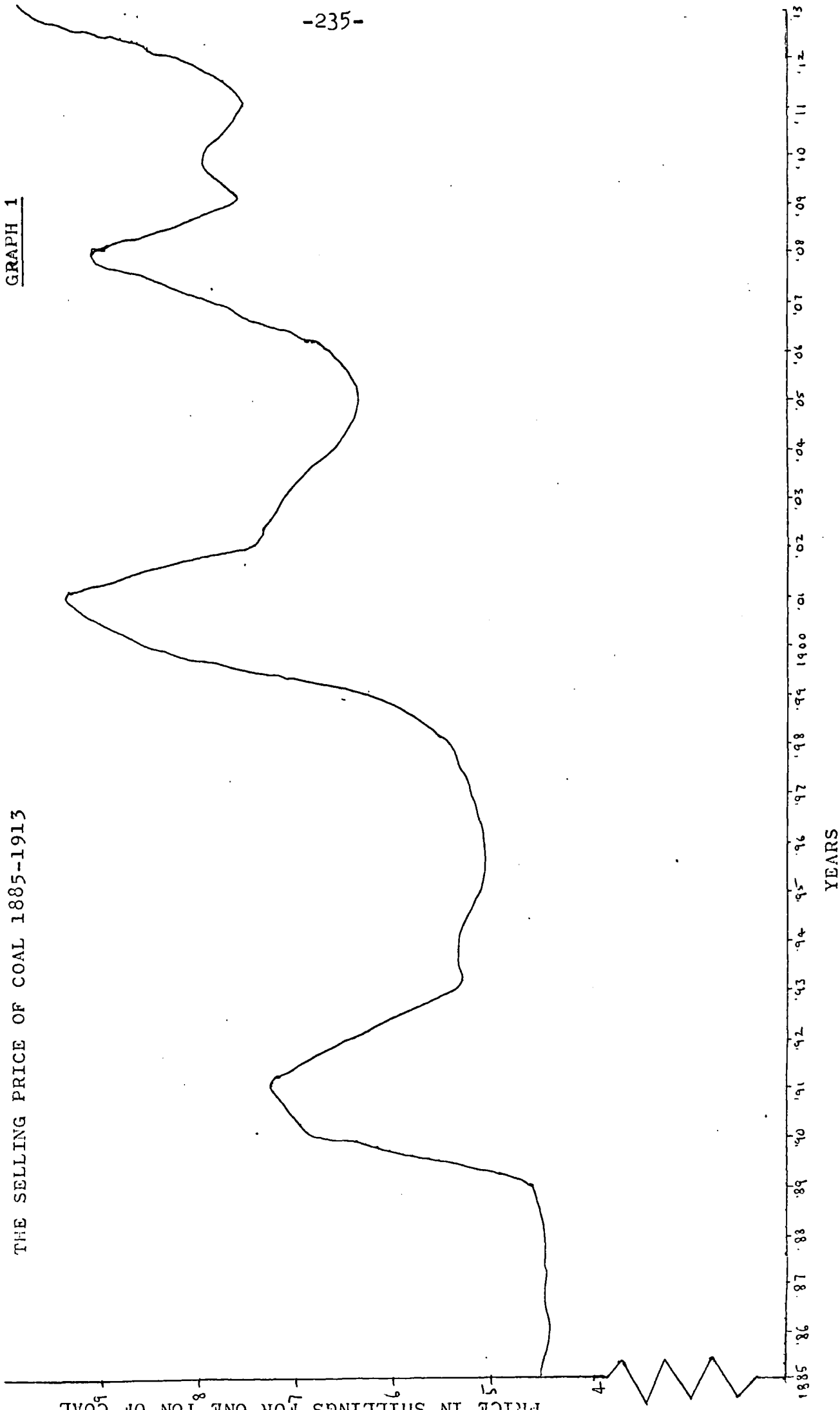
2. R. Garside, op.cit. p32.

3. A. J. Taylor, 'The Coal Industry' pp45-6. in D. H. Aldcroft, The Development of British Industry and Foreign Competition 1875-1914, pp37-70. (London 1968).



THE SELLING PRICE OF COAL 1885-1913

GRAPH 1



### The Selling Price of Coal

In a coalfield dominated by the sliding scale and the conciliation board the crucial factor in determining the wage levels was the price of coal. The breakdown of the selling cartels by the mid-nineteenth century made the coal industry highly competitive. Durham coal being sold abroad was forced to accept the European prices or risk losing the markets. In such an internationally competitive situation this meant that the traditional methods of artificially raising the price of coal by restricting output were ineffective, resulting only in the loss of a market.

The world consumption of coal grew steadily by 4% per year in the two decades prior to the outbreak of war in 1914<sup>1</sup>. The constantly rising demand reduced the pressure in the coal markets, and Durham was able to sell abroad without being subjected to price-cutting wars. As a result the price of Durham coal was able to rise gradually throughout the period, although there were some sharp price fluctuations.

Durham prices were quoted four times each year, changing in accordance with market supply and demand. The price per ton of Durham coal varied considerably<sup>2</sup> (see graph 1). After a slight decline between 1885-1889 the period 1889-91 witnessed price rises of over 70%. The rise was followed by a fall from 1891-96 of 45%. The next eighteen years saw greatly oscillating prices: between 1896-1901 a rise of 80%, 1901-05 a fall of 30%, 1905-08 a rise of 35%, 1908-11 a fall of 15%, and 1911-13 a rise of 30%. Between 1885 and 1914 prices rose by a total of 120%.

1. R. Garside, op.cit., p31.

2. Appendix G, Durham Coal Prices per ton 1885-1913.

## Wages

Since unemployment played a very small part in the life of a Durham miner before 1914, the only direct influence which the economic condition of the coalfield had on him was in determining the level of his wages. The wages problem was to be at the centre of dispute between both the union and the coalowners, and the union and its own rank and file. In Durham the sliding scale agreements between 1877 and 1889, and then the Conciliation Board, tied the level of wages to the price level. As a result the wage rates followed a similar path to those of the price of coal, but with rather smaller oscillations. The hewers' net wages per shift during the period are listed beneath<sup>1</sup>.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Hewers'net wage per shift</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Hewers'net wage per shift</u>
1885	4s. 8.85d.	1898	5s. 4.46d.
1886	4s. 7.93d.	1899	5s. 9.46d.
1887	4s. 7.79d.	1900	6s.10.8d.
1888	4s. 7.93d.	1901	7s. 1.57d.
1889	4s.11.35d.	1902	6s. 4.69d.
1890	5s.11.87d.	1903	6s. 3.35d.
1891	6s. 1.13d.	1904	6s. 0.85d.
1892	5s. 9.32d.	1905	5s.11.22d.
1893	5s. 6.09d.	1906	6s. 0.97d.
1894	5s. 7.30d.	1907	6s. 9.53d.
1895	5s. 3.66d.	1908	7s. 3.78d.
1896	5s. 1.36d.	1909	6s. 0.28d.
1897	5s. 1.58d.	1910	6s.10.38d.

1, Royal Commission of the Coal Industry. 1919 Vol.III  
App23 p42.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Hewers' net wage per shift</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Hewers' net wage per shift</u>
1911	6s. 9.58d.	1913	7s. 7.87d.
1912	6s.11.98d.	1914	7s.10.92d.

The overall pattern was one of a longterm rise in wage rates, interrupted from time to time by minor setbacks.

The two periods of substantial reductions come in the early 1890's accompanied by a county coal strike, and in the early 1900's when there was an upsurge of discontent throughout the county.

Durham's wage trends were similar to those of the rest of the country<sup>1</sup>, except that the gains were somewhat greater in the late 1890's, and the losses far more severe in the early 1900's. In 1886 the figures of the average hewer's wages in each coalfield were given at an M.F.G.B. meeting. They were:<sup>2</sup>

<u>Area</u>	<u>Average Wage per Shift</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Average Wage per Shift</u>
Scotland	2s. to 3s.6d.	N.Staffs.	4s.0d.
Northumberland	5s.2d.	Cumberland	4s.6d.
Durham	4s.7d.	Notts.	4s.9d. to 5s.3d.
Cleveland	4s. to 4s.2d.	Aberdare	3s.10d.
Lancashire	4s.9d.	Monmouth	3s.4d. to 3s.10d.
South Staff.	3s.9d.	N. Wales	3s.4d. to 3s.10d.

While Durham pursued an individual policy isolated from the M.F.G.B., she failed to maintain her 1886 wage position/<sup>relative</sup> to theirs. This was in part due to the competitive

1. R.Gregory, op.cit. p168

2. R.Challinor, 'The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners.' (Newcastle 1972) p194 & A.R.Griffin, 'The Miners of Nottingham.Vol.I 1881-1914.' (Nottingham undated) p44.

position of her important European markets, but it was also due to the D.M.A. leaders's failure to abandon the sliding scale ideas which still dominated their wages policies. The M.F.G.B. was successful in demanding a higher percentage of the price of coal for its members' wages, and broke away from the old ideas of a fixed relationship between coal prices and miners' wages. They took this idea to its logical conclusion by demanding a statutory minimum wage regardless of price.

Working from an 1879-1880 base the following wage rises occurred in the coalfields during the next twenty years:

Scotland	+ 81.25%	
South Wales	+ 60 %	
English M.F.G.B. members	+ 55 %	with a further 5% to be given
Durham	+ 53.25%	
Northumberland	+ 47.25%	1

Only Northumberland had increased her wages less than Durham, and they had had a base wage over 10% above Durham's. A comparison with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire in 1914 reveals that the Durham miner was receiving two shillings per shift less than his Midland counterpart<sup>2</sup>.

Although Durham had lost ground relative to the M.F.G.B. members, advances averaged nearly 2.5% per year between 1885 and 1907. The rising prices after 1901 turned the shift money wage rises into real wage declines in 1906, 1910, 1911, and 1912<sup>3</sup>.

1. G. Metcalfe, op.cit. p237.

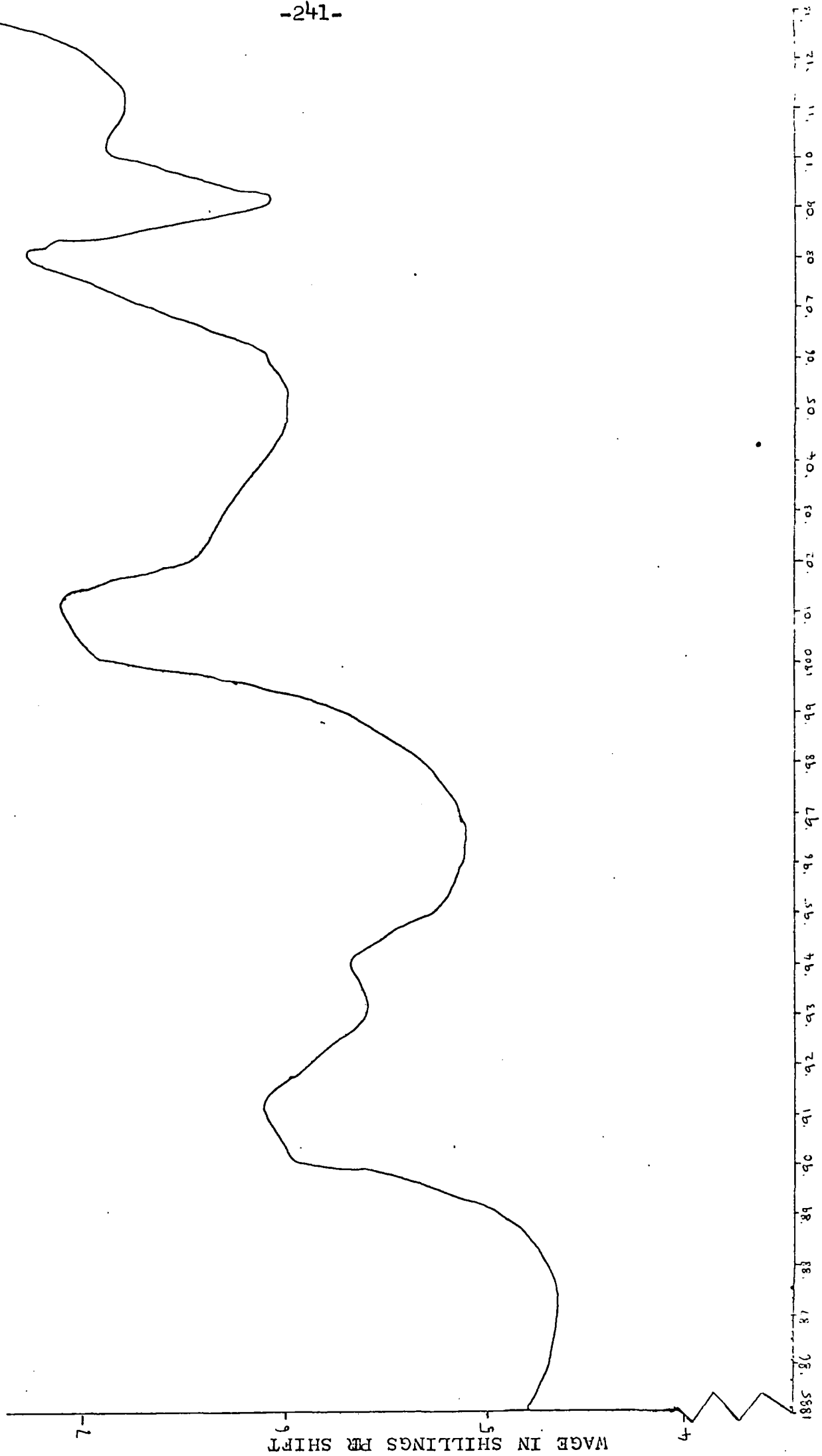
2. A. Griffin, op.cit. p136.

3. G. Routh, 'Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-1960.' (Cambridge 1965) P110.

It is against this background that the discontent amongst the Durham miners in both the industrial and political fields must be viewed. The constant rank and file demands for affiliation with the M.F.G.B. , for the abolition of the Conciliation Board and for a statutory minimum wage can all be seen as resulting in some part from the D.M.A's. own very poor wage record. No miner, no matter how moderate he was, could afford to ignore a drop in his real wage for long. The recurrent outbreaks of unofficial strikes after 1908 were led by the putters who were complaining about the large disparity between their pay and that of the hewers: they demanded higher basic rates of pay in order 'to maintain a reasonable standard of living.'

HEWERS' WAGES IN COUNTY DURHAM 1885-1913

GRAPH 2



## Productivity

The productivity of the Durham miners was of great importance to the economic viability of the coalfield. The higher the productivity, and the higher the wage level could become, the brighter the future of the coalfield. One way of measuring productivity is to divide the number of shifts the miner worked into his fortnightly production, giving the tons of coal hewed per hewer shift worked. Inevitably, there will be certain shortterm fluctuations with such a figure, but the longterm pattern will be reasonably reliable; the figures for the period are given below<sup>1</sup>:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons per hewer shift</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons per hewer shift</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons per hewer shift</u>
1885	3.95	1895	3.58	1905	3.41
1886	4.01	1896	3.57	1906	3.38
1887	4.04	1897	3.52	1907	3.39
1888	3.98	1898	3.52	1908	3.34
1889	3.90	1899	3.50	1909	3.36
1890	3.81	1900	3.48	1910	3.32
1891	3.59	1901	3.43	1911	3.30+
1892	3.61	1902	3.40	1912	3.26
1893	3.65	1903	3.41	1913	3.21
1894	3.61	1904	3.45	1914	3.29

+Altered from the obviously incorrect printed figure of 4.30 tons/hewer's shift. This would appear to be a typing error.

The table clearly indicates that 1887 was the turning

1 <sup>1919</sup> Royal Commission on the Coal Industry Vol. III Appendix 23 p42. Submitted by Reginald Guthrie, Secretary of the Durham Coalowners' association.



point for the productivity levels of the miners in the coalfield. Between 1887 and 1913 the hewers' output per shift fell by 0.83 tons, or by 20.5% per shift. The decline, it has been suggested, was greater than in most British coalfields, but appears to have been similar in its timing. During the period the tide of productivity ebbed and flowed, with recoveries in 1893, 1904, 1907 and 1909, but each was less pronounced than its predecessor.

The reasons for the declining productivity not only in Durham, but in the country as a whole, deserve attention. It has been stated that with an old coalfield decreasing productivity is inevitable; with a deeper shaft, longer seams and the early removal of the broader seams resulted in the hewer hewing less and more people becoming involved in bringing it to the surface<sup>1</sup>. While accepting the validity of this argument it is likely that too much emphasis has been placed on it. The fact that productivity fell throughout the British coalfields suggests that more complex factors were involved in the productivity decline.

Declining productivity could have been remedied by technical innovation in four different ways: first in the coal hewing; second, bringing the coal to the main roadways; thirdly in carrying it to the shaft bottom; and lastly in raising the coal to bank. In the past the introduction of the steam engine for the shaft and roadway haulage greatly improved efficiency in those areas, as did the introduction of pit ponies nearer to the face. The North East, which experienced the greatest haulage problems, was in the forefront

1. A. Taylor, 'Labour Productivity and Technological Innovation', p58.

of those changes, all of which took place before 1870. The remaining area for improvement, that of coal hewing, did not however experience any radical change before 1914, despite the development of the mechanical coal cutter three decades earlier. The reasons for the delay in the adoption of the mechanical cutter are examined later, here the important factor is that few were used in the coalfield.

With the great increase in demand for coal, which rose and continued to rise for the next three years, the corresponding wage rises attracted more labour into the industry to meet the demand. The peak in 1900 witnessed a national rise in production of  $2\frac{1}{4}\%$ , a rise in prices of 40%, an increase in employment of 50,000 men and a large fall in productivity. Despite falls in wages in the early 1900's, they still remained well above the pre-1896 level and attracted more men into the industry. The demand for labour was met, but the miners who were now earning high wages had little inclination to work hard in order to make a living wage. Absenteeism became a marked feature of the coalfield.

Many of the new men who were drawn into the industry, as many as one in six in some areas, lacked experience and skill in the pits, one result of which was to reduce productivity. Similarly the new pits opened to meet the rising demand for coal, took several years to reach peak production. This inevitably led to a period of lower productivity.

The coal industry was experiencing a false sense of security in the pre-war years. Price rises of 5s. 3.82d. per ton between 1885 and 1913, and the corresponding wage rises, by 2s. 11.02d. per hewer per shift, had enabled the

industry to enlarge rapidly. The growth was however accompanied by the diminishing productivity of the workers. In Durham, with her dependence on her export trade, the position was potentially serious; while Durham's productivity fell rapidly, that of her overseas competitors fell only slightly, or in some cases actually rose (the United States in particular). As a result Durham's previous productivity advantage over her European competitors was rapidly disappearing.

The decline in Durham's productivity per shift was the largest in the country<sup>1</sup>. The seriousness of this position is emphasised when it is recalled that Durham and Northumberland were the only two counties in Britain which did not suffer a reduction in hewers' working hours in 1910. Some other coalfields lost as much as 20% of their working time underground, which must have appreciably cut their productivity. In Durham in most cases the time worked remained unchanged, thus there was no decline in the tons hewed per hewer's shift due to this. The reasons for Durham's declining productivity must be found elsewhere.

The decline itself was a powerful argument with which the coalowners could oppose the introduction of a minimum wage. A minimum wage in the coalfield was in one sense tantamount to paying the miners a constant wage for producing an ever-decreasing amount of coal. The falling productivity created a strong pressure on the coalowners to resist wage rises on the scale of other more modern coalfields, and consequently led to animosity between themselves and the men.

1. A.J. Taylor, 'The Coal Industry' p49.

### Absenteeism

The growth of absenteeism during the period is an interesting rather than a particularly serious problem. Moos in his work on absenteeism in the inter-war period<sup>1</sup> found Durham to have the lowest absentee rate of all Northern pits. He found also that the hewers were absent 1.7 times as frequently as other underground workers<sup>2</sup>. Graph 3 gives the annual hewers' absenteeism rates between 1885 and 1914<sup>3</sup>.

It is immediately apparent that there is a strong link between the percentage of absentees and the wages of the Durham miners between 1885 and 1907. Only once, in 1897, did the movement of wage rates and those of absenteeism go in opposite directions. This correlation suggests that the miners had an optimum wage rate - any fall in wages beneath that level resulted in a decline in absenteeism, and vice versa. Considering the unpleasant and dangerous nature of their work this is not surprising.

The figures from 1910 to 1914 do not show the same link between wages and absenteeism; in 1910, 1912 and 1914 the rates moved in opposite directions. This divergence can be largely explained by the strikes of 1910 and 1912, which left many miners in financial difficulties, and to the outbreak of war in 1914, when absenteeism was viewed in a more serious light. If we accept these explanations, it is

1. S. Moos, 'Absenteeism in the Coal Industry.' (Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies), pp. 89-108.

2. ibid. p. 95.

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3. Appendix H, 'Absenteeism in the Durham Coalfield 1885-1914.'

reasonable to conclude that the wages level was the key factor in determining the level of absenteeism.

Mocs in his work finds a strong negative correlation between wages and absenteeism, wage falls being accompanied by rises in absenteeism<sup>1</sup>. It is probable that the different economic conditions of the 1920's, in particular low wage rates and high unemployment, were responsible for the reversal of the pre-war trend.

It can be suggested that the level of absenteeism was partly responsible for the decline in Durham's productivity. If the correlation between wages and absenteeism held true for all coalfields, then Durham, with relatively the lowest wage rate, should have experienced a lower rate of absenteeism than those coalfields where productivity did not fall so markedly. Taylor estimates that at most absenteeism could have accounted for 20% of the total decline in productivity<sup>2</sup>.

The study of absenteeism provides us with an insight into the financial effect of changes in the level of wages on the rank and file. If the level of wages rose beyond a certain level then the miners would be earning a figure in excess of their perceived financial needs, consequently the rate of absenteeism rose. Similarly the reverse was probable, that if wages fell beneath a certain level absenteeism became negligible.

It is possible that a very detailed study including the

1, ibid. p97.

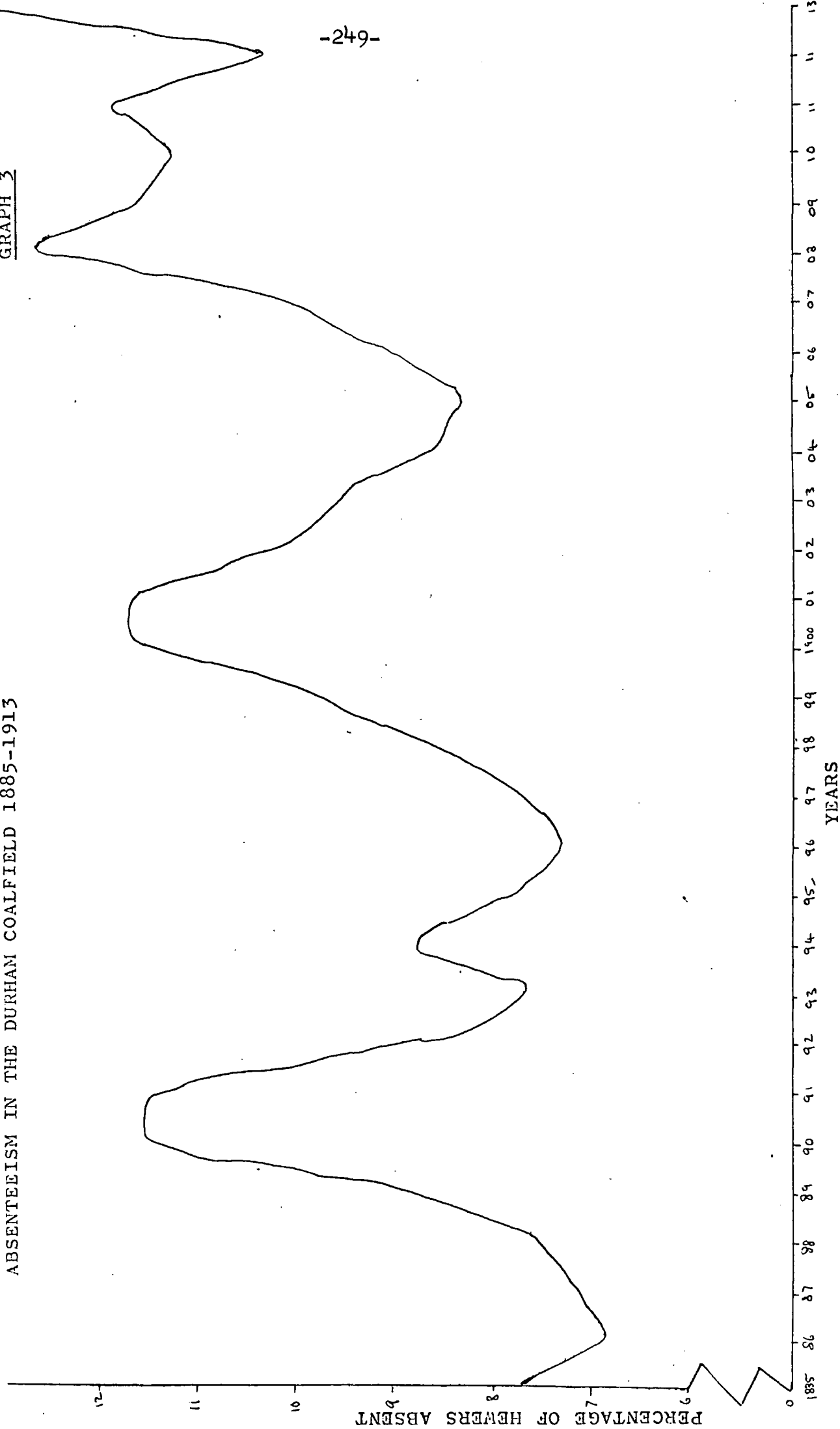
2. A. J. Taylor, 'The Coal Industry' p53.

fortnightly absenteeism rates, and changes in the cost of living, could venture to suggest the importance of changes in the wage levels to the miners themselves. It would also be interesting to study the absenteeism rates in individual pits to see if there were any marked differences.

ABSENTEEISM IN THE DURHAM COALFIELD 1885-1913

GRAPH 3

-249-



### Technological Advance

The period between 1885 and 1914 did not experience any widespread implementation of new techniques in raising coal. The most general changes made in Britain's coalfields concerned the implementation of certain improvements in the shafts of the pits, a helpful but singularly unimportant alteration. On a more limited scale, but of far greater importance for the industry, was the introduction of electricity into the pits. This change made for a considerable improvement in machinery beneath the ground. The most significant innovation in the industry was the invention of the mechanical coal cutter and conveyor, capable of simplifying both the hewers and the putters' jobs. The mechanical cutter did not become accepted in British pits, however, and by 1913 only 8.3% of total British coal production was mechanically cut, and even less mechanically conveyed.

While the benefits of the mechanical cutter were visible for all to see in the United States, where productivity rose sharply, there were several drawbacks to their use in Britain<sup>1</sup>. One of the most obvious problems concerned the British coal seams, in the U.S.A. the cutters were used with the greatest success in eight to twelve foot seams, whereas in Britain the seams were far narrower, frequently under four feet thick. These difficulties were heightened by the frequent geological faults in the British seams and poor roof and floor conditions. A second drawback was the initial opposition of the Home Office

1. A.J.Taylor, 'Labour Productivity and Technological Innovation.' pp59-60.



Departmental Committee . It was not until 1904 that the Home Office expressed favourable opinions on the safety and efficiency of electrically driven coal cutters, which had resulted in the earlier use of unreliable compressed air cutters. Even after this somewhat late Home Office approval, stringent safety requirements further hampered the machines' adoption. The final drawback was the cost of the machines, £335 each<sup>1</sup>.

There were ninety-four coal cutting machines in operation in the Durham coalfield by 1905<sup>2</sup>, fifty-four were driven by compressed air and forty by electricity. The majority of pits using them were the larger modern collieries opened within the previous twenty years. These pits were the most likely to have been electrified, and in them the best seams had still be be exploited, making the use of the coal cutter appreciably easier. The gradual acceptance of the new machines after 1900 received a setback in 1907 when a disaster at Washington Glebe colliery which killed fourteen men, was said to have been caused by sparks from a mechanical cutter igniting coaldust. This accident hardened opposition to the use of coal cutters.

The acceptance of the electrification of mines in Durham appears to have followed a remarkably similar pattern to that of mechanical cutters. The majority of pits opened after 1895 had electricity, and several of the large older pits were electrified after 1905; for example, in 1910 the

1. A.Wilson, 'The Consett Iron Co. Ltd.' p154.

2. ibid. .pp.155-6.

Consett Iron Co. decided to electrify all its pits. The major obstacle facing the coalowners who were in favour of electrification was the cost. The electrification of a small colliery cost well in excess of £5,000, a figure beyond most small companies. The benefits of electrification were not however immediately apparent to many coalowners, particularly if they were not using electrical coal cutters, and consequently there was little pressure for electrification. The gradual acceptance of electricity was shaken in 1909 when the public enquiry into the explosion at West Stanley, which killed 169 miners, blamed a faulty junction box in the pit.

By 1914 Durham was lagging behind many of the newer coalfields in the field of technological advance. This lag meant that the productivity of the Durham miners, was not aided by the new machinery available, and it continued to fall at a rate far in excess of other British coalfields. The failure to use machinery on a wide scale did help to create more jobs in the coalfield during the boom pre-war years: the numbers of hewers and putters had to be increased to raise output at a time when coal cutters and conveyor belts would have replaced them. The very nature of the boom, rising sales to overseas markets, being met by an increasing workforce, whose productivity was rapidly declining, suggests that even without the difficulties of war the Durham coalfield was about to experience a severe recession.

### Investment in the Coal Industry

The growth of any coalfield, with its very costly equipment and its high initial costs, necessitated a large amount of investment. There were three traditional sources of new capital: the ploughing back of profits; the issuing of shares on the London and provincial stock exchanges, and borrowing from the banks and general public<sup>1</sup>. By the late nineteenth century, investment in coalmining, particularly in an old coalfield, had only limited attractions. The investment involved considerable risks for a relatively small return on one's capital. Consequently, many potential investors were attracted to overseas investment, so popular in this period, in areas such as the South African gold and diamond mines, which offered the prospect of far higher returns. After 1880 the London Stock Exchange began to play a smaller part in the finance of coalmining, forcing it to turn elsewhere for money.

In Durham these deficiencies in the capital market did not cause so many problems as one might expect. There were two major areas of new investment in the coalfield, the electrification of the pits, and the sinking of new shafts for either a new or an existing pit. The electrification of the pits involved substantial expenditure, particularly since it frequently involved the building of a generator plant. In 1910 when the Consett Iron Company were electrifying all their mines, the cost of the two generating turbines necessary at Chopwell was £13,148<sup>2</sup>. This was paid for by the

1. A. J. Taylor, 'Labour Productivity and Technological Innovation' p.63

2. A. Wilson, op.cit. p154.

ploughing back of profits. It is obvious that investment on this scale could only be done by the large coal companies. Even at the level of buying coal cutters, it is significant that by 1910 three large coal companies, the Birtley Iron Company, the Lambton Coal Company and Bolckow Vaughan owned over half the county's coal cutters.

The smaller companies, who often did not make enough profit to plough it back, had to turn elsewhere for their money. J. Bowes and Company, a large company, with low profits, embarked on a major modernisation programme in all their collieries after 1910<sup>1</sup>. Three new pits were sunk, and two old ones re-opened during the programme. To finance these operations, the company sold off all its collieries outside of a twenty square mile area. In order to modernise, the company had to rationalise.

It would appear that much of the new investment in the coalfield between 1885 and 1914 came from the larger companies. Besides J. Bowes, only the Horden Coal Company, the Stella Coal Company and Pease and Partners opened more than one new pit during the period<sup>2</sup>. All these companies were large concerns, able to either plough back profits, or sell off other collieries. For a smaller company the cost of leasing land, sinking a shaft and building a new community was prohibitive. The cost of Bowes' new colliery at Dipton in 1913 was £65,000, excluding the leasing or buying of the land.

The small companies were often formed by a local group

1. C.E. Mountford, 'The history of J. Bowes and Company up to 1914.' (Univ. of Durham M.A. 1967), pp181-187.
2. Appendix I, New pits opened in Durham between 1885-1913.
3. C. Mountford, op.cit. p186.

of people, all of whom contributed £X towards the purchase and running of a pit. Such groups rarely included exceptionally wealthy people, and were seldom able to raise enough capital for any major new investment. The existence of a large number of these small coal companies did retard the modernisation of the coalfield. By 1913 85% of Durham's collieries were over thirty-five years old, and under 10% of the new pits were owned by small companies.

The structure of ownership in the coalfield thus played a major part in the retention of its nineteenth century character. The concentration on the small colliery as the main unit of production was inevitably largely responsible for the declining productivity of the coalfield. The small units of ownership made it very difficult to adopt the necessary policies of amalgamation, rationalisation and investment which would have lessened the effect of the inter-war slump in demand for Durham's coal.

## Conclusion

This rather superficial look at the economic condition of the Durham coalfield does provide us with an insight into some of the key influences which affected both the miners and their leaders. There are two completely different views that can be taken of the changes in the coalfield, during the period. The first impression focuses on the great growth of the mining industry in Durham. Durham's output increased from 27 million tons to 41 million tons and the number of people employed rose from 75,000 to 165,000 by 1913. The bulk of the increased production was being exported to Scandinavia, Russia, France and Germany, where the demand for coal increased rapidly. As exports rose so did the price of coal, from 4s.6d. to 9s.8d. per ton between 1885 and 1913; these price rises were reflected in corresponding rises in the miners' wages, from 4s.8d. to 7s.10d. per shift. The level of wages had risen so high that a high level of absenteeism was a regular feature of the coalfield. The rapid growth also resulted in there being only a negligible level of unemployment for most of the period. The situation by 1914 was that coalmining in Durham was an apparently booming industry with the miners enjoying an unrivalled period of prosperity.

The second view is more concerned with the less obvious aspects of the coalfield's growth. The most significant point in this approach concerns the great decline in the miners' productivity. A decline in productivity has the effect of making coal more expensive, unless wages fell by a similar or greater level. Between 1885 and 1913 productivity in the Durham coalfield fell by 20.5%. This fall

was more severe than any other coalfield in Britain, which all experienced declining productivity, and came at a time when both the U.S.A. and Germany were raising their productivity. The end result was that Durham's coal became increasingly less competitive, both in the British and European markets. In an effort to prevent the loss of these markets the costs of Durham's coal were kept to a minimum, i.e. wages were kept down. It is partly due to this that the wages in Durham's field fell behind those of the other M.F.G.B. members.

A look at the reasons behind Durham's particularly low level of productivity did not provide much hope for the future of the industry. Durham was an old coalfield and as the best seams were worked out, productivity inevitably went into decline. The main hope for arresting this decline lay in the adoption of the new cutting and conveying techniques used so successfully in the U.S.A. A combination of factors, and noticeably the high cost, geological difficulties and the need for the electrification of the mine, served to prevent the widespread use of these new techniques. A brief survey of the colliery owners and their willingness to invest in new machinery suggested that few were willing to invest on the scale necessary, and even less were able to gain access to the necessary capital if they wanted to invest in the coalfield.

The second approach realises fully that the reason for the expansion of the Durham coalfield lay in the peculiar position existing in Europe at that time. Many European countries were now undergoing industrial revolutions and consequently the demand for coal grew rapidly. Few of the

countries had however been able to increase their own production rapidly enough to meet the demand, the gap had to be bridged by imports. While the demand continued to grow rapidly, Durham's position was secure, but when the demand began to decline, European production could catch up and the need for imports fell. Unless the price of Durham coal was very competitive and able to compete in the European markets, a decline in the rate of growth of demand would bring about the collapse of Durham exports. The rapidly declining productivity in the coalfield was making Durham's position far more precarious since the coal prices were becoming increasingly competitive.

There can be little doubt that the majority of miners in Durham held the 'optimistic' view of the coalfield and its prospects. Their wages in 1914 were higher than ever before, prices were high and coal sales were still rising. They saw few signs of problems ahead: the industry seemed to be enjoying an unparalleled period of growth and they were benefit ing. It was only natural for the Durham miner to want to affiliate to the M.F.G.B. since their members appeared to be enjoying even more success in their wage demands than the Durham men. The Durham miner was not in a position to fully understand that Durham's wages reflected the coal prices in Europe rather than in Britain and that consequently affiliation to a body pressing for national wage levels might eventually cost him his job.

The D.M.A. leaders understood the inherent problems in Durham's growth rather better. They realised that with Durham experiencing a rapid fall in productivity her international selling position would be jeopardised. John Wilson



took a particular interest in foreign coalfields, notably in the U.S.A., Germany, France and Belgium, all of which he visited. He was thus well aware of the increasing continental output and their improving productivity levels. It was not difficult to see why Wilson believed so strongly in Durham pursuing an isolationist policy, why he was strongly in favour of sliding scale agreements and the Conciliation Board, and why he opposed the demands for a statutory minimum wage: all removed the element of independent action, vital to Durham's economic future. His policies were aimed at providing all the D.M.A.'s. members with a job, even if the wages were low, rather than seeing the decline of the coal-field bringing with it high unemployment. He referred to Durham's precarious position when discussing the disadvantages of strike action:

"It would not be correct to say that if once lost, gone for ever, but it will be true to say that in a very large part it will be difficult to get back and especially that part which finds the market on the continent. The larger the export of a county and the lower the productivity levels, then the more that county will suffer and the greater difficulty it will have to face in holding the markets."

1

The long running dispute between Wilson and the rank and file can be seen in terms of the two views of the coal-field's economic position. The rank and file saw the coal-field only in the short-term, a prosperous successful industry; the D.M.A. leaders viewed it more in the longterm, an over-extended industry facing a potentially disastrous collapse.

1 D.M.A. Circular, 12:2:12.

The position of Durham was becoming increasingly precarious, but the outbreak of war served to cover up the flaws for a further five years.

CHAPTER 4.

The INFLUENCE OF METHODISM.

## Methodism

Any attempt to assess the impact of a religion on the social, industrial and political life of a community must be undertaken with some trepidation. Yet recent work, in particular R. Moore's study of the influence of Methodism on life in the Deerness valley<sup>1</sup>, suggests that the Methodists played an important role in most mining communities. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, Durham and in particular the mining communities, experienced a rise in the number of Methodists far in excess of any other part of the country. The Primitive Methodist movement which was particularly strong in the coalfield, continued to grow until 1909, when a peak membership was reached<sup>2</sup>. It is fair to state that during much of our period the Methodists' movement in the county was at its strongest, and that the persistence of popular religion at this late date provides one of the biggest contrasts between the miners, and the much more secularly-minded working class of the great towns and cities. Does this contrast explain the particular developments in industrial and political life in Durham and, if so, how?

The long-established links between the Liberal Party and the Methodist movement as a whole suggest that Methodism might well have been a barrier to the growth of political radicalism in the Durham coalfield, most notably to the I.L.P. Similarly, the conservative views of many Methodists

1. R. Moore, 'The Influence of Methodism', (Univ. of Durham. Ph.D. 1972)
2. W. R. F. Wearmouth, 'The Social and Political Influence of Methodism in the Twentieth Century'. (London 1957) p50.

concerning industrial relations, and the use of conciliation and arbitration policies in preference to an aggressive industrial policy, may well have hampered the activities of the industrial militant. This section aims to examine the relationship between Methodism and the increasing militancy and radicalism of the coalfield.

### Methodism and Political Radicalism

During the past hundred years, a school of thought has emerged which links the absence of a political revolution in England with the presence of Methodism. These views were first put forward by the French Historian F. Guizot in the 1870's<sup>1</sup>, and they were later taken up by P. Taine and E. Halévy<sup>2</sup> in France and by W. Leckey in England<sup>3</sup>. The basic contention of these writers was best expressed in Halévy's work:

"The elite of the working class, the hard-working and capable bourgeois, had been imbued by the evangelical movement with a spirit from which the established order had nothing to fear. This spirit - conservative and anti-revolutionary - derived from the Methodist revival of the previous century."

4

Since the publication of Halévy's work several writers have entered into the debate on Methodism. One of the best-known works is E.P. Thompson's 'The Making of the English Working Class.' Thompson suggests that there were two sides to Methodism's impact on the working classes. Firstly, that it served the bourgeoisie, since it:

"weakened the poor from within, by adding to them the active ingredient of submission, and they (the leaders of Methodism) fostered within the Methodist church those elements most in need...it contributed to rationalisation of

1. F. Guizot, 'A Popular History of England' (Boston 1876) pp85-6.
2. E. Halévy, 'A History of the English People 1815-1915' (London 1924-47).
3. W.E. H. Leckey, 'A History of England in the Eighteenth Century.' (London 1878-96) pp635-638.
4. E. Halévy, 'The Birth of Methodism in England' (Chicago 1971) p11.

work through self-discipline whereby ideally the labourer must be turned into his own slave driver."

1

Thompson's second point concerned the political nature of the movement:

"Methodism did not become a vehicle for a radical political response to the destruction of the old order, since it brought to a point of hysterical intensity the desire for personal salvation."

2

If we accept Thompson's viewpoint, together with the basic contentions from the French school of thought, it would appear that the very existence of a large Methodist community amongst the Durham miners would act as an almost insurmountable barrier to the spread of either extreme political or industrial beliefs in the coalfield. There were however other effects of Methodism which offset some of these restrictions. Thompson himself conceded that Methodism could play a role in the development of a united working class. By producing leaders with a capacity for sustained organisational dedication and (at its best) a high degree of personal responsibility, the Methodist was able to carry into political activity (given that Methodism may not have actually encouraged that activity) a sense of earnestness of dedication and of a calling that was to be so important for the organisation so led)<sup>3</sup>.

A great personal dislike of Methodism led Thompson to understate the benefits which the working classes gained from Methodism, in particular the unification of a few of the

1. E. P. Thompson, 'The Making of the English Working Class' (London 1963) p390.

2. ibid. p424.

3. ibid. p433.

many sectional elements of the working classes. The great emphasis laid on self-help resulted in a marked improvement in the general levels of education and literacy amongst active working class members. There was a corresponding decline in the consumption of alcohol and in the incidence of gambling. While Thompson accuses Methodism of repressing a revolutionary awareness, he overstates the importance of a small united educated classless group in preventing a revolutionary situation; although strong in certain areas, Methodism by no means dominated the working classes' religion throughout Britain.

One major mistake of both the French school and Thompson is their failure to distinguish in sufficient detail between the differing forms of Methodism. The Methodist church founded by John Wesley had few links with the Liberal working class.

"John Wesley and <sup>the</sup> early leaders were extreme Conservatives...opposed to liberal and radical reform, to trade unionism and other manifestations of Labour activity."

1

During the following century, the Methodist stance underwent a marked change. The movement split with new groups emerging, the Kilhamites in 1797, the Bible Christians in 1800, and the Primitive Methodists in 1806. These groups showed far more working class leanings than the Wesleyan Methodists. Although technically barred from any political associations by the 1819 conference vote, the Primitive Methodists became increasingly active in political affairs.

1. E. Hobsbawm, 'Methodism and the Threat of revolution in Britain' p23, in 'Labouring Men' (London 1964) pp23-33.



"Regarding and reviewing the Methodist sections as a whole it is no exaggeration to say that they made a large contribution to progressive politics, civic freedom, the advancement of the working classes. The Toryism of the Wesleyan Conference was countered and subdued in later years by the rise of a vigorous Liberalism: the conference of the other denominations were never Tory in constitution or tendency...In the political sense and sphere Methodism was not reactionary nor was it a rival rallying ground to radicalism and it was never a drag on the wheels of working class organisation, and served as an example and a spur in social service." 1

This statement by Wearmouth is a balanced summary of the situation, although he does fall into one of the traps one faces when discussing Methodism, that of referring to Methodism as one ideologically united movement. In fact the main groups, in particular the Wesleyans, the Primitives and the New Connexion, all held somewhat differing views concerning the political, social and industrial role of the Methodist church; and with the diffusion of power to the local chapels and lay preachers, there were a plethora of interpretations put forward.

As a consequence it is very difficult to refer specifically to the existence of such a thing as the Methodist viewpoint. There were in practice a multitude of differing views; when dealing with Methodism we must keep this in mind, and use only general statements rather than attempt to be too precise, since what was acceptable in one Methodist community might well have been condemned in another.

It is thus necessary to carefully establish the dominant

1. R. F. Wearmouth, 'Methodism and the struggle of the Working Classes. 1850-1900.' p241 (London 1954).

branch of Methodism in the coalfield and to try to assess its significance, although it is obvious that this can only be done within the most general terms. In order to give more substance to the work, the religious beliefs of both the D.M.A. leaders and the I.L.P. leaders are studied and the influence of Methodism on them suggested.

### Methodism in County Durham

During the rapid growth of the Durham coalfield in the first half of the nineteenth century, the county underwent enormous economic and social change. The influx of young men produced a high level of violence, and drunkenness became commonplace. One writer on Methodism might well have been referring to Durham when he said:

"The leaders of the Methodist movement were impressed, not so much by the social evils from which the poor suffered as by the social evils  
at which they had succumbed." 1

The Methodist church of the early nineteenth century had no great appeal for the miners. The majority of its working class members enjoyed financial success and social improvement; as members became wealthier the Methodist movement, predominantly Wesleyan, became socially and politically Conservative and began to experience difficulties in recruiting from the working class. One result of this was the emergence of the Primitive Methodists as a distinct body.

"These the most purely 'proletarian' of the major sects broke away because the Wesleyans were insufficiently democratic in the matter of preaching by laymen and women, and opposed to the mass propagandist campaigns of the great revivalist 'camp meetings' which American evangelists had introduced. Their strongholds were to be amongst the northern miners." 2

Webster continues:

1. H. R. Niebuhr, 'The Social Sources of Denominationalism.' (New York 1924) p47.
2. E. Hobsbawm, op.cit. p26.

"Primitive Methodism arose in response to the desperate social conditions, particularly of northern miners, and brought a radicalism to English religion not seen for two hundred years."

1

The Primitive Methodists became very active in the North East, concentrating on the mining communities. It has been suggested that one of the great attractions of Methodism was that it provided a primary community to replace the institutions and relations lost in the process of social change.<sup>2</sup> This would appear particularly relevant to Durham, since the period was marked by very high levels of internal migration. In the colliery villages, the key feature of Methodism was its following and the sense of community it created. The Methodists were involved in the community and played as active a part as possible in it.

According to Moore, there were three main lines of activity in which the Methodist could involve himself. Firstly, a continuation of his evangelistic activities; secondly, the doing of the other secular things, such as feeding the hungry, saving the drunkard, helping the gambler's family and in general encouraging individual improvement. Thirdly, there was the serving of the community as a whole, which ranged from anything from the practice of good neighbourliness to serving as a party official or local councillor<sup>3</sup>.

Primitive Methodism proved highly acceptable to many

1. F. Webster, The Durham Miners and Unionism 1831-1926 ... (Univ. of Durham PA 1474) 218
2. R. Moore, 'The Influence of Methodism.' p15.
3. ibid. p.138.

Durham miners, and its spread throughout the coalfield was spectacular. By 1880 virtually every pit village had a local chapel, and Durham was one of the driving forces in the Methodist movement. Since its very early days the close links between the Primitive Methodists and the Trade Union movement were of great importance. Tommy Hepburn, the leader of the 1831 Miners' Union, was one of the first Primitive Methodist miners' leaders of note. The Primitives' activities appear to have made them unpopular amongst the early coalminers:

"When Lord Londonderry evicted strikers after the 1844 coal strike, two thirds of the Durham Primitive Methodist circuit became homeless... whoever it was for turning the other cheek it was not the Primitives."

1

The Primitives were subjected to such harassment largely because their organisational skills and oratory distinguished them from the rank and file. In every attempt at forming a miners' union in the county, the Primitives played a vital part in the leadership of the movement. This naturally made them a target for the early coalowners' displeasure. After the establishment of the D.M.A., the coalowners began to recognise that their Methodist workmen were hard workers, were rarely absent and generally set a good example. Some coalowners, notably Pease and Partners, reacted by actively encouraging Methodism<sup>2</sup>.

Despite their numerical domination of the Methodist movement in the county, the miners did not gain the degree of

1. E. Hobsbawm, op.cit. p26.

2. R. Moore, op.cit. p80.

representation in the leadership of the movement that their numbers merited<sup>1</sup>. Darvill found a similar situation in his study of the leaders of the North Eastern Co-operative Societies, few Methodist miners reaching the top, although several non-Methodists did<sup>2</sup>.

The Methodists did however make spectacular advances in the D.M.A., where they held a complete domination of the top D.M.A. positions between 1885 and 1914. Of the associations' leaders Crawford, Patterson, Wilson, Johnson and House were all Primitive Methodist preachers, and Samuel Galbraith was a New Connexion preacher. Inevitably this Methodist domination was reflected in the D.M.A.'s industrial policies. The Methodist belief in arbitration and conciliation manifested itself in the creation of the sliding scale agreements and a conciliation board. These policies also added weight to the leaders' desire not to become involved in any strike activity, moderation and negotiation proving more acceptable. In later years the acceptance of the laissez-faire beliefs implied a rejection of demands for statutory hours or wages.

Even at a local level these Methodist beliefs did have an influence. Moore found in his study:

"that the degree of radicalism measured by industrial militancy (in terms of organising demonstrations and harassing blacklegs) seems to have been in inverse proportion to the numbers of Methodists in the village population."

3

1. ibid. pp26-7.

2. P. Darvill, 'The Co-operative Movement in the North East' (Univ of Durham N.A. Thesis 1951), p221.

3. R. Moore, op.cit. p286.

This conclusion can be questioned since Moore restricted his study to four small pits, in three <sup>was</sup> Methodism strong, in the fourth where it was only of limited importance. In the three 'Methodist' pits the management actually encouraged Methodism, in the fourth (Quebec) the owner was an Anglican brewer, disliked by Methodists and non-Methodists alike. It is then probable that the causes of industrial unrest were more diverse than Moore suggests.

There is little doubt that in the more isolated mining communities the Methodists did gain election in the late nineteenth century to the local co-ops, the parish councils and control over the local union branch, and the local political party (predominantly liberal). A study of twenty-six leading Methodists in the Deerness Valley between 1880 and 1926 revealed the extent of their dominance<sup>1</sup>. Twenty-one of them held a total of forty-three union posts. Thirteen held posts in their local co-operative societies, twenty-one held a total of twenty-eight political posts. Several were county, district or parish councillors, one was all three; several were J.Ps. Between the twenty-six they held over one hundred posts in the local community.

Webster concludes of Methodism:

"Methodism vaulted the pitmen from a life of indolence, but more significant was that having taken the first steps, the temperate ~~miner~~ would then be led into the wider spheres of Gladstonia<sup>Δ</sup>-Liberal politics, reform, newspaper reading and all the attendant phenomena. Such characteristics ...had more in common with the respectable middle class than with the miners' own kind, making the convert that much more likely to imitate the standards of the former, while disdaining the latter, yet lead fellow pitmen to recognise

1. Ibid., p201.

amongst them one who was worthy of meeting the owners on their behalf."

1

Since the D.M.A. agents were to a man Methodist, removed from the pit face, and in some instances from the colliery village, they were inevitably drawn further into this essentially respectable life style. In a few extreme cases it was possible for a leader, particularly if he had moved away from his colliery village, to have more in common with the middle classes than the rough pitmen. This would appear to have occurred in the case of John Wilson. Wilson's duties as an M.P. necessitated his frequent absence from Durham and when he was in the county he regularly attended the large social gathering of the local landowners, often in his role as Chairman of the County Council. In the newspapers his links with the miners were played down and his position as M.P. and County Councillor emphasised. This transition did not occur rapidly, but gradually over a thirty-year period, the shift in association became obvious.

1. F. Webster, op.cit., p40.



### Liberalism to Socialism

Despite the 1819 ban on political activity by the Wesleyan Methodist ministry, the Primitive Methodists became increasingly active in the second half of the nineteenth century in promoting the Liberal cause. In 1851 this support had become so open that the Primitive Methodist Conference attempt to redress the balance by stating:

"A minister...is strongly recommended not to deliver speeches at political meetings nor at Parliamentary elections." 1

Thirty-five years later it was obvious that the previous recommendation had gone unheeded. The Primitive Methodist Conference debated political activity and stated:

"Primitive Methodists had been so emphatic and enthusiastic in support of Liberal measures that the question was put: 'Is the Connexion too closely allied with a political Party?' One correspondent admitted that the connexion as a whole has assumed a strong political attitude...By the Liberal Party we are regarded as amongst its most trusty and forces." 2

In Durham the strong links between the Liberals and the Methodists was reflected in local politics, particularly before the 1906 elections. The miners' candidates were all Liberal Primitive Methodists before the emergence of the L.R.C.

The main point at issue must be to establish what the change from Liberalism to Socialism involved, and whether or not it was possible for an active Methodist to make the change easily. Part of any answer to this problem must

1. R.Wearmouth, 'Methodism and the Working Classes' p 226. cit. in 'Primitive Methodist Conference Minutes 1851-55' p64.

2. ibid. p231 cit. in 'Primitive Methodist Magazine 1893' p597.

inevitably involve some kind of estimate as to the actual beliefs of socialists in the pre-war period. Socialism, as with Methodism, was not a tightly-knit easily defined political doctrine, it encompassed many different ideas, some of which people might accept and others they might reject.

The true socialist methodist inevitably faces the need to reconcile two basic sorts of ideas. Firstly, his religious ideas will be rooted in faith and linked to the notion of individual salvation. Secondly, his political ideas based on rational conviction and grounded in the collective solidarity of working men. For some of the more devout the reconciliation of Methodism's ethical individualism and Socialism's collectivism must have proved impossible.

The point has been made by Moore that no Methodist could have been involved with the new Labour Party, since it necessitated several activities which could be personally objectionable to the Methodist<sup>1</sup>. Firstly, funds had to be raised, which was usually done through raffles, draws, etc., which constituted gambling for the Methodist. Secondly, there had to be a mass following which forced concentration on the club, not the chapel. The provision of a social life was usually accompanied by the consumption of alcohol. Lastly was the problem that socialism claimed a universal base, transcending religion. While there is obviously a degree of validity in these points, there can be no doubt that they could also be applied to a lesser degree to any political party. The close association of the Methodists and

1. R. Moore, op.cit., p252.

the Liberals and formerly the Conservatives indicates that these objections are not of paramount importance.

Another area of difficulty came for the Methodist who fully accepted the goals of Socialism. This meant that the member was prepared to change the existing social system to replace it with different forms of society. Several writers have made the point that since methodism was distinctly Conservative in its origins it lacked any revolutionary designs<sup>1</sup>. What they fail to realise is that the Labour Representation Committee and the I.L.P., having chosen to work within the framework of British democracy can no longer be viewed as revolutionary. The Labour men became radicals, working to change the social order, but it was the Syndicalists who gained little Methodist support in Durham, who were the real revolutionaries of the period, wishing to overthrow the existing order by their industrial aggression.

The crucial point appears to revolve around the reconciliation of the socialist and methodist beliefs. There can be no doubt that such beliefs could be reconciled, as the presence of numerous Methodist ministers in the early I.L.P. bears witness<sup>2</sup>. The absence of any single set of either socialist or methodist beliefs probably made the reconciliation of the two sets of beliefs easier for the devout, and the reconciliation can have presented few problems to the less religious.

The growth of the Labour Party in Durham was not based

1. F. Webster, op.cit., p13. E.Hobsbawm, op.cit. p23.

2. Appendix E.

entirely on the conversion of thousands of miners and their wives to a class-conscious proletarian view of the world. Instead like any political party it appealed to the masses on a broad front. Some of the miners were undoubtedly sincere Socialists, but the majority favoured or were interested only in certain points of the labour programme. The most important of these were the industrial aspects of the I.L.P.'s. national policies. The demands for the Eight Hour Act and the Minimum Wage Act were the cornerstone of I.L.P. industrial policy. Since the former was highly unpopular in Durham it was on the latter that most attention was focused. The demand for a minimum wage predated the I.L.P. and was in no way connected with Socialism as defined in its narrowest sense. The Labour Party was thus gaining the political support of many miners, only a few of whom can be classed as socialists.

It is precisely because of this situation that continuity between the Labour Party and nineteenth century Liberalism was relatively smooth<sup>1</sup>. It is obvious that for many Methodists the change from Liberalism to the Labour group was largely titular and was of little or no relevance to their Methodist beliefs.

1. H. Pelling, 'The Origins of the Labour Party 1880-1900.' (London 1954) p150 and D. Martin, 'Pacifism' (London 1965). pp88-9.

### Labour leaders

A study of the men who were instrumental in bringing the Labour Party into the county provides us with an insight into the influence which Primitive Methodists brought to bear on the party. The outstanding socialist leader in the coalfield was Tom Richardson whose efforts in organising and spreading the I.L.P. have been mentioned. Richardson came from a very ardent Primitive Methodist family, and following the death of his father in a pit disaster in 1886 became closely linked with the church. Many of Richardson's unusual qualities of leadership were cultivated in the Primitive Methodist chapel. He became a local preacher of exceptional ability, always drawing large audiences, and despite his national success he never wavered in his close affiliation with the chapel. Like all Methodists he did not tolerate gambling, was a teetotaler and a non-smoker, he believing in leading by example.

While Richardson was clearly the undisputed leader of the early Labour group, he was not the only one to put his Methodist upbringing to good use in the socialist cause. Joseph Batey, the other driving force in the Minimum Wage movement, had been a Primitive Methodist since his youth, and despite his labour activities, remained a loyal Methodist until his death<sup>1</sup>.

The miners' first socialist M.P., J.W. Taylor, was another ardent Primitive Methodist. Like Batey he was attracted to the movement in his teens, and soon became a local preacher of distinction. He remained a preacher

1. R. Wearmouth, The Social and Political Influences of Methodism, p129.

throughout his life despite numerous political commitments<sup>1</sup>. It may be significant that none of the early socialists appear to have left the Primitive Methodist movement either before or after their involvement in the Labour group.

Amongst the other early I.L.P. leaders who had strong Methodist links was Jack Gilliland, a local preacher at twenty-one who continued his preaching for fifty years<sup>2</sup>. Jack Adair<sup>who was</sup>, a renowned local preacher, a Sunday School teacher and Trustee of both Langley Moor High Street and the Jubilee Durham Primitive Methodist chapels. W.P. Richardson, the brother of Tom, experienced a similar early upbringing and became a local preacher at twenty. Peter Lee was another converted to Primitive Methodism in his youth, he changed from being an unusually violent youngster to a local preacher and an outstanding miners' leader<sup>3</sup>.

Jack Lawson, who was converted to Primitive Methodism in his youth, suggests that Methodism provided the serious environment suitable for discussion of deeper matters<sup>4</sup>. He gave up his penchant for gambling and enjoyed a political career which ended in him becoming a peer of the realm.

For William House, who was converted at the age of twenty:

"Religion awoke in him a passion for education. Every movement - educational, industrial, social and religious - for uplifting the people had his active support."

5

1. Appendix D, Local Leaders. J.W. Taylor.
2. Appendix D, Local Leaders. J. Adair, J. Gilliland, W.P. Richardson, J. Lawson.
3. R. Wearmouth, 'The Social and Political Influence of Methodism.' pp121-143.
4. J. Lawson, 'A Man's Life' (London 1932) p63
5. R. Wearmouth, 'The Social and Political Influence' . pl26.

Several other leading Labour men were associated with different branches of Methodism. John Robson was a New Connexion Methodist. Arthur Henderson a Wesleyan preacher and William Whitely a New Connexion member.

The only leading member of the D.M.A. who was not an active Methodist during the period was T.H.Cann. Cann showed sympathies with socialism, but cannot be described as an active member; in 1915 he replaced Wilson as General Secretary. Cann had been a Primitive Methodist, but was expelled after being jailed for assault during the 1892 strike.

Thus, significantly, all of the leaders, both of the early Labour Party in Durham and of the Labour group active in the D.M.A. were Methodists. This complete dominance was undoubtedly unrepresentative of the mining community, as a whole. Hobsbawn says that in the early nineteenth century the reasons for people being attracted to either Methodism or radicalism or both were identical<sup>1</sup>. This may have been equally true in Durham a century later concerning Methodism and the I.L.P.

An inquiry into the reasons for the Methodists' domination of the radical leadership is an obvious course to pursue. As a result of their Methodist training, the young radicals had both oratorical and organisational skills, far in excess of those of most non-Methodist miners. In an organisation like the I.L.P. which was dependent upon the rank and file for its local leaders, the educated miner who had experience of organising meetings was a great asset.

1. E. Hobsbawn, 'Primitive Rebels', pp128-132. (Manchester Univ. Press 1959).

Philip Snowden attributed his rise in the I.L.P. solely to his Methodist training and in particular to his ability to deliver a speech.

The well-read young Methodists inevitably came into contact with Socialist literature due to their desire for further education. In this they were probably more exposed to the Socialist campaigns than the average miner. In their desire to create a better world in which to live some probably saw in socialism a cure to the social evils they saw around them. This social awareness and exposure to socialist material in part compensated for the liberal bias of Methodism.

Methodism may well have had the effect of forcing its members to a more ethical type of socialism than the bulk of Labour supporters, but this was not a great hindrance. More significant would have been the problem of finding Labour leaders if it had not been for Methodism.



### Methodism and the I.L.P. at a Local Level

The early activities of the I.L.P. had much in common with Methodism. They made great use of the large outdoor meetings, as had the Primitives half a century earlier. Special weekend outings or camps provided a very similar service to Methodist outings. The great emphasis on education and self-improvement was common to both. These activities probably spread into the Labour movement at a local level as a result of the Methodist upbringing of the local leaders.

In Moore's work on the Deerness valley he uncovered some material on the local I.L.P. branch in the area. The Quebec I.L.P. was founded in 1908 by the local Methodist minister, the Reverend W. Bull<sup>1</sup>. The I.L.P. branch replaced the Fabian society which had been active since the 1890's. Initially several members of the Methodist church would have nothing to do with the I.L.P., considering them to be agitators. As a result they obtained an alteration of the time of the service in the Methodist chapel to prevent the group from meeting there<sup>2</sup>. Only gradually did these attitudes change, although by 1914 little numerical progress had been achieved.

The group consisted of thirteen miners and a school teacher. Eleven of the miners were Primitive Methodists, one a Wesleyan Methodist and one a Spiritualist. Two of the Primitives and the Wesleyan were local preachers, and one of the Primitives was the chapel organist<sup>3</sup>. The near-

1. South Durham and Auckland Chronicle, 2:7:08.

2. R. Moore, op.cit. p219.

3. ibid. p217.

monopoly of the group by Methodists indicates that many young Methodists were attracted to the movement, but it must be stressed that Quebec was a strong Methodist area.

The group were led by the school-master, an intelligent though not devout Primitive Methodist. There were three basic themes to their discussions. Firstly, they offered a systematic and coherent critique of capitalist society, which explained both local economic hardship and international conflict. Secondly, they offered a new and optimistic view of man and a view of a new social order, the view was put into programmatic terms by the I.L.P. nationally. Thirdly, the group questioned the social and economic order in religious and moral terminology.

The dominance of the local school teacher meant that the group owed little intellectually to Methodism. The schoolmaster's own doubts about Methodism, which he eventually left, resulted in the themes tending to be a negation of the principles underlying the social and political gospel of traditional Methodism<sup>1</sup>.

Unfortunately the study of the Quebec I.L.P. is the only detailed account of the activity of an I.L.P. branch in Durham which we possess. Moore's suggestion that the group's views were a negation of the principles underlying the social and political gospel of traditional Methodism will bear further study. At the turn of the century the Primitive Methodist church was in fact divided on political issues: the church's older attitudes had ceased to be relevant to the more progressive thinkers.

Partly in response to the need for Methodism to come to

1. ibid. p232.

terms with the ideas of the twentieth century, a new theology emerged. The 'new theology' came largely from the pastor of the City Temple, London, the Reverend R.J. Campbell. Campbell's theology embraced a revision of many of the old Methodist beliefs, both social and political, through a radical new interpretation of the Bible. The 'new theology' changed the emphasis from Methodism's social reformism to a pure form of Socialism. Campbell was himself a confessed Socialist.

"When I say that I am very far from wishing to claim that Socialism is necessarily identified with any particular theory of religion. But I am anxious to make it clear that in its essence it is not irreligious...I am a Socialist because I am a Christian...I believe that when the Socialist ideal has been realised in victory, it will be the victory of my Lord. - The Kingdom of God on earth."

1

Campbell's theology divided the church, preachers openly disagreed, as did elders and members. In an attempt to end the controversy, the church tried to assert the prevailing orthodoxy<sup>2</sup>. This move proved successful with the older men, but caused an increasing degree of alienation amongst the young as the century progressed.

In Durham there was considerable interest in the debate. The young radical leaders sided with Campbell, Tom Richardson becoming a personal friend. In 1908 when Campbell came to speak at the central Primitive Methodist Church, Cockton Hill, Bishop Auckland, the importance of these issues for the Durham miners was highlighted. Several thousand people turned up for the service, forcing the organisers to arrange other services in the vicinity which Campbell could address. When

1. South Durham and Auckland Chronicle, 21:5:08.

2. R. Moore, op.cit. p316.

Campbell finished the services Richardson took him to address a huge I.L.P. gathering<sup>1</sup>.

The interest generated by this one man is testimony to the interest of the younger miners in the area in the 'new theology'. A newspaper editorial said:

"His discourse was by no means entirely new theologically but...the large congregation was a clear and unmistakeable answer to those who criticised him."

Turning to his Socialism, it went on:

"He...will never be a political firebrand, although he is, at the present moment, one of the greatest compelling forces behind Socialism. He goes the whole distance...but.. the narrow bigoted spirit which is associated with so many is left far behind." 2

Campbell made much use of simple language. He described socialism:

"Socialism means...join hands, get together, co-operation instead of competition." 2

Although Campbell was obviously a focal point for the Methodist-Labour link, he was not active in Durham's affairs. The two most prominent local Methodist ministers were the Reverend W. Bull of Esh, and Reverend D. Pughe at Willington. Bull was one of the early forces in the county I.L.P. and played an active role until he was moved to a new area. Pughe was the driving force behind the Willington I.L.P., one of the most popular ministers in the coalfield, he preached in many colliery villages. Like Bull his activities came to an abrupt halt when he was transferred to a new area. Several other ministers were active in local affairs without

1. South Durham and Auckland Chronicle, 21:5:08.

2. ibid, 21:5:08.

rising to county prominence.

It would be wrong to see the Reverend Campbell's new theology in isolation from the wider Christian Socialist Revival in Britain. The spread of socialist thinking through Britain after 1880 resulted in a great upswing of interest within the church, particularly amongst the younger clergy in the problems of the poor and of ways to improve their deprived position. To this end the Church Socialist League was founded, an important body, perpetuating belief in a wider socialist/religious view of life, and transcending individual religious creeds, uniting everyone regardless of their denomination in the need for socialism<sup>1</sup>.

Within each church men came forward to take up the challenge of Christian Socialism, the Reverend Campbell being the leader of the Primitive Methodists. In the Anglican Church the Guild of St. Matthew was set up by those actively involved in Christian Socialism. One of the most important leaders of this group was the Reverend W.E. Moll<sup>2</sup>, the man who was so closely linked to the I.L.P. in Durham. The Durham socialists were thus in regular contact with one of the most important Christian Socialist leaders in Britain, a man who despite being a member of the Church of England probably played a significant role in enabling Methodists to reconcile their beliefs with those of socialism.

1. P. D. Jones, 'The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914'. (Princetown 1968) p227.
2. ibid. pp123-4.

### Industrial Activities

As was noted above, in 1844 the Primitive Methodists bore the brunt of the owners' actions during the strike. The violence which surrounded the strike suggests that the Methodists did not pursue their usual industrial policies. The Methodist leaders were not basically hostile to the owners in their attitudes.

"In this situation the congruence between Methodist individualism and current economic thinking reinforced faith in the operation of the market. Industrial relations were seen as a series of compromises within the market context, involving degrees of reciprocity which were reinforced by the paternalistic outlook and actions of owners and managers. The union leaders' outlook was essentially personalistic and traditional... never one class interest against one another." 1

From this viewpoint, strikes were traumatic experiences for the Methodist union leader, to be opposed whenever possible. This was highlighted in 1892 when the temporary loss of control of the rank and file by the D.M.A. leadership resulted in the rejection of their advice not to strike. As the coalowners adopted an equally obstinate stance, the Methodists found themselves in a situation which they were unable to cope with. Their response to the strike was to plead for peace.

"The fierce struggle between capital and labour gives us much concern. The collision of the great industrial forces in the lockout and the strike is a peril to the social fabric. On every movement and on every man that helps to bind them into harmonious action we implore the blessing of the God of Peace." 2

1. R. Moore, op.cit. p218.

2. R.E. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes, p149 & 1892 Wesleyan Conference Minutes.

The dilemma of the Methodist can be seen by the phraseology 'the lockout and the strike.' For the miners it was viewed as a lockout, but the coalowners as a strike, but the Methodists were unwilling to side with either party.

The Methodist industrial policies enjoyed considerable success in the settlement of the miners' wages. Despite widespread opposition they managed to use sliding scale agreements between 1877 and 1889. - due almost entirely to their domination of the D.M.A.'s hierarchy. Following the rejection of the sliding scale the industrial difficulties resulted in the introduction of a Conciliation Board, as part of the 1892 settlement. By astute manipulation Wilson kept the Conciliation Board (a pseudonym for a sliding scale) in operation until 1912, with a short break between 1896-1898. Opposition to the Conciliation Board was widespread when it was first introduced, and it continued to grow for much of the period. The Board became the focal point for the militants' attacks in the D.M.A.

At a local level the Methodists had a degree of scope for personal influence.

"The owners used to patronise (Methodist) union leaders, giving them time to go to Durham, etc... and paying them for the shift... in return leaders were meant to take things easy... they did used to go soft, 'sorry, boys, couldn't get any more.'" 1

One result of the domination of Methodist policies over the D.M.A. at both a local and a coalfield level may have been to stimulate the growth of the radical political groups. The young Methodist who was dissatisfied with the existing industrial and political policies of the D.M.A. was presented

with two possible forms of 'protest' activity. The first option was for the young Methodist to join a 'radical' political group; in Durham almost certainly the I.L.P. Membership of such a party enabled him to become active in a group which was acceptable to his church, but differed enough to satisfy his need for something new. The second alternative was to become active within a group of industrial militants. The goals of the industrial militants were far less clear than those of the 'Socialists', their desire for industrial confrontation was merely the common link in a multitude of diffuse industrial ideologies. The traditional Methodist attitude ardently pursued the policies of arbitration and conciliation in the industrial field, and was strongly opposed to the policies of the industrial militants; consequently the Methodist who joined this group faced the strong disapproval of his church.

It is significant that during the violent unofficial strike of 1910 the majority of trouble appears to have been centred in areas with large Catholic communities in Murton, Birtley, Blackhill and Consett. The strongly Methodist collieries such as Hamsteels, Esh Winning and Quebec appear to have experienced very little unrest and to have been amongst the first of the strikers to return to work. Such a calm atmosphere was to be expected in villages with a strong Methodist following.



## Conclusion

It was stated at the start of this section that any attempt to assess the full impact of Methodism on the political and industrial life of the Durham coalfield would be fraught with difficulties. It is for this reason that this part of the study has confined itself mainly to a highly superficial review of the most likely areas of Methodism's influence. The apparent religious domination of the Primitive Methodists in the coalfield suggested that their influence was widespread. The Primitive Methodists were usually very active in union affairs, of all the Methodists' branches Primitive Methodism...produced twice as many Labour leaders as all the rest put together<sup>1</sup>.

A study of the D.M.A. leaders and their policies reveals a strongly Methodist line. The conciliatory industrial policies favoured by most Methodists proved to be well suited to building up the D.M.A. from a small unstable body into one of the largest unions in the country. The constant emphasis on industrial peace enabled the union to advance unhindered by the crippling economic and social hardship of frequent strike action. These moderate policies appear to have undergone a crisis in the early 1890's when the bitterness of the Silksworth and the 1892 County strikes placed an intolerable strain on many Methodists. At this time it became apparent that the 'Methodist position' was over-dependent on the good will of both sides. Their policies were highly successful in periods of economic prosperity when prices and wages were high and both the coalowners and the men were satisfied, but in a recession, this mutual

1. P.Jones, op.cit., p404.

goodwill was very liable to break down and lead to conflict. The period between 1885 and 1914 saw a longterm growth in the price of coal, a situation which helped the Methodists to dominate the coalfield's industrial affairs.

Despite a general acceptance that when Socialism emerged to challenge liberalism many Methodists transferred their allegiance to the Labour group, few historians have studied whether or not such a change was likely. In Durham it is important that the distinction is made between Methodists who became Socialists and Methodists who were members of the L.R.C., but cannot be termed socialists. The widespread support for the L.R.C. in Durham appears to have owed much to the miners' acceptance of the minimum wage ideal: many miners became associated with the Labour group without having any interest in their policies, beyond that of the minimum wage. These men cannot be termed Socialists, and it would appear that they had no problem in adapting their Methodist beliefs to their Labour Party affiliation.

Those Methodists who fully accepted socialist beliefs did however face greater problems. These men owed much to the change brought about within the Methodist church by the Reverend R.J. Campbell in the absence of which they would have faced real difficulties in reconciling their beliefs. The split in the Methodist church brought about by Campbell's 'new theology' was reflected at a local level in the Durham coalfield, the older D.M.A. leaders continued to pursue their staunch liberal policies, whereas many of the more active young miners became involved in Socialism.

One must not fail to mention that there were those in the coalfield who although they bore the title 'Methodist' were neither particularly serious nor active within the church.

These men can have had no difficulty in accepting Socialism because of religious beliefs. It is unlikely however that any of the leaders of the Labour group fell into this category, since most were active Methodist preachers.

The I.L.P. was greatly indebted to the Methodist movement for their young working class leaders. These well-educated, hard working, trained leaders were responsible for taking over the running of the movement in the coalfield from the outsiders, mainly clergymen and national leaders, who played an important part in the I.L.P.'s. formation. These young leaders knew the miners and understood their fears, partly because of this the I.L.P. played down the importance of Eight Hour legislation in Durham, and stressed the Minimum Wage demands.

It must be noted that the less flexible position of the church on industrial matters effectively prevented any sincere Methodist from drifting towards extreme industrial militancy. In Durham Syndicalism gained very little support, and this might be partly due to the presence of a strong Methodist group in the coalfield. It would be unwise however to overstate the case for Methodism reducing the numbers of industrial militants; in the South Wales coalfield where Methodism was also a powerful force, the syndicalist policies gained far more general approval, suggesting that other factors than Methodism played an important part in either Durham's relatively low level of unrest or South Wales' high level or both.

CHAPTER 5.

MIGRATION IN THE COALFIELD.

## Migration

A study of the importance of migration in creating an environment which directly influenced the levels of industrial militancy and political radicalism encounters considerable difficulties in trying to isolate those influences attributable to migration. Despite this it has been suggested by several writers that the modern large collieries opened towards the end of the nineteenth century tended to be the more industrially and politically active communities in the coalfield.

Wilson in his study of the Consett Iron Company<sup>1</sup> was faced with the problem of accounting for the unusually high level of industrial militancy at Chopwell colliery. The colliery, sunk in 1897, was the only one of the Consett Iron Company's pits to experience such industrial unrest. Wilson said of it:

"It is unlikely that Consett's labour policy would have differed greatly between collieries, so the course of the disturbances at Chopwell can probably be attributed to either the miners' militancy or failings of individual managers at the colliery...such a community had few roots and no identity and was therefore most likely to be impressionable by activists. The size of the colliery also militated against amicable relations."

2

Commendably Wilson qualifies his statements concerning the impact of migration. Since migration was a widespread phenomenon it is obvious that its importance lies more when it combined with other factors, rather than in isolation. These other factors included the attitudes of the management

1. A. Wilson, 'The Consett Iron Company Limited' (Univ. of Durham M.Phil. 1973).

2. ibid. p175.

to the workforce in the larger impersonal collieries, the relations between the men themselves, the level of wages, the shifts worked and the utilisation of machinery and equipment absent in the other pits.

Other questions which must be asked concern the migrants themselves. Where had they come from? What type of colliery were they used to? Were they Methodists like many of the pitmen or not? Were they moving from one colliery to another regularly? Or was this move one forced on them by economic conditions? Lastly, but of considerable importance, were they malcontents who had been forced to come to the new collieries for work after having been in trouble elsewhere?

The census returns for Durham indicate that population rose rapidly from the middle of the nineteenth century. The county gained 130,000 people between 1851 and 1871, population then levelled off for the next decade before rising by 70,000 between 1881 and 1911. The high rate of population growth can be, in part, attributed to the high birth rate of the area, although the effects were somewhat reduced by the very high infant mortality rates in the mining communities. The gap between the coalfield's natural level of reproduction and the overall population increase was filled by migrants.

Cairncross, in his work on migration in Victorian England, states that out of a total increase of four millions by the nation's colliery districts, five sixths was due to the excess of births over deaths, and only one sixth was due to migration<sup>1</sup>. Cairncross makes no mention of internal

1. A.Cairncross, 'Home and Foreign Investment 1870-1913.' (Cambridge 1953). p27.

county migration. Durham however had a higher death rate than the more modern coalfields, where better housing and sanitary conditions prevailed. The increase in numbers in Durham thus might well have been due to a higher level of migration than the 16½% Cairncross suggests.

There is some local evidence of an unusually high level of migration amongst the mining communities. Jack Lawson said of Boldon Colliery circa 1890:

"Its population consisted of people from every part of the British Isles, some of the first generation, some of the second, all boasting they were Durham men...our neighbours on one hand were a dear old Irish couple...and on the other a kindly Northumbrian...opposite were Cumberland and Lancashire people and behind Wales, Cornwall and Ireland. There were whole masses of Cumbrians."

1

Material such as this unfortunately serves only to indicate the high degree of long-distance migration. Similarly in his work on more recent migration in County Durham<sup>2</sup>, R.C. Taylor states of the period 1832-1883:

"Pits were sunk so fast that the rate of change among local men from farming to mining could not provide an adequate labour force...Men came especially from...North-umberland, Cumberland and Yorkshire, attracted by the prospect of earning up to £1 per week in the pits, at a time when agricultural workers paid only 7s. 6d. per week. Men also came from the tin mines of Cornwall and Derbyshire and from East Anglia, which suffered from the agricultural depression at the end of the nineteenth century. Families came from the textile areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire. A contemporary suggested that many parents came from these counties to find employment for their children, as the 1833 Factory Act had prohibited child employment in the factories."

2

1. J. Lawson, 'A Man's Life.' (London 1932) pp36-7.

2. R.C. Taylor, 'Migration in the Durham Coalfield.' (Univ. of Durham Ph.D. Thesis 1970). pp20-21.

Much of the work that has been done on migration has been based on the 1851 Census figures, mainly because people had to state their place of birth for the first time. Works such as those by Grant<sup>1</sup>, Moyes<sup>2</sup> and Cootner<sup>3</sup> have all relied heavily on the 1851 returns to demonstrate the level of migration in the areas under study. The lack of any comprehensive later records greatly devalues the use of the 1851 returns for any comparative work. This census is, of course, too early to be of any great use in the present study.

The lower rate of population increase between 1885 and 1914 appears to suggest that the general level of migration was below that of 1851. Cairncross lays great stress on the point that the declining mortality rate amongst miners' children, led to a higher rate of natural reproduction than in 1850<sup>4</sup>, which, if accepted, suggests that migration from outside the county might well have virtually ended by 1900.

Since it is more frequently stated or referred to, long-distance migration has attracted the limited amount of work done on the subject. R. Moore in his thesis on the Deerness valley uncovered some relevant material. He noted that Pease and Partners had recruiting offices in Lincolnshire and the East End of London<sup>5</sup>. He refers to a sermon being given in Welsh at Witton Park Primitive Methodist

1. P. Grant, 'The Coalmine's of Durham City' (Geography Dept. Paper. Univ. of Durham 1972) p.20.
2. W. Moyes, 'Mostly Mining.' (Newcastle 1969). pp100-102.
3. P. Cootner, 'The Irish in Co. Durham' (Univ. of Durham M.A. Thesis 1973) pp10-11.
4. A. Cairncross, op.cit. p77.
5. R. Moore, 'Influences of Methodism.' p65.



Church<sup>1</sup>. Taylor mentions Welsh as being the spoken language in Chilton<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately Moore, having referred to the decline of the Weardale lead industry providing migrants and an unsubstantiated remark 'that Durham seems to have experienced a continuous eastward migration<sup>3</sup>; ignores the migration question.

One area in which some detailed work has been done concerns the Irish migrants in the county. Cootner in his work has pinpointed the Irish settlements in the coalfield. He lists Ushaw Moor, Blackhill, Southwick, Byers Moor, Consett, Stanley, Washington, Tow Law, Witton, Crook, Willington, Bishop Auckland, Tudhoe, Barnard Castle, Gainsford, Darlington, Sedgefield, Cornforth, Coxhoe, Trimdon, Thornley, Croxdale, Castle Eden, Esh, Newhouse, Langley Moor, Houghton le Spring, Tunstall, Monkwearmouth, Washington, Birtley, Broom, Consett and South Shields<sup>4</sup>, as having Irish communities. Three omissions: Sacriston<sup>5</sup>, Murton<sup>6</sup> and Wingate<sup>7</sup> must be mentioned since all contained large Irish communities and had United Irish League groups.

1. ibid. pp65-6.

2. R.Taylor, op.cit. p21.

3. R.Moore, op.cit. p66.

4. P.Cootner, op.cit. p5.

5. Durham Chronicle, 21:6:95.

6. Durham Chronicle, 3:12:97.

7. Durham Chronicle, 13:1:11.

One serious problem with Cootner's work when one is studying migration is that the tightly-knit Irish communities tended to list their third and fourth generations born in Durham as Irish. Viewed in this way the Irish impact is not as great as it appears. This is highlighted by Cootner's figures for the Irish in Durham. In 1851 the majority of the Irish in Durham and Newcastle, 5.1% of the total population<sup>1</sup>, had recently migrated from Ireland. By 1871 the figure had reached 6.3% of the total population<sup>2</sup>. This was a rise which could have been due entirely to local reproduction and not due to migration at all, similarly the 1881 figure of 6.5%<sup>3</sup> of the population appears to suggest that migration had ended.

One problem which could have been looked at to estimate the extent of intra-county migration is the opening and closures of pits in the county. Areas where a pit had just been sunk inevitably attracted a great inflow of migrants. In some districts there was already a rural community which provided some workers for the pit, for example, this happened at Murton<sup>4</sup>, at others nearby pit communities led to limited small-scale migration, but the greatest migratory attractors were the isolated rural pits which built up communities around them. Similarly when a pit closed, there was a corresponding outflow of migrants, unable to earn a living

1. P. Cootner, op.cit. p5.

2. ibid. p17.

3. ibid. p21.

4. C. Jenson-Butler, 'An Economic Study of Consumer Movement in Co. Durham.' (Univ. of Durham Ph.D. Thesis 1969) p36.

they were forced to move elsewhere<sup>1</sup>.

During the period 1885-1914 a total of twenty-one new pits were opened in the county<sup>2</sup>, the majority of them were large modern pits sometimes employing 2,000 or more men. The two well-known radical pits, Washington Glebe and Chopwell, were amongst those opened in the period. The manning of these pits needed a workforce of some 3,000 or more men, the great majority of whom had to migrate. This figure does not include other pits which were enlarging and opening up new seams.

Similarly during the period a total of eighty-seven pits closed in the county, laying off their entire workforce. Many of these were small collieries employing between 50-400 men, but a few such as Hutton Henry employed nearly 1,000 men<sup>3</sup>. Again this figure does not include those who were laid off due to the closure of one or some shafts and seams, or the pits which were contracting, but did not close down completely. The lack of serious/<sup>un</sup>employment in the area indicates that the majority of the men rapidly found work elsewhere<sup>4</sup>. The movement of men away from a declining pit would have included a wide range of workmen. No one group can be said to have moved more readily than others. It was frequent however to have a group movement, a move from the closing colliery to another colliery by twenty to thirty miners, who had worked

1. See Croxdale School Logbook, 1874-1904. D.C.R.O/Educ. Closure of Colliery 23:6:86.

2. Appendix 1, New pits.

3. W. Moyes, op.cit. p112.

4. Appendix L, Migration to and from Chopwell. 1896-1914.

together over a long period and wanted to stay together; one example of this is the mass movement from Sherburn to Chopwell in 1904<sup>1</sup>.

A pit often took fifteen to twenty years from its sinking before it reached peak production. The paybill books of T. Hadley (Bros.) Collieries at Holmeside and Craghead from 1866 to 1909<sup>2</sup> provide us with an insight into the growth of a pit and the availability of men to work. The first pit, the Thomas, was sunk at Holmeside in 1866; in 1882 a second pit, the Oswald, was also sunk at Holmeside. By January 1885 the Thomas employed 495 men, the Oswald 228 - a total of 743 men. The next six years saw a decline, January 1891 showing only 465 men at the Thomas Pit and 163 at the Oswald.

In January 1892 the Craghead branch opened with five men being engaged for sinking operations; by December the figure had reached 52. The 1893 figures indicate a very rapid recovery from the county strike. The Thomas pit employed 362 men, the Oswald pit 523 and the Craghead pit 108, a total of 993 men. The following table shows the growth of the pits:

<u>Numbers Employed</u>	<u>Thomas Pit</u>	<u>Oswald Pit</u>	<u>Craghead Pit</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Change</u>
Jan.1893	362	523	108	993	
Jan.1894	458	608	266	1,332	+ 349
Jan.1895	419	628	316	1,363	+ 31
Jan.1896	581	1,137	492	2,210	+ 847
Jan.1897	557	958	589	2,104	- 106
Jan.1898	561	854	640	2,055	- 49
Jan.1899	454	986	611	2,051	- 4
Jan.1900	482	782	553	1,817	- 234
Jan.1901	474	777	540	1,791	- 26
Jan.1902	457	755	559	1,771	- 20
Jan.1903	530	687	560	1,777	+ 6

1. ibid.

2. T. Hadley. (Bros.), Holmeside and Craghead Collieries. Paybills. 1866-1909 (two vols.). D.C.R.O.-N.C.B. deposit.

<u>Numbers Employed</u>	<u>Thomas Pit</u>	<u>Oswald Pit</u>	<u>Craghead Pit</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Change</u>
Jan.1904	505	786	485	1,776	- 1
Jan.1905	408	751	540	1,699	- 77
Jan.1906	432	633	448	1,513	- 186
Jan.1907	480	610	494	1,584	+ 71
Jan.1908	649	921	662	2,232	+ 638
Jan.1909	723	1,050	609	2,382	+ 150
Jan.1910	579	897	585	2,061	- 321

These figures show very considerable fluctuations in the numbers employed. The eight occasions on which a hundred or more people were either taken on or laid off would suggest that migration could have been common. Holmeside was a small community largely dependent on mining, Craghead, although a little larger, was equally dependent. The close proximity of other pits at Craghead, Edmondsley, Burnhope, Sacriston and South Moor may have reduced the need for migration, but the lack of transport services imposed serious limitations on the distance one could live from the pit. Conversations with old miners reveal that very few were prepared to travel in excess of four miles to work on foot. Such a journey added a minimum of two hours to the working day. The readily available housing facilities at most collieries made a move more attractive for the miner with a family; many single men became lodgers. It must also be noted that the miner usually had to vacate his colliery house when he ceased working for the house's owner's pit, and in such circumstances he had little choice but to move.

Equally important in the fluctuations in employment were the men who were laid off by the owners. Those at most risk would be the recent arrivals at the pit. The management would probably have also attempted to rid itself of any trouble-makers in the pit at the same time. Those laid off were placed in a vicious circle, which might have prevented them

from gaining any long-term employment if economic conditions merited it, being laid off regularly, due to being the most recent arrivals. This does not appear to have been true for the very good workers, who were welcomed by any colliery managers.

The lack of material prevented a further study of the numbers employed at other collieries. Inevitably, many of the colliery records dealing with a period between sixty and seventy years ago have been lost. Of those remaining, many have not yet been classified. When searching for specific material in this field, one is thus forced to rely on a large element of luck.

One question of crucial importance to the migration problem and its effects on the social life of the miner, is the level of turnover of the workforce within a given pit. This gives us a double-edged view of migration: on the one hand, the number of people who leave a colliery, on the other the number of new people who replace them in the colliery. Any study of these elements should enable us to see the turnover of the new arrivals as against the local residents.

There are two main drawbacks to such an approach. The first concerns the sheer scale of the task. A cast study of labour turnover in one colliery, Consett Garesfield, has been undertaken for the four years 1890-1893<sup>1</sup>. For each of these years two consecutive fortnightly paybills were examined and all the names of employees were transcribed, the list of names for each year were then compared with the list for the preceding and succeeding years, and the extent of the turnover noted.

1. Consett Garesfield Colliery, 'Mens' Pay Book, 1890-1893.  
D.C.R.O./N.C.B.

To avoid any possible omissions anyone who was absent one year, but present in both the preceding and succeeding years was included as present throughout. It must be realised however that the figures do not record solely migration. Included amongst them are those who died or retired.

The second major obstacle was the problem of finding the paybooks. Due to the number of records kept in the paybooks and the regularity with which they were recorded, the books were both very large and numerous. The result would appear to be that many companies disposed of these paybooks shortly after finishing them, keeping only the company paybook which recorded the total sums of money paid in wages. The absence of material and the lack of time available to search for further records resulted in the restriction of thesis study to Consett Garesfield Colliery.

Owing to the lack of comprehensive material relating to the wages of the drivers, putters and shifters, many of whom changed their occupation within the mine, the study was restricted to hewers. Since the hewers constituted the large majority of the Garesfield workforce, a reasonable insight into the level of migration in the colliery can still be obtained. The results of the study are easily tabulated:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage of hewers leaving the pit</u>	<u>Percentage who arrived</u>
Between		
1890-91	16.4%	19.3%
1891-92	17.8%	32.8%
1892-93	16.1%	20%

Of those who came in 1891, 32% left in 1892 and of those who came in 1892, 48% left in 1893<sup>1</sup>.

1. Appendix K, Men who came and left the colliery's employment.

The Consett Garesfield Colliery was in many ways typical of the North Durham coalfield. It was sunk before 1850 and was a small pit with a workforce of barely 300 men. The relatively stable figures of those who left the colliery indicates that the 1892 strike had no lasting effect on the pit.

It seems reasonably safe to assume that about 15% of the hewers moved away each year, but between 30% and 50% of those had only worked at the colliery for a short period of time. In the period studied the hewing workforce increased by 9.8% a rise which suggests that there were no problems in securing new miners.

There are still several questions which remain unanswered by the study. These include a knowledge of the ages of the migrants, their marital status, and their occupations within the pit. It would also be useful to discover whether there were any significant differences between the migration around an old pit and one of the new ones, which it has been suggested, were more radical.

A detailed study of the employment registers for Chopwell colliery answered some of these outstanding problems<sup>1</sup>. The turnover of men at the Chopwell colliery was of an exceptionally high rate. The colliery workforce grew from 222 in 1897 to 1,238 in 1905, to 2,296 in 1913<sup>2</sup>. During that period the colliery management books record a total of 9,687 people taken on. This works out at an average turnover of almost exactly 40% of the workforce every year. This figure does appear to

1. Appendix L, 'Migration to and from Chopwell colliery. 1896-1914.'

2. A. Wilson, op.cit. p376.



be above the corresponding figures for the Consett Garesfield Colliery.

The engagement books contained the age of each new miner taken on. The average age of the new miners is listed below.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Age</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
1896	33.5 yrs.	1904	30.4 yrs.
1897	27.0 yrs.	1905	33.8 yrs.
1898	32.8 yrs.	1906	32.0 yrs.
1899	26.5 yrs.	1907	29.0 yrs.
1900	31.78yrs.	1908	27.6 yrs.
1901	31.8 yrs.	1909	30.7 yrs.
1902	31.2 yrs.	1910	31.9 yrs.
1903	28.7 yrs.	1911	28.85yrs.

The average age of the migrant, 30.48 years, might be higher than in some other groups. The migrant has traditionally been referred to as the young single male, but since the age of marriage in mining communities was exceptionally low, it is unlikely that the majority of migrants were single men.

The limited information available to us confirms this view. Since the marital status of men was not always given, it is necessary to concentrate only on certain years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Nos.Single Men</u>	<u>Total Nos.Men</u>
1901	74	471
1902	101	390
1903	176	658
1904	66	229
1905	175	335
1911	91	410

These figures suggest that in Chopwell, at least, the married men with a young family were the most common type of migrant. This could have resulted partly from a desire for a larger house, which may have resulted from the move to a new colliery. The move was probably not for money, since the Chopwell pit was not paid unusually high wages<sup>1</sup>.

1. A.Wilson, op.cit. p177.

The age structure of the migrant workers was confirmed by the detailed study of the occupations of those taken on<sup>1</sup>. The number of hewers taken on was 289, more than double the next largest group, the putters with 119. Since the putters were predominantly younger men, not yet ready to cut coal, the relatively low numbers of putters suggests that the older men were as likely to change colliery as the young. Being a new colliery, Chopwell would have needed fewer putters than many of the older pits, where the coal had to be moved several miles from the coalface to the pithead. The numbers of putters proportional to the numbers of hewers reflects the needs of the pit rather than a higher propensity to migrate.

The question which must be asked is what was the relationship of those case studies of migration to radicalism and militancy in the lodges of the colliery concerned? One major change which came in the age structure of a new pit was that the men gained positions of leadership which they could not have obtained at so young an age in an older pit. This was not however the only course of action open to the men at a new colliery, at Chopwell, for instance, an outsider, Frank Mackay, was appointed checkweighman<sup>2</sup>.

It can be argued that a new pit proved an excellent dumping ground for the malcontents from other pits. Obviously, with management holding the power to dismiss disruptive workers, many must have tried to find employment in the new pits. Such a theory does not however explain why the managements at the new pits did not dismiss them themselves. It is known that

1. Appendix L.

2. Appendix F, Frank Mackay.

the colliery owners circulated a blacklist of men who would have a disruptive influence on the workforce if employed, and there would appear to be no reason why the management of a new colliery should have needed to employ such a person. Similarly if the employment of malcontents in the new pits did occur, we have to explain why it was only the large new pits which had poor industrial records; the smaller ones were less affected<sup>1</sup>.

The differential between large and small pits is an important factor in the study of discontent. Inevitably in a new pit the management was faced with certain problems in co-ordinating the workers into an efficient workforce. In the new pits the men had to be introduced to electricity, mechanical cutters and even mechanical conveyors, these new innovations cut across the old traditional job evaluations and it needed time for them to be accepted.

In the smaller collieries, the management was often alert and close enough to act quickly to iron out the problems which the men encountered. In the larger collieries, this in itself caused problems. The personal relationships between the management and the rank and file of the smaller pits was replaced by the highly impersonal relationship of the large pits. The management was unable to keep in direct touch with the large rank and file, and communication blockages within the managerial hierarchy caused further problems. One result was that discontent was not as easily seen and remedied, the problems festered until they broke out in a strike.

1. Appendix I, 'Pits opened 1885-1914.'

At Chopwell it would appear that several other factors were involved. The first major strike, in 1898, lasted ninety-nine days and came at a time when the pit had barely started production and was employing only 219 men. The policies pursued by the management were, according to Wilson<sup>1</sup>, to all appearances similar to those of all the Consett Iron Companies' collieries. Significantly, the Chopwell men were locked out in 1898 and gained the support of the D.M.A. The D.M.A. at this time completely dominated by John Wilson, was unlikely to have supported the Chopwell miners, had there been any question of doubt concerning the validity of their actions. It is possible that the personalities of those involved in the running of the colliery were partly to blame for the dispute. Their actions might also have contributed to the high turnover of the workforce. As Chopwell acquired a reputation for its industrial militancy, it is possible that it attracted other extremists to it, becoming a focal point for the militants.

The only way we can view migration's impact upon the social and political side of the miners' lives is to see it in conjunction with those events which were to be found at the same time, i.e. a new management, a different community, new working conditions, etc. For this reason it is impossible to fully assess the impact of migration in isolation; it must remain a clouded issue.

There can be little doubt, however, that migration did

1. A.Wilson, op.cit. pp175-177.

play a major role in breaking down the isolation of many of the pit villages. Since many of the collieries were physically removed from contact with the outside world, there was a distinct possibility that the men working at these collieries were out of touch with new ideas and views on both industrial and political affairs. One of the few ways in which such a community could have kept abreast of the times was by an inflow of migrants into the area, bringing new ideas with them. An isolated mining community had little social life beyond the public house and the chapel, and one result of these was the popularity of public discussion. If a socialist moved into the community it was probable that in time he would be called upon to give his views. In this way migration may have played a vital role in the spread of political radicalism, but a role which cannot be measured. The occasional I.L.P. meeting in an area before 1906 may have attracted and interested the miners, but it was through the constant discussion of 'labour' policies that the I.L.P. gained its support. The high level of internal migration suggests that the flow of migrants was sufficient to make such a spread of ideas possible.

CHAPTER 6.

THE LEADERS OF THE D.M.A.

## Union Leadership

Throughout this work there have been areas where it could be said that the D.M.A. leadership acted against the wishes of the members. Dave Douglass has presented the thesis that the union officials constantly betrayed their members, pursuing a policy of moderation, even when their caution was not justified<sup>1</sup>. Douglass suggests that there were serious discrepancies between the views of the leadership and those of the rank and file.

"...there were the men, the owners and firmly between them the full-time agents who negotiated on their behalf, but came to totally unsatisfactory agreements and then spent the bulk of the time trying to ram them down the throats of the men."

2

Douglass' work contains several relevant ideas for a study of the D.M.A., but suffers from a serious lack of evidence. Many of his points contain a degree of validity, but presented in isolation without any substantive material, the strength of the argument is lost. Criticism of the work is thus easy, but one must be careful not to dismiss the entire work because of these flaws.

There can be little doubt that the D.M.A.'s policies during the period did not please many of the pitmen. The persistently moderate attitude of the leaders resulted in the miners losing out relative to the other British coal-fields. Wage rates in Durham grew at the slowest rate in the country, the miners had only one M.P. for much of the period, their houses ranked amongst the worst in the country,

1. D. Douglass, 'Pit Life in Durham'. p81.

2. ibid. p81.

these were all issues where the adoption of an aggressive line by their leaders would probably have brought gains to the men, and certainly gained the leadership popular support.

The high incidence of illegal strikes, particularly after 1909, is cited by Douglass as an example of the discontent with the leadership. Since unofficial disputes inevitably resulted in fines or even prison sentences for those involved, they must not be dismissed lightly. The D.M.A. leadership bitterly opposed these strikes, saying that they undermined the power of the union. They even went so far as taking a case to the High Court to determine the legality of such a strike.

The comparison of Douglass' views on the D.M.A's. leadership with Michels' work on political leadership is an obvious one<sup>1</sup>. Michels' work deals with several stages in the rise of groups to political power: we can substitute union power.

"Similarly it may be said that it is a matter of pride with the socialists to show themselves capable of maintaining a discipline which, although it is to a certain extent voluntary, none the less signifies the submission of the majority to the orders issued by the minority, or at least to the rules issued by the minority in obedience to the majority's instructions." 2

Michels goes on to make the point that the gaining of power/control by any individual or group inevitably results in them deviating from their original aims. These deviations constitute his Iron Law of Oligarchy, and are in favour of prevailing status quo. The group gaining control can expect to become alienated from the rank and file. Michels summarised

1. R.Michels, 'Political Parties'. (London 1916)

2. ibid. p294.



the position:

"When the discontent of the mass culminates in a successful attempt to deprive the bourgeoisie of power, this is after all...effected only in appearance, always and necessarily there springs from the masses a new organised minority which raises itself to the rank of a governing class. Thus the majority of human beings in a condition of eternal tutelage are predestined by tragic necessity to submit to the dominion of a small minority, and must be content to constitute the pedestal of an oligarchy." 1

A study of the structure of the D.M.A. adds weight to the view that a minority could hold control. The body with the supreme power in the organisation was the General Council. It had the right to veto any Executive Committee decision, but, since it met only once every two months it lacked the familiarity with the day-to-day running of the organisation to make its force felt.

The day-to-day running of the union affairs was the responsibility of the Executive Committee. The General Secretary could call an Executive Committee meeting at any time, but it met at least once every week. Members were subject to re-election every six months, but the regular return of the same men strengthened the body. The agents were permanent members of the committee, subject only to their own annual re-election.

One result of the regular membership of the agents was that they were placed in a situation where they inevitably gained experience of the problems of the job. They were always at the miners' hall, attendance of the committee was thus a simple matter. As they gained expertise in the affairs of the committee, they became increasingly difficult to replace. Michels put the position aptly:

1. ibid. p406.

"Just, as the patient obeys the doctor, because the doctor knows better than the patient, having made a special study of the human body in health and disease, so must the political patient submit to the guidance of his party leaders, who possess a political competence impossible of attainment by the rank and file." 1

The dependence of the rank and file on ready proven leaders made it far harder for them to replace these men with their own untrained followers.

The key position in the D.M.A. hierarchy was the General Secretary. Crawford's rules gave the General Secretary (himself) a complete control over the activities of the entire organisation. While the council and the Executive Committee retained their limited powers, the Secretary was able to use a number of more subtle checks to influence the overall outcome.

The Secretary's powers included the decision as to what was to appear on the Council agenda, by which he gained the right of censorship over the Council's work. He had the right to call and dispense with committee meetings, particularly important in times of difficulties. Another key power was the Secretary's control and writing of the publication of all union views. This gave him a mouthpiece with which he was able to advocate his own policies and views, while refuting those of his opponents. The key item in this area was the monthly circular used by both Crawford and Wilson. All opponents were forced to create and finance their own newsletters, the General Secretary had unlimited backing for his ventures.

A brief study of the two men, Crawford and Wilson,

1. ibid. p87.

who dominated the General Secretary's position from 1870 to 1915, allows us to see the way in which they used their power (W.H. Patterson is excluded from the study since he lost much of his support after the 1892 strike and was replaced in all but name by Wilson. He was still technically General Secretary when he died in 1896).

William Crawford took the position of General Secretary in 1870; his earlier efforts at forming a union in 1863 having made him very popular with the rank and file. His huge physical stature and biting tongue gained him the respect of the miners and he was an obvious choice for leader. The complete absence of any other leaders of note gave him an unrivalled position in the early D.M.A. While the union adopted moderate policies in order to consolidate, there was a rise in the level of illegal strikes. However the only really marked opposition to Crawford came in the two years prior to his death when failing health caused him to lose his hold over the association.

Crawford was a Primitive Methodist, and a firm believer in conciliation and arbitration. The policies which he followed were in line with these beliefs, his determination to prevent industrial confrontations resulting in there being only one strike, in 1879, between 1870 and 1890. This was crucial in giving the D.M.A. time to build up a strong financial base for the future, not overstraining the unions' limited resources. Such a policy, although essential to the establishment and continued existence of the union, was unpopular with the militant rank and file. Four sliding scale agreements dominated the wage demands during the period, tying wages to prices and thus restricting wage problems to a minimum.

John Wilson assumed full control of the D.M.A. in 1892 following the disastrous strike. The problems facing him were somewhat different from those which Crawford had had to face. The vast membership of the D.M.A. ensured that the association was on a sound financial footing, freeing Wilson from the problem of building up the union. The favourable economic conditions of the late 1890's allowed wage rises and general prosperity throughout the coalfield.

From the start of his period as General Secretary, Wilson introduced measures which were highly unpopular with the rank and file. He was the key figure in the introduction of the Conciliation Board, which was widely opposed in the coalfield. It was at Wilson's insistence that legal action was taken against Washington Lodge concerning illegal strike payments made by the D.M.A. General Council. It was Wilson who despite his opposition to the Act was the key figure behind the Eight Hours Agreement, which resulted in the strike against the D.M.A. leaders by the rank and file in 1910.

Wilson's sustained opposition to many of the major demands favoured by some of the rank and file made it hard to accept that he was indeed the men's representative; he opposed the joining of the M.F.G.B.; he opposed the severing of the D.M.A.'s links with the Liberals. He refused to accept the new alignment of the D.M.A. with the L.R.C. and he even opposed the Minimum Wage Bill. Naturally, both strikes which occurred during his term of office met with his open criticism.

Wilson was a man for whom conversion to Methodism can be regarded as the turning point of his life. He was a well-known radical in his early days who had been dismissed for

his activities as an agitator. Following his conversion to Methodism, in 1869, Wilson became a different man. His drinking and gambling stopped and in their place came an interest in Liberalism and in the D.M.A. Through his early work with the Durham Franchise Association he was elected an agent in 1876. Lacking the personal charisma of Crawford, Wilson rose to the top by sheer hard work.

He attempted to force the Durham miners to accept his strict Methodist-Liberal view of the world, from which he refused to change. His openly declared dislike for socialism was coupled with his bitter opposition to its advance. He was hostile to the radical demands for an end to the Conciliation Board, the legal enforcement of an Eight Hour day and for a legal Minimum Wage all of which were contrary to Liberal thought. In order to prevent their spread he was forced to make the utmost use of his powers as General Secretary. In June 1909 he ruled that thirty-five demands for the abolition of the Conciliation Board were unfit for presentation before Council. In 1908 he used his knowledge of the D.M.A. rules to prevent a vote on joining the Labour Party from taking place.

Against this picture of Wilson's stubborn refusal to accept the demands of the rank and file must be placed Wilson's specialist knowledge of the economic condition of the coal-field. Durham's rapidly declining productivity greatly endangered her position as a coalfield exporting most of its produce, and Wilson, realising the peculiar nature of the Durham trade, insisted on a policy of isolation in order to enable Durham coal to compete freely with foreign competitors. Many of the demands of the rank and file were basically aimed

at restricting Durham's freedom of action and consequently had to be opposed. Wilson's defeat over the affiliation with the M.F.G.B. marked the end of Durham's isolation. Wilson lost much of his power to the national leaders and remained in office largely due only to the respect for his age and national stature.

The argument has been suggested that no matter how much rank and file discontent there was, Wilson was still re-elected as General Secretary every year, indicating that the discontent was merely the vociferous criticism of a small minority. Between 1885 and 1914 the agents were only opposed in their annual re-election on three occasions. In the first in 1889 Crawford was returned without a vote being taken, only one man opposing him<sup>1</sup>. Following the 1892 strike both Patterson and Wilson were opposed by two candidates, but were returned easily<sup>2</sup>. In 1910 following the unofficial county strike, all the agents were opposed<sup>3</sup>. House was challenged by three candidates, Wilson by two candidates, three challenged Johnson as financial secretary, five the General Treasurer, Galbraith and five the Joint Committee agent Whitely. All were returned.

Although all the agents were returned with relatively large majorities, this must not be taken as a sign of solidarity behind the leaders. The lack of organisation amongst the opponents of the D.M.A. leadership appears to have been an important factor. The opposition vote was invariably split

1. D.M.A. Council Meeting Minutes, 7:12:89.

2. D.M.A. Council Meeting Minutes, 16:12:93.

3. D.M.A. Council Meeting Minutes, 17:12:10.

by two or three candidates, consequently reducing their chances of success. The agents were men of considerable standing, experienced in union affairs and proven at least partially capable of running the union. Their opponents were not men of comparable stature, proving relatively unknown outside their local areas. Given the control of the newsletter by the General Secretary and these other factors the return of the agents can be seen as a mere formality.

The effective block which the D.M.A. leadership was able to place on many of the rank and file demands coupled with their control over the agents' elections must have been the cause of considerable discontent in the coalfield. With union officials reluctant to act in local disputes the men were forced to take strike action in an effort to improve their conditions. Considering the penalties such action invariably resulted in, it is obvious that some discontent was very deep-rooted.

While accepting that the D.M.A. itself must accept a portion of the blame for the unrest in the coalfield, particularly in the 1900's, it must be realised that they were in a difficult position. If an aggressive policy was pursued, the inevitable outcome would have been strikes, a severe drain on union resources and possibly the loss of an overseas market. If their policy was too moderate, there was widespread discontent within the union itself. The D.M.A. leaders had to find a balance between the two extremes.

It is worth noting the accuracy of Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy. The General Secretary during the late 1920's

was W.P. Richardson, one of the most active radical leaders during the pre-war period. During the 1920s he was forced to adopt moderate policies in order to ensure the survival of the union in the face of the slump in the industry. He became increasingly unpopular as a result and was subjected to bitter attacks from the radicals led by Will Lowther of Chopwell. In time Lowther himself rose to prominence in the M.F.G.B. and in 1949 accepting the Presidency of the body. His moderate policies, in a difficult period, infuriated the radicals and led to a split within his own family. Both men learnt that the conflict between union leadership and industrial radicalism resulted in a shift towards the moderate stance.



## Conclusion

The basic aim of this work has been to discover the extent to which the new industrial doctrines and political philosophies of the period affected the miners of the Durham coalfield. Having examined the evidence both for and against increasing industrial militancy and political radicalisation, it was then necessary to analyse some of the factors which can be seen as having influenced the miners' attitudes.

The study of the industrial history of the coalfield revealed that the Durham miner had a traditionally high propensity to strike, and that the D.M.A. was the first union body to overcome problems of a young union facing a major strike. In order to survive the D.M.A. leaders were forced to adopt an extreme anti-strike policy which kept the level of official disputes down to an absolute minimum. The D.M.A. leaders were in no way unusual in adopting such a policy, the early unions in Scotland, Northumberland, Yorkshire and Wales all resorted to similar tactics as moderate leaders struggled with industrially militant rank and file members<sup>1</sup>.

Between 1885 and 1914 the D.M.A. grew both numerically and financially to become one of the largest unions in Britain. This successful emergence of the union owed much to the moderate policies of the leaders, in particular Crawford and Wilson; the more militant rank and file was held in check and the union able to build a strong financial base. This moderation was not unusual amongst miners' leaders at this period, Thomas Burt pursued similar policies in Northumberland, as did Haslam and Harvey in Derbyshire<sup>2</sup>

1. H. Clegg, A. Fox & A. Thompson, 'A History of British Trade Unions since 1889.' (Oxford, 1964) pp15-18.

2. J. Williams, 'The Derbyshire Miners.' (London, 1962) pp1-253

and Abraham: (Mabon) in South Wales<sup>1</sup>.

Durham experienced three county strikes during the period, in 1892, 1910 and 1912. In 1892 the miners struck in order to resist a 10% wage reduction, but after an eleven-week strike they were starved into submission. The strike was marked by a series of violent outbreaks which were usually related to the introduction of blacklegs into the pits. The uncompromising attitudes of both sides resulted in considerable bitterness and frustration, a natural background for more widespread violence.

In 1910, the strike was unofficial and affected two thirds of the coalfield. The miners came out on strike in protest against the eight hours' agreement signed by both their leaders and the coalowners. The strike was thus one of protest, the most the men could hope to achieve being the replacement of the D.M.A. leaders. There is evidence of considerable violence and destruction by the men, particularly after their failure to unseat the D.M.A. executive. As the futility of their situation became apparent, their aggression played itself out and their savings were exhausted, the men were forced to return to work albeit in a discontented frame of mind.

The 1912 strike was in marked contrast to the two earlier disputes. Following the affiliation of the D.M.A. to the M.F.G.B., in 1908, the M.F.G.B. was in a position to press for the acceptance of its demands for an eight hour day and a statutory minimum wage. The liberal government passed the Eight Hours' Act in 1908, but resisted the pressure

1. R.P. Arnot, 'The Miners of South Wales.' (London 1967) pp. 11-95.

for a minimum wage. Consequently in 1912 the entire M.F.G.B. came out on strike in an attempt to force the government to act. The government rapidly capitulated and passed the minimum wage act. The strike lasted for under three weeks, during which the miners suffered no apparent hardship and appeared to enjoy their peaceful holiday, there were no reports of any violence or unrest.

Despite the D.M.A.'s. success in keeping the number of major disputes down to a very low level, there was a constant problem with unofficial strikes. The unofficial strike must not be lightly dismissed: by going on strike without union support and without handing in two weeks' notice the miner became liable for prosecution for breach of contract. The unofficial striker also received no strike pay and was listed as an extremist by the colliery owners, greatly reducing his chance of obtaining work; obviously few men would undertake such action without a real grievance.

The unofficial strike level remained fairly steady for much of the period, but rose to peaks in the late 1880's and in the five years prior to the war. Many of the unofficial strikers were taken to court, fined, on several occasions jailed, but such actions do not appear to have dissuaded others from pursuing such policies. The frequent disruption caused by the unofficial strikers suggests that there were real grievances in the coalfield. The problem of the unofficial strike was not however confined to Durham or even to the miners' unions. Every coalfield in Britain experienced considerable unofficial strike activity, particularly in the more moderate unions<sup>1</sup>. The situation was so serious in

1. J. Williams, op.cit. pp392-394.

the pre-war period that in 1910 a special address on the problem of unofficial strikes was given to the T.U.C.<sup>1</sup>

In Durham the frequency of the strikes throughout the entire period, suggests that there was a poor rapport between the rank and file and the D.M.A. leaders. From the very outset the D.M.A. appears to have followed policies decided upon by the leaders, to the exclusion of the views of the rank and file. In this the Durham leaders appear to have been somewhat more extreme than their counterparts in other miners' unions<sup>2</sup>. As a result there was considerable disagreement between the two groups on several subjects, the most important of which were: the level of wages and the method of their determination, in particular the use of Conciliation Boards; the strike policies of the D.M.A.; and affiliation to the M.F.G.B.

The two great leaders of the D.M.A. during the period, Crawford and Wilson, both appear to have gradually lost touch with the rank and file the longer they remained in office. As a result of this the latter years of both men's 'reigns' were marked by upswings in the level of discontent. There can be little doubt that both men saw the economic condition of the coalfield in a different light from the rank and file, but rather than attempting to win support by explaining their policies, they sought to impose them on the workforce. A more progressive leader might have been able to pursue similar policies without creating so much discontent. On the other

1. Trade Union Congress Report 1910, p48.

2. J. Williams, op.cit. p297. R. P. Arnot, op.cit. pp372-5.  
E. Welbourne, The Miners' Union of Northumberland and Durham (Cambridge 1923)  
pp. 3-47

hand, had the more extreme members of the association gained control the coalfield might have ended up in a situation similar to that of South Wales, with major confrontations between the union and the coalowners<sup>1</sup>.

Whereas there appears to be little evidence to support the belief that the Syndicalists enjoyed anything other than complete failure in Durham, the extreme political parties, in particular the I.L.P., enjoyed a different fate. The growth of the I.L.P. in Durham after 1900 transformed the mining communities from overwhelming Liberal support in 1890 to divided Liberal and Labour groups by 1910. This rapid acceptance of the I.L.P. by the miners made the Durham coalfield into one of the most politically advanced areas in Britain by 1906<sup>2</sup>.

The I.L.P. relied heavily on miners' candidates, and by 1914 had gained a secure footing on all the local elected bodies. A strong I.L.P. group had been elected to the Durham County Council, and the I.L.P. dominated several parish councils, most of its success coming at the expense of the Liberals. The L.R.C. of which the I.L.P. was only a part, relied very heavily on the I.L.P. for its advances in the coalfield, and most L.R.C. bodies were centred on I.L.P. branches.

These findings are quite similar to those of Paul Thompson for London<sup>3</sup>, and they give further weight to the argument that the Labour Party was already well-established

1. R.P. Arnot, 'The South Wales Miners' pp. 162-297.

2. R. Gregory, 'The Miners and British Politics 1906-14.' (London 1963). p. 69.

3. P. Thompson, 'Socialists, Liberals and Labour. The Struggle for London.' (London 1967).

by 1910, rather than in a rapid decline<sup>1</sup>. The work that has been done on particular regions makes it obvious that politics in 1913 were still not exclusively national in character. In some areas such as Durham it would appear that the Labour Party had firmly established itself at a grass-roots level by 1913, in others such as Wales<sup>2</sup> and Lancashire<sup>3</sup> the party does not appear to have enjoyed the same degree of success.

One of the main problems in this work is to account for the shift of the miners' allegiance from the Liberals to the new Labour group. One is forced to try to assess whether or not there is a corresponding shift from Liberalism to Socialism. Within the early Labour Representation Committee and then the Labour Party itself there were two rather poorly defined groups, the Socialists and the 'Labour' men. The Socialists were committed to the key Socialist policies of nationalisation and equal opportunity for all; whereas the 'Labour' men tended to see the party as a vehicle for improving the position of the working classes through industrial and social legislation, but not as a means of changing the social order. The Labour men could have been accommodated by a progressive Liberal party, but the socialists had little in common with the Liberals<sup>4</sup>.

In Durham it would appear that the I.L.P. which was the most successful Labour group in the county, had two main

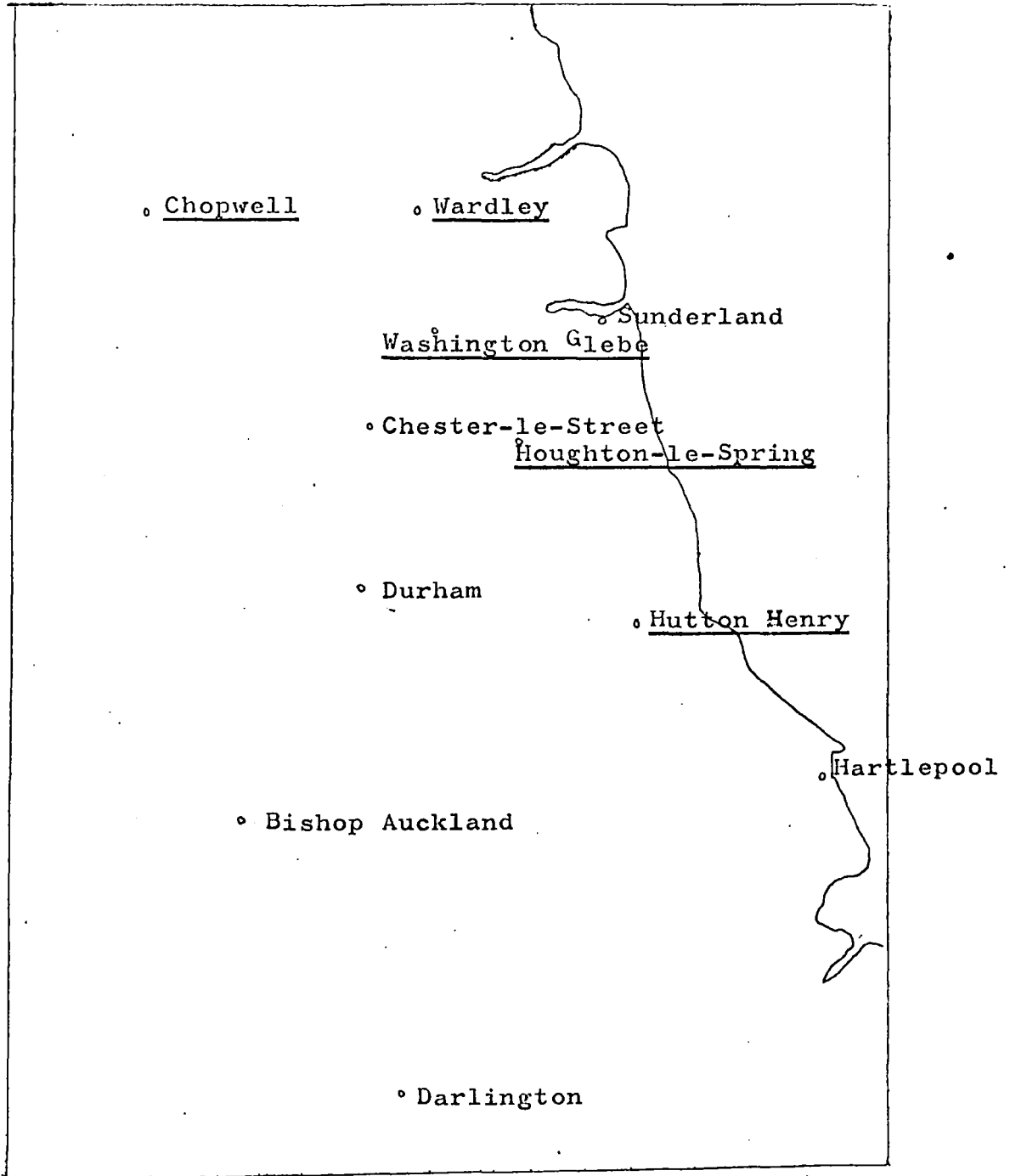
1. R. Douglas, 'Labour in Decline' pp105-121. in K. Brown, 'Essays in Anti-Labour History' (London 1974)
2. K.O. Morgan, 'The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour' pp159-182 in K. Brown op.cit.
3. P. Clarke, 'Lancashire and the New Liberalism' (Cambridge 1973) pp311-341.
4. H. Pelling, 'A Short History of the Labour Party' (London 1964) pp5-33.

attractions to the miner: their active social functions, and their championing of the statutory minimum wage demands. Following the passage of the 1912 Minimum Wage Act support for the I.L.P. might have been prone to fall off, but the act's failure to stipulate a realistic minimum wage resulted in a further growth of support for the I.L.P. It would appear that by 1914 the Labour Party as a whole was in a position to replace the Liberals at a grass-roots level, but the support for the party was largely based in the 'Labour men' group, rather than through any mass ideological conversion to Socialism.

A careful study of those areas where industrial unrest was unusually high provided little explanation for their behaviour. The five collieries most prominent in this field were all sited in different parts of the coalfield and had little contact with each other. Only two of the five , Chopwell and Washington Glebe, were new collieries, being sunk in 1896 and 1905 respectively, the others had been opened for widely varying periods. The only feature the collieries had in common was their size, all were large concerns employing over one thousand men. This does suggest that the size of a colliery may have played an important part in determining its industrial relations, although it must be noted that many other large collieries enjoyed good industrial records.

The I.L.P. centres had even less in common with each other than the militant collieries. The map of the major I.L.P. branches in the coalfield (Map 2) shows quite clearly <sup>area</sup> that no-one/had a particularly high concentration of branches.

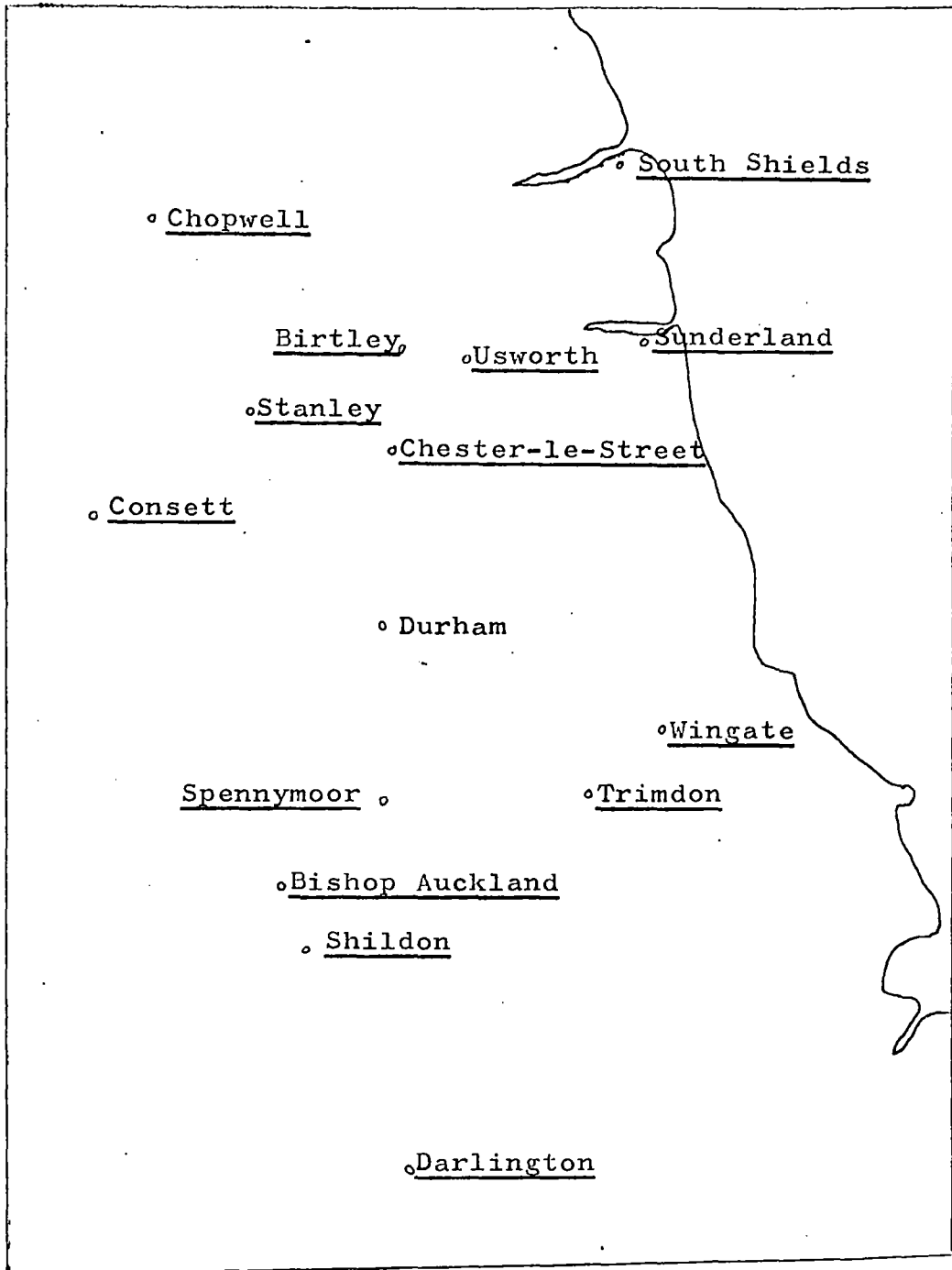
The Durham Coalfield 1



KEY CENTRES OF INDUSTRIAL UNREST (UNDERLINED)



The Durham Coalfield 2



MAJOR I.L.P. CENTRES IN DURHAM (UNDERLINED)

A breakdown of the sixty-eight known I.L.P. branches<sup>1</sup> revealed that twenty-nine were in the northern half of the coalfield, thirty-five in the south, and four centrally situated. The size of a pit was unrelated to the existence of an I.L.P. branch, some pits with under one hundred men had branches, as did others with several thousand.

The second section of this work tried to find what reasons could be advanced to explain the presence of political radicalism and industrial militancy in many parts of the coalfield. The first area to be studied in this context was the economic condition of the coalfield. The main conclusions of this section related to the wages paid to the men, and the attitudes of the D.M.A. leaders. The level of wages was a key factor in determining the basic levels of unrest in the coalfield. Such a conclusion was fully anticipated since it holds true in most studies of the rank and file of trade unions in this period<sup>2</sup>. In Durham the reliance on the export of coal as the major outlet subjected the miners to influences which served to keep their wages beneath those of other M.F.G.B. members. The export markets were becoming increasingly competitive at the turn of the century, one consequence of which was to prevent prices from rising as rapidly as in England, thus keeping wages at a level lower than in the home-producing coalfields. In Durham this greatly stimulated the demand for a statutory minimum wage, a demand which played an important part in the popularity of

1. Appendix D, County Durham. I.L.P. Branches.

2. H. Pelling, 'A History of British Trade Unionism.' (London 1956) pp101-147.

the I.L.P.

The D.M.A. leaders saw the coalfield's future in a different way from the rank and file miner. The miner saw that the union, despite being one of the largest and strongest in the country, was unable to obtain wage rises comparable with those obtained by other weaker unions, whereas the D.M.A. leaders were able to see that the rapidly declining productivity of the Durham miners, and increasing foreign competition meant that wages had to be kept as low as possible in order to make it possible to sell Durham coal abroad. As a result while the rank and file were pursuing policies demanding the abolition of conciliation board, affiliation with the M.F.G.B. and the introduction of a statutory minimum wage, the leaders were pursuing policies of isolation and complete freedom in wage negotiations. The marked differences between their policies was responsible for much of the conflict between the rank and file and the D.M.A. leadership. The two major export coalfields in Britain also experienced difficulties due to declining productivity; in Northumberland the union leaders pursued similar policies to those of the Durham leaders and experienced very similar difficulties<sup>1</sup>. The South Wales Miners' Federation was dominated by extremists and the coalfield experienced a series of bitter strikes as the union strove to resist wage cuts<sup>2</sup>.

The second field which was studied was Methodism. The

1. J. Davison, 'Northumberland Miners' History 1919-39' (Newcastle 1973) 2198

2. R. P. Arnot, 'The South Wales Miners.' pp70-130.

importance of Primitive Methodism in the Durham coalfield has long been established<sup>1</sup>, but it was the object of this study to see how it affected the change from Liberalism to Socialism, and whether or not it influenced the level of industrial militancy. It was shown that the old traditional Methodist beliefs did present a real problem for the staunch Socialist and that it was only with the emergence of the new theology at the turn of the century that it became feasible for one to reconcile Methodism and Socialist beliefs. The I.L.P. was quick to realise the political potential of young Methodists, their high propensity to work, their organisational abilities and their training in public speaking combined to make them valuable members of the party. The early I.L.P. leadership was dominated by young Methodist lay preachers<sup>2</sup>.

The industrial beliefs of the Methodists did appear to have had a considerable influence on the industrial policies of the D.M.A. The Methodist domination of the D.M.A's. hierarchy resulted in the practice of industrial policies which can be termed somewhat 'Methodist' in outlook, although the policies were by no means confined to Methodists. These included the use of sliding scale agreements, the Conciliation Board, the use of arbitration and an aversion to any form of strike action. This abhorrence of strike action may also have had the consequence of forcing young extremists to express themselves through the radical I.L.P. rather than by

1. R. F. Wearmouth, Methodism and the struggle of the working classes 1850-1900. pp75-90.
2. R. F. Wearmouth, The Social and Political Influence of Methodism. pp188-195.

becoming engaged in morally unacceptable unofficial strikes.

The third aspect of explanation was provided by the impact of migration on the political and industrial life of the coalfield. Several writers have stressed the significance of migration in the coalfields, particularly as a cause of industrial unrest<sup>1</sup>, but as yet very little had been written on the subject. The limited amount of work done in this study suggested that migration, in particular between local collieries, took place at a higher level than previously accepted<sup>2</sup>. In a settled traditional Durham colliery the turnover was at a level between 15% and 20% annually, in the large new Chopwell colliery it reached levels of 30% annually. Even allowing for a high level of re-migration a turnover of this dimension each year must have had an appreciable impact on the relations in and structure of the mining communities. The absence of any similar type of work on the other coalfields of Britain suggest that this is an area where much work has still to be done.

At a political level the existence of such a high level of migration would have had a considerable impact on the voting registers. It has been suggested that in practice it took two years of residence in an area before it was possible to vote in elections<sup>3</sup>. If this was so then the mining vote may well have been far lower than has been suggested by Gregory in his work on politics and the miners<sup>3</sup>. It is also

1. A. Wilson, 'The Coasey Iron Co Ltd ...' (Univ of Durham 17. Phil 1473) p. 175
2. A. Cairncross, 'Home and Foreign Investment 1870-1913' (Cambridge 1453) p. 77
3. R. Gregory, op.cit. p. 96.

probable that the high level of migration may have stimulated the growth of new political beliefs and industrial policies. Particularly in the more isolated communities the main vehicle of new ideas would have been the migrant, who entered into the community and was constantly there to state his views in discussions. The newly opened pits which were dependent on migrants to form a workforce, and the large pits where the total number of migrants each year was high (even though the percentage turnover was not necessarily above that of smaller pits) were even more susceptible to an inflow of new beliefs and ideas.

On the industrial front a high level of migration can, in part, be attributed to a dissatisfaction with some aspect of pit life. Other reasons for migration included unemployment, better prospects for promotion, a desire to travel, unpopularity either with the men or the management, better housing facilities and higher wages. One consequence of a high level of migration coupled with the trend towards larger pits was to bring about the replacement of old colliery ties between the workmen and the managers, many of whom went to school together, with the impersonal relationships of the large-scale enterprise. This shift made it increasingly difficult for the management to fully understand the men's feelings and vice versa, and can only have caused a deterioration in industrial relations.

The last section to be studied was the position of the D.M.A. hierarchy. The way in which the D.M.A. leaders, in particular John Wilson, sought to impose their policies, both political and industrial, on the rank and file was an important factor in the spread of discontent in the coalfield.

Wilson's personal dislike of socialism and the I.L.P. in particular was partly responsible for the I.L.P. coming to be regarded as the focal point for the agitation for change in Durham.

The anti-strike policies of the D.M.A. were unpopular with the rank and file, but the leaders refused to be swayed by their opinions. The high level of unofficial disputes in the coalfield was due largely to the leaders' intransigence, but Wilson reacted by successfully blocking the payout of hardship grants to pits involved in unofficial stoppages; while this policy ensured the financial stability of the D.M.A. and resulted in good relations with the Coalowners' Association an increasing number of miners became disillusioned with the leaders. It is probable that only the lack of well-known candidates to oppose the D.M.A. hierarchy in the annual elections prevented the leadership from being replaced by men more in accord with rank and file views. The frustration appears to have built up gradually during Wilson's period in office until by 1906 his hold over the union was being seriously challenged by the rank and file.

The Durham Miners' Association was not typical of Britain's miners' unions at this time. In some, notably Nottinghamshire<sup>1</sup> and Derbyshire<sup>2</sup> the Liberal leaders followed similar policies to those of the D.M.A., but they appear to have been slightly more ready to listen to the views of their members; this, combined with the economic prosperity of both coalfields, resulted in only minor disputes occurring within

1. A. Griffin, 'The Miners of Nottinghamshire. 1914-44.' Pp. 151-212

2. J. Williams, 'The Derbyshire Miners.' Pp. 64-247.

the unions themselves. In Durham the leaders proved unwilling to listen to the views of the rank and file, but they were further hindered by the coalfield's dependence on exports. If the leaders gave way to rank and file demands for wage rises unrelated to the price of coal they risked the loss of the overseas markets and a sharp recession in the local industry. It was thus very difficult for the Durham leaders to even appear to pursue rank and file demands.

By 1914 the Durham coalfield had a well-established radical political group, who were very active in local politics, and had been experiencing a high level of industrial unrest for eight years. In the case of the political group it would appear that Durham was one of the most advanced areas in the country: the I.L.P.'s demands of a fair minimum wage particularly appealed to the miners in an export coalfield and support was high. A comparison with the two other major export fields in Britain reveals that Northumberland, subject to very similar influences to those in Durham, experienced an equally high level of political awareness. The Durham I.L.P. organiser Matt Simon was also responsible for Northumberland and the I.L.P. groups in both coalfields were closely linked. In South Wales it would appear that the I.L.P. were not well-established, the Liberals were still the dominant political force in the area<sup>1</sup>.

The level of industrial unrest which manifested itself largely in unofficial strikes in Durham differed from the levels of Northumberland. In Northumberland there appears to have been less unrest in the coalfield, the N.M.A. leaders,

1. K.Morgan, op.cit. pp159-198.



despite adopting similar industrial policies to those in Durham do not appear to have brought about any significant unrest in the coalfield, the N.M.A. was subjected to some unofficial strikes, particularly in the immediate pre-war years, but not on the same scale as in Durham. The situation in South Wales was markedly different from that in the North East. Whereas in Durham much of the frustration and discontent can be attributed to the moderate policies of the union leadership in South Wales the more radical miners controlled the Federation, consequently the Welsh miners became involved in a series of bitter disputes between themselves and the coal-owners, which necessitated the introduction of troops and police to quell the violence<sup>1</sup>.

The industrial disputes in South Wales have been largely attributed to the popularity of Syndicalist doctrines amongst some of the miners<sup>2</sup>. In Durham the Syndicalists do not appear to have enjoyed a comparable level of success. The only evidence of possible Syndicalist activity came during the 1910 dispute when the discontent of the miners may well have provided the syndicalists with some temporary support.

The Durham miners despite becoming affiliated to the M.F.G.B. and later the Labour Party, remained more interested in local than national affairs. Despite the increasing transition of politics from a local to national level during the period, in Durham politics appears to have remained essentially local in character. While the I.L.P. gained much support in Durham due to its minimum wage policies, which it

1. R. P. Arnot, 'The South Wales Miners.' Pp. 161.-184.

2. H. Pelling, 'A History of British Trade Unionism' . . . , p140.

was generally felt would greatly benefit the Durham miners: other I.L.P. policies were not so ardently pursued, the demands for an eight hour day were played down by the party in the coalfield, and the later demands for nationalisation attracted little interest among the miners. If a policy did not appear to be directly to benefit the Durham miners it gained little support. Because of this it would be safer to conclude that while in Durham the Labour Party enjoyed considerable success, and a tradition of voting behaviour was established, the socialists were still rather an unknown force.

Similarly the attempts to join the M.F.G.B. were largely influenced by that body's successful wages policies: it being generally felt in Durham that affiliation would bring about comparable wage rates. The M.F.G.B., like the I.L.P., laid great stress on the need for a minimum wage and gained further support on this issue. In the event, affiliation to the M.F.G.B. did not bring about any major changes in the relative position of Durham's wage rates compared to those of the M.F.G.B. members; the united miners' unions did however achieve a statutory minimum wage although the low level of the wage made it a rather hollow victory. Despite these links with national bodies right up to Wilson's death in 1915 the Durham miners continued to be more interested in local issues than national ones, the transition was yet to be completed.

APPENDIX A

EIGHT HOURS' AGREEMENT (Dec.13th 1909)

It is hereby agreed between the Durham Coalowners' Association and the Durham Miners' Association that the following conditions of working the mines be adopted to meet the circumstances brought about by the commencement of the operation of the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908 on the 1st January, 1910:-

1. That the ordinary coal drawing time shall not be subject to limitation, but the shafts or other outlets of the mines may be used by the owners at any time of the day or night for the purpose of drawing coals or for any other purpose without limitation, except that no person shall be required to remain at his work in any one shift longer than the hours recognised by the two Associations.

2. That the number of shifts of the various classes of workmen, the number of men in each shift and the number of coal drawing shifts shall be such as may be deemed necessary by the management of each colliery.

3. The following arrangement shall be adopted with respect to the hours of coal hewers:-

At the present day shift pits the hours per shift of coal-hewers shall continue as under the present conditions.

At present night shift pits, the owner shall have the option of deciding which of the following conditions shall apply, namely:-

1. That the hours per shift of coal-hewers shall continue as under the present conditions.

2. That the hours per shift of coal-hewers shall be 7 hours, 10 minutes, calculated from the time of the first man going down to the time of the first man commencing to rise.

The times at which the various shifts of the different classes of workmen shall descend the mine shall be such as may be fixed by management to suit the circumstances of each individual colliery. At the 7-hour collieries the hewers in the first and second shifts to remain until charged by their marrows in the face, except in the case of flats a long distance inbye, and for all flats in the last shift a loosing time shall be fixed, which allowing for travelling time at the rate of 25 minutes to the mile, will, in 7-hour pits, enable the first man to be at the shaft to ride in not exceeding 7 hours from the time of the first man going down at the commencement of the shift, provided that at the 7-hour pits where the foreshift and middle shift hewers have changed in the face under the provisions of the agreement they shall be allowed to ride in accordance with the custom previously existing at each colliery. In the case of other pits each shift of hewers shall remain in the mine for 7 hours 10 minutes, calculated from the time of the first man going down at the commencement of the shift to the time of the first man ascending at its conclusion.

4. That in addition to hewing, filling coals and doing such other work as is now customary, hewers shall, where so required by the manager, make height in the stone for the tons to travel, at prices to be fixed where not already fixed, and shall drive combined stone and coal places; such places shall, at the option of the manager, be let as bargains, or worked at prices to be fixed mutually or by Joint Committee or by arbitration. Where the hewers' work requires the stowing of stones and rubbish at the face they shall do such stowing and put in a running wall parallel with

the barrow-way sufficient to stow the stones. Where an extra height above the tube height is required the employers shall (except in the combined stone and coal places referred to above) find stonemen or other classes of workmen, but in cases where such men have not time to finish their work within their shift, or where the shifters have not been able to get a place ready, the hewers shall do the work, for which they shall be paid in accordance with existing arrangements. Insofar as it may be practicable fillers shall, if required, carry out the above-named extra work.

5. SHORT SHIFTS:- The arrangement as to periodical short shifts granted to shifters and stonemen, etc., to continue in accordance with the present county arrangements.

6. SATURDAY WORKING:- The Owners to have the right to work two shifts of hewers on one Saturday at the 11-day pits, and on both Saturdays at the 12-day pits.

7. DEPUTIES:- The Deputies face shifts to be  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours from bank to bank, it being understood that if required they shall stay longer and be paid an equivalent wage for overtime.

8. FILLERS, STONEMEN, SHIFTERS, ETC:- Where fillers, stonemen, wastemen, shifters and others underground are now working less than the maximum under the Act they shall continue as at present. Stonemen, wastemen, shifters and others as above may be required to remain up to the maximum hours permitted by the Act, and be paid overtime, according to existing arrangements.

9. The hours of putters, drivers, landing lads, and off-hand men, all persons engaged directly in the output of coal, and others underground whose present hours are more than the maximum permitted by the Act, shall be reduced to the

minimum under the Act.

10. WAGES:- The county basic rate for coal-hewers at the 7-hour collieries shall remain as at present. For all persons paid by the day for whom there is a county rate, such county rate shall continue as at present.

11. GENERAL:- All existing practices and conditions not inconsistent with any of the arrangements embodied in this agreement shall continue as at present.

APPENDIX B

COAL MINES (MINIMUM WAGE) ACT, 1912

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

SECTION

1. Minimum Wage for workmen employed underground in coal mines.
2. Settlement of minimum rates of wages and district rates.
3. Revision of minimum rates of wages and district rules.
4. Provision on bringing Act into operation, etc.
5. Interpretation and provision as to chairman.
6. Short title and duration.

SCHEDULE:- An Act to provide a Minimum Wage in the case of Workmen employed underground in Coal Mines (including Mines of Stratified Ironstone), and for purposes incidental thereto.

Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by hand with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:-

1.-(1) It shall be an implied term of every contract for the employment of a workman underground in a coal mine, that the employer shall pay to that workman wages not less than the minimum rate settled under this Act and applicable to that workman, unless it is certified in manner provided by the district rules that the workman is a person excluded under the district rules from the operation of this provision, or that the workman has forfeited the right to wages at the minimum rate by reason of his failure to comply with the conditions with respect to the regularity or efficiency of the work to be performed by workmen laid down by those rules;

and any agreement for the payment of wages in so far as it is in contravention of this provision shall be void.

For the purpose of this Act, the expression 'district rules' means rules made under the powers given by this Act by the joint district board.

(2) The district rules shall lay down conditions, as respects the districts to which they apply, with respect to the exclusion from the right to wages at the minimum rate of aged workmen and infirm workmen (including workmen partially disabled by illness or accident), and shall lay down conditions with respect to the regularity and efficiency of the work to be performed by the workmen, and with respect to the time for which a workman is to be paid in the event of any interruption of work due to an emergency, and shall provide that a workman shall forfeit the right to wages at the minimum rate if he does not comply with conditions as to regularity and efficiency of work, except in cases where the failure to comply with the conditions is due to some cause over which he has no control.

The district rules shall also make provision with respect to the persons by whom and the mode in which any question whether any workman in the district is a workman to whom the minimum rate of wages is applicable, or whether a workman who has not complied with the conditions laid down by the rules, or whether a workman has forfeited the right to wages at the minimum level is to be decided, and for a certificate being given of any such decision for the purposes of this section.



(3) The provisions of this section as to payment of wages at a minimum rate shall operate as from the date of the passing of this Act, although a minimum rate of wages may not have been settled, and any sum which would have been payable under this section to a workman on account of wages if a minimum rate had been settled may be recovered by the workman from his employer at any time after the rate is settled.

2-(1) Minimum rates of wages and district rules for the purposes of this Act shall be settled separately for each of the districts named in the Schedule to this Act by a body of persons recognised by the Board of Trade as the joint district board for that district.

Nothing in this Act shall prejudice the operation of any agreement entered into or custom existing before the passing of this Act, and in settling any minimum rate of wages the joint board will have regard to the average daily rate of wages paid to the workmen of the class for which the minimum rate is to be settled.

(2) The Board of Trade may recognise as a joint district board for any district any body of persons, whether existing at the time of this Act or constituted for the purpose of this Act, which in the opinion of the Board of Trade fairly and adequately represents the workmen in coalmines in the district and the employers of those workmen, and the chairman of which is an independent person appointed by agreement between the persons representing the workmen and employers respectively in the body, or in default of agreement by the

Board of Trade.

The Board of Trade may, as a condition of recognising as a joint district board for the purposes of this Act any body the rules of which do not provide for securing equality of voting power between the members representing workmen and the members representing employers and for giving the chairman a casting vote in case of difference between the two classes of members, require that body to adopt any such rule as the Board of Trade may approve for the purpose, and any rule so adopted shall be deemed to be a rule governing the procedure of the body for the purposes of this Act.

(3) The joint district board of a district shall settle general minimum rates of wages and general district rules for their district (in this Act referred to as a general district minimum rates and general district rules) and the general district minimum rates and general district rules shall be the rates and rules applicable throughout the whole of the district to all coal mines in the district and to all workmen or classes of workmen employed underground in those mines, other than mines to which and workmen to whom a special minimum rate or special district rules settled under the provisions of this Act is or are applicable, or mines to which and workmen to whom the joint district board declare that the general district rates and the general district rules shall not be applicable pending the decision of the question whether a special district rate or special district rules ought to be settled in this case.

(4) The joint district board of any district may, if it is shown to them that any general district minimum rate or

general district rules are not applicable in the case of any group or class of coal mines within the district, owing to the special circumstances of the group or class of mines, settle a special minimum rate (either higher or lower than the general district rate) or special district rules (either more or less stringent than the general district rules) for that group or class of mines and any such special rate or special rules shall be the rate or rules applicable to that group or class of mines instead of the general district minimum rate or general district rules.

(5) For the purpose of settling minimum rates of wage the joint district board may subdivide their district into two parts or, if members of the joint district representing the workmen and the members representing the employers agree, into more than two parts, and in that case each part of the district so subdivided shall, for the purpose of the minimum rate, be treated as the district.

(6) For the purpose of settling district rules, any joint district board may agree that their districts shall be treated as one district, and in that case those districts shall be treated for that purpose as one combined district, with a combined district committee appointed as may be agreed upon between the joint district board concerned, or, in default of agreement, determined by the Board of Trade, shall be chairman of the combined district committee.

3.-(1) Any minimum rate of wages or district rules settled

under this Act shall remain in force until varied in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

(2) The joint district board of a district shall have power to vary any minimum rate or rules for the time being in force in their districts:

a. at any time by agreement between the members of the joint district board representing the workmen and the members representing the employers;  
and

b. after one year has elapsed since the rate or rules were last settled or varied, on an application made with three months' notice given after the expiration of the year by any workmen or employers, which appears to the joint district board to represent any considerable body of opinion amongst either the workmen or employers concerned; and the provisions of this Act as to the settlement of minimum rates of wages or district rules shall, so far as applicable, apply to the varieties of any such rate or rules.

4.-(1) If within two weeks after the passing of this Act a joint district board has not been recognised by the Board of Trade for any district, or if at any time after the passing of this Act, any occasion arises for the exercise of or performance in any district of any power or duty under this Act by the joint district board, and there is no joint district board for the district, the Board of Trade may either forthwith or after such interval as may seem necessary or expedient, appoint such person as they think fit to act in the place of the joint district board; and, while that appointment continues,

this Act shall be construed, so far as respects that district as if the persons so appointed were substituted for the joint district board. The Board of Trade in any such case where it appears to them that the necessity for the exercise of their powers under the provision arises from the failure of the employers to appoint members to represent employers on a board when the workmen are willing to appoint members to represent workmen on a Board when the employers are willing to appoint members to represent employers, may, if they think fit, instead of appointing a person to act in place of the joint district board, appoint such persons as they think fit to represent the employers or the workmen, as the case may be, who have failed to appoint members to represent them; and in that case the members so appointed by the Board of Trade shall be deemed to be members of the board representing employers or workmen as the case requires.

(2) If the joint district board within three weeks after the time at which it has been recognised under this Act for any district fail to settle the first minimum rates of wages and district rules in that district, or if the joint district board within three weeks after the expiration of a notice for an application under this Act to vary any minimum rate of wages or district rules shall fail to deal with the application, the chairman of the joint district board shall settle the rates or rules or deal with the application, as the case may be, in place of the joint district board, and any minimum rate of wages or district rules settled by him shall have the same effect for the purpose of this Act as if they

had been settled by the joint district board:-

"Provided that, if the members of the joint district board representing the workmen and the members representing the employers agree, or if the chairman of the district board directs, that a specified period longer than three weeks shall for the purposes of this subsection be substituted for three week, this subsection shall have effect as if that specified period were therein substituted for three weeks.

5.-(1) In this Act -

The expression 'coalmine' includes a mine of stratified ironstone.

The expression 'workman' means any person employed below ground other than -

- (a) a person so employed occasionally or casually only; or
- (b) a person so employed solely in surveying or measuring; or
- (c) a person so employed as mechanic; or
- (d) the manager or any sub-manager of the mine; or
- (e) any other official of the mine whose position in the mine is recognised by the Joint District Board as being a position different from that of workmen.

(2) If it is thought fit by any person when appointing a chairman for the purposes of this Act, or by the Board of Trade when so appointing a chairman, the office of chairman may be committed to three persons, and in that case those three persons acting by a majority shall be deemed to be the chairman for the purposes of this Act.

6.-(1) This Act may be cited, as the Coal Mines (Minimum

Wage) Act, 1912.

(2) This Act shall continue in force for three years from the date of the passing thereof and no longer, unless Parliament shall otherwise determine.

APPENDIX C (a)

EXTREMIST LODGES IN COUNCIL

1. M.F.G.B. membership:

Red Lough	8:1:03
Boldon	23:3:05
Spen	:6:06
Hedley Hope)	
Chopwell )	:2:07
Blaydon )	
Houghton )	

M.F.G.B. Key Voters in favour

30:11:07

Boldon, Chopwell, Clara Vale, Deaf Hill, Dunston, East Hetton, East Tanfield, Felling, Harraton, Hebburn, Heworth, Horden, Hylton, Lumley, Marsden, Monkwearmouth, Murton, Ouston E., Ryhope, St. Hilda, Usworth, Washington, Wingate.

2. Wages:

a. Demanding very large advances. c. demands for a minimum wage

Croxdale	St. Hilda	9:4:04	
Lambton	11:9:90	Chopwell	4:6:04
Seaham		Heworth	)
Rowlands Gill		Rowlands Gill)	

b. opposition to Conciliation Board

Thornley	)	12:7:04	
Wardley	:2:02	Tudhoe	)
Marsden )		Marsden	)
Chopwell )		d. opposition to the	
	16:6:06	minimum wage agreement	
Randolph )		Rough Lea	)
Twizzell	25:2:10	Washington Glebe)	20:7:12
		Dawden	)



2. Opposition to Wage Acts 1914:

Chopwell  
Rowlands Gill  
Kibblesworth  
Hylton  
Mainsforth  
Urpeth  
Malton  
South Hetton

3. Eight Hours Dispute:

a. Pits which were 100% behind the unofficial strike

Allerdene	Edmondsley	Medomsley	Tanfield East
Alma	Elemore	Murton	Tanfield Lea
Axwell	Eden	North Biddick	Thornley
Beamish	Horden Hold	Oxhill	Thrislington
Bewick Main	Harraton	Ouston Winning	Twizzell
Blackhill	Harton	Page Bank	Urpeth
Brandon	Hetton	Ravensworth	Ushaw Moor
Burnhope	Horden	Red Lough	Victoria Garesfield
Byer Moor	Houghton	Sherburn Hill	
Croxdale	Hunter	Sherburn House	
Dawden	Kimbleworth	Shotton	
Dean and Chapter	Littleburn	South Derwent	
Delves	Lumley	South Pelaw	
Derwent	Mainsforth	Springwell	

b. Leaders of the demands for the Executives' resignation:

Eldon, Shildon, West Thornley, Ouston E., Philadelphia,  
Baldon,; D.M.A. Council 5:2:10.

4. Opposition to a Wilson Testimonial Fund:

D.M.A. Council 21:4:06

Boldon	Hylton	Sherburn Hill
Chopwell	Hobson	Shotton
Craghead	Marsden	Usworth
Evenwood	Morrison	Washington
Hetton	Philadelphia	Wheatley Hill
Heworth	St. Hilda	Wingate

5. Opposition to the Re-election of D.M.A. agents.

D.M.A. Council 17:12:10

Blaydon Burn	Morrison
Addison	Sacriston
Dawdon	South Hetton
Hedley	South Moor
Kimbleworth	Tanfield Lea

(b) SLIDING SCALE AGREEMENTS

The Second Sliding Scale.

Federation Board 11:10:79.

If wages reach	but are below	they decrease/increase by
3s. 10d.	4s. 2d.	- 2½%
4s. 2d.	4s. 6d.	None
4s. 6d.	4s. 10d.	+ 2½%
4s. 10d.	5s. 2d.	+ 5 %
5s. 2d.	5s. 6d.	+ 7½%
5s. 6d.	5s. 10d.	+ 10%
5s. 10d.	6s. 2d.	+ 15%
6s. 2d.	6s. 6d.	+ 17½%
6s. 6d.	6s. 10d.	+ 20%

The Third Sliding Scale.

Federation Board 29:4:82.

If wages reach	but are below	they decrease/increase by
3s. 6d.	3s. 8d.	- 2½%
3s. 8d.	3s. 10d.	- 1¼%
3s. 10d.	4s. 0d.	None
4s. 0d.	4s. 2d.	+ 1¼%
4s. 2d.	4s. 4d.	+ 2½%
4s. 4d.	4s. 6d.	+ 3¾%
4s. 6d.	4s. 8d.	+ 5 %
4s. 8d.	4s. 10d.	+ 6¼%
4s. 10d.	5s. 0d.	+ 7½%
5s. 2d.	5s. 4d.	+ 10%
5s. 8d.	5s. 10d.	+ 15%
5s. 10d.	6s. 0d.	+ 16¼%

	-C5-	
6s. 0d.	6s. 2d.	+ 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ %
6s. 6d.	6s. 8d.	+ 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ %

The Fourth Sliding Scale.

Federation Board 23:5:84

As the Third.

APPENDIX D

The problem of finding out the location of I.L.P. branches in County Durham has not been treated by anyone up to the time of writing. Beneath is an alphabetical list based largely on newspaper reports between 1898 and 1914.

<u>Branch</u>	<u>First Mentioned</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>President</u>
Annfield Plain (formed)	23:6:05	Durham Chronicle	
Barnard Castle	1902		
Beamish	19:10:06	ibid	
Birtley	16:5:02	Durham Chronicle	
Bishop Auckland	24:8:06	ibid.	
Bishop Wearmouth	28:10:98	ibid	
Boldon Colliery	1904	J.Lawson op.cit. p74.	
Brandon	4:6:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	J. Adair
Brandon Colliery (formed)	22:9:05	Durham Chronicle	J. Bowran
Byers Green	10:6:09	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	J. Herriotts
Chester le Street	30:6:99	Durham Chronicle	
Chopwell	17:5:07	ibid	
Consett	24:6:98	ibid	
Cornsay	21:6:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	
Coxhoe	10:6:09	ibid	J. Thompson
Crook	19:2:04	Durham Chronicle	
Croxdale (formed)	21:8:08	ibid	J. Bell
Darlington	24:6:98	ibid	
Dawdon	31:5:12	ibid	T. Scho- field
Dipton	24:6:98	ibid	

Durham (formed)	22:7:04	ibid	
Edmondsley (formed)	7:6:07	ibid	
Esh Winning (formed)	13:3:08	ibid	C. Thompson
Evenwood	17:6:09	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	
Fatfield (formed)	13:5:04	Durham Chronicle	R. Johnson
Ferryhill	29:7:09	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	S. Watson
Frosterley	18:5:05	ibid	M. Lee
Gateshead	1:4:04	Durham Chronicle	
Horden	19:5:10	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	G. Bloom- field
Houghton le Spring	31:7:03	Durham Chronicle	
Howden le Wear	1:7:05	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	T. Dawson
Hunwick	21:5:08	ibid	
Jarrow	24:6:98	Durham Chronicle	
Langley Moor (formed)	9:6:05	Durham Chronicle	D. Pearson
Langley Park	3:8:06	ibid	T. Clayton
Low Fell	1906	E. Manders op. cit.p277	
Middleton in Teesdale	17:8:05	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	J. Bowran
Newton Colliery	1:6:06	Durham Chronicle	
New Brancepeth	25:10:07	ibid	
New Herrington	17:8:06	ibid	T. Stewart
New Silksworth	14:3:13	ibid	
New Washington	11:1:07	ibid	W. Smith
Oakenshaw	20:6:13	ibid	Frost
Pelton	18:8:11	ibid	A. Temple
Quarrington Hill	21:11:13	ibid	
Quebec	2:7:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	C. MacDonald

Ryhope	24:8:06	Durham Chronicle	
Ryton	24:6:98	ibid	
Sacrison	23:3:06	ibid	
Seaham Harbour	20:12:07	ibid	J. Alexander
Shildon	24:6:98	ibid	
Silksworth	24:8:06	ibid	
Shotton Colliery (formed)	26:5:08	ibid	T. Young
South Hetton	28:5:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	W. Doxford
South Shields	24:6:98	Durham Chronicle	
Spen	24:6:98	ibid	
Spennymoor	24:6:98	ibid	
Stanhope	28:5:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	J. Ewbank
Stanley	30:3:06	Durham Chronicle	
Stanley (Now Mount Pleasant) (formed)	30:8:07	ibid	
Sunderland	24:6:98	ibid	
Tantobie	5:4:07	ibid	J. Jeffrey
Toft Hill	18:6:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	
Tow Law	22:2:07	Durham Chronicle	
Trimdon	21:8:08	ibid	S. Davison
Trimdon Colliery	14:5:09	ibid	
Trimdon Grange	14:5:09	ibid	
Tudhoe Grange	30:7:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	J. Peacock
Usworth (formed)	17:1:02	Durham Chronicle	R. Richardson
Washington	23:3:06	ibid	
Washington Station(formed)	31:8:06	ibid	
West Cornforth	15:7:09	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	

West Pelton	25:5:06	Durham Chronicle	
Wheatley Hill	14:5:09	ibid	
Willington (formed)	29:6:06	ibid	J. Strickland
Wingate	9:8:07	ibid	T. Metcalf
Wolsingham	28:5:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle	

There were also several Labour and Progressive parties which appear to have had the same local leaders and national speakers as the I.L.P., including A. Henderson, P. Curran, R. Naysmith and Rev. Bull. They appear a predominantly South Durham phenomenon.

<u>Branch</u>	<u>First Mentioned</u>	<u>Source</u>
Barnard Castle	1912	E. Lloyd <sup>1</sup>
Cockfield	30:7:08	South Durham & Auckland Chronicle
Crook	13:7:05	ibid
Evenwood	16:7:08	ibid
Stanhope	21:5:08	ibid
Tow Law	25:5:05	ibid
Wolsingham	28:5:08	ibid

1. E. Lloyd, 'The History of the Crook and Neighbourhood Co-operative Mill, Flour and Provision Society Limited (1865-1915) and a short History of the Town and District' p251. (Pelaw 1916)



APPENDIX F

T. Richardson

Tom Richardson of Usworth was the outstanding figure in the Durham I.L.P. before 1914. Born in 1868 Richardson was brought up at Usworth with his younger brother, W.P. In 1884 his father was killed in the Usworth Colliery disaster, leaving him as the breadwinner. Richardson responded well, and within a decade was the checkweighman at Washington Colliery. At the same time he was acquiring local prominence as a local preacher.

He was elected to the first parish council at Usworth in 1894<sup>1</sup>. He retained the seat in 1896, but did not contest it in 1897. The last time he contested was in 1899, when he won a seat<sup>2</sup>. In 1894 he secured election to the Chester le Street R.D.C. as a representative for Washington<sup>3</sup>. He retained the seat in 1898, 1901, 1904 and 1907, standing down in 1910. He became vice-chairman of the R.D.C. in 1904<sup>4</sup> and chairman of the highways committee in 1906. He also became Chairman of the Houghton le Spring District Education Committee<sup>5</sup> and represented Usworth on the Chester le Street Board of Guardians, of which he was elected vice-president in 1907<sup>6</sup>.

1. Durham Chronicle, 7:12:94.
2. Durham Chronicle, 18:3:99.
3. Durham Chronicle, 21:12:94.
4. Durham Chronicle, 22:4:04.
5. Durham Chronicle, 3:11:08.
6. Durham Chronicle, 15:2:07.

Richardson stood for Washington in the 1901 County Council elections, but was defeated by a local iron-founder Eli Cook. In 1904 he again contested the seat and defeated Cook. He was unopposed in the 1907, 1910 and 1913 elections. On the County Council he rapidly became a prominent member of the County education committee<sup>1</sup>.

On mining bodies Richardson played a major role. He was one of the founders of the Durham Minimum wage movement in 1898<sup>2</sup>, becoming a prominent lecturer in the movement. In the same year he was elected to the D.M.A. executive, a position he held until 1910. In 1902 he was elected to the Conciliation Board and in 1906 to the Federation Board, he retained both positions until 1910. Richardson stood in the 1897 agents' election, but was defeated by T.H. Cann<sup>3</sup>.

In the organisation of the North Eastern I.L.P. Richardson was a key figure. Active in the pre-1900 era he formed the I.L.P. branch at Usworth<sup>4</sup> in 1902, and played a prominent part in founding branches at Fatfield, Durham City, Langley Moor and Shotton Colliery. In 1906 he was elected by an overwhelming majority to represent Durham and Northumberland on the I.L.P.'s. National Administrative Council<sup>5</sup>. In the same year he was the chief agent for the election of J.W. Taylor at Chester le Street. A new dimension of his political

1. Durham Chronicle, 3:11:08.

2. Durham Chronicle, 17:0:98.

3. Durham Chronicle, 17:12:97.

4. Durham Chronicle, 17:1:02.

5. Durham Chronicle, 6:7:06.

career came in December 1910 when he was elected M.P. for Whitehaven. After this election he was forced to spend less time in the county. He retained only his County Council seat, and greatly reduced his committee activities. He continued to lecture, if somewhat irregularly, to I.L.P. branches in the county after 1910.

The loss of Richardson to the county I.L.P. in 1910 was a serious blow. Despite his continued presence in the county he had not the time to involve himself so actively in local I.L.P. affairs. After a decade as the county I.L.P. leader it proved impossible to find a leader of comparable stature, skill and dynamism to replace him. After 1910 some of the drive appeared to go out of the Durham I.L.P. movement, only picking up again in 1913.

W.P. Richardson

W.P. Richardson, born in 1873 at Usworth, was the younger brother of Tom Richardson. For a long time it appears that W.P. lived in the shadow of his famous brother. In 1897 he stood unsuccessfully for the parish council at Usworth, in 1898 he won a seat only to be defeated again in 1899. He did not contest the parish council again in the pre-war years, but presided over the poll<sup>1</sup>. In 1902 he became the secretary of the Usworth I.L.P. branch<sup>2</sup> and in 1908 President of the neighbouring Washington branch<sup>3</sup>.

While his brother was leading the county radicals W.P. does not appear to have played anything other than a local role. He was however interested in the D.M.A. In 1898 he had been elected secretary of Usworth Miners Lodge, a position which gained him election to the D.M.A. Council. In 1906 he was elected auditor of the D.M.A. Council<sup>4</sup>. In 1912 he secured election to the D.M.A. executive and the Federation Board<sup>5</sup>. It was only with the death of Wilson in 1915 that he became secretary of the Executive Committee and was elected an agent. In 1924 he assumed the General Secretaryship of the D.M.A.<sup>6</sup>

1. Durham Chronicle, 8:3:01.
2. Durham Chronicle, 20:6:02.
3. Durham Chronicle, 17:4:08.
4. Durham Chronicle, 7:12:06.
5. G. Metcalfe, op.cit. p503.
6. ibid. p502.

Richardson's D.M.A. activities were not to the detriment of the I.L.P. He remained active on a local level throughout the early 1900's. His rise to the county leadership came after the election of his brother as M.P. for Whitehaven; he filled many of the gaps his brother left. Early in 1910 he became Chairman of the Gateshead and District Council of I.L.P. branches. He became a leading authority on the Minimum Wage issue, lecturing throughout the county from 1911 onwards<sup>1</sup>. In 1912 he provided M.Ps. with material on the minimum wage issue, then before Parliament.

Although active and popular Richardson never achieved the same stature within the I.L.P. as his brother - the movement was by now too advanced. In 1914 he was elected by the miners as one of five prospective M.Ps. for the county<sup>2</sup> but the outbreak of war deprived him of a political career.

1. Durham Chronicle, 22:3:12.

2. Durham Chronicle, 20:3:14.

J. Batey

One of the early county leaders of the radicals<sup>was</sup> Joseph Batey. Born at West Moor near Gosforth in 1867 Batey moved to South Shields in 1886. In South Shields Batey became very active in local affairs. In 1895 he was elected by the South Shields Board of Guardians, of which he later became Chairman<sup>1</sup>. In 1897 he was elected to the South Shields Town Council for Laygate Ward, a position he held up until 1916.

At the local lodge, St. Hilda's, Batey was already well-known. In 1888 he became President of the Lodge, in 1891 Treasurer, and Secretary in 1896<sup>2</sup>. In 1897 he was elected Checkweighman at the colliery<sup>3</sup>. Batey was an ardent advocate of the minimum wage, and Wilson's bitterest critic in sliding scales and Conciliation Boards. With Tom Richardson he helped found the minimum wage movement in 1898<sup>4</sup>.

In 1901 Batey secured election to the D.M.A. executive<sup>5</sup>, holding the premier position in elections from 1905 onwards. While a member of the executive he wrote a pamphlet, published in 1904, calling for the need for a minimum wage<sup>6</sup>.

Batey, despite being an ardent Socialist, did not rise to

1. Durham Chronicle, 10;5:07.

2. G. Metcalfe, op.cit. p314.

3. Durham Chronicle, 10:5:07.

4. Durham Chronicle, 17:6:98.

5. Durham Chronicle, 10:5:07.

6. J. Batey, 'The Present System Condemned. The need for a Minimum Wage.'

prominence within the I.L.P. This can be attributed to several factors. The most obvious was that South Shields was an area in which the I.L.P. never thrived. It was opposed by local seamen,<sup>1</sup> and never achieved widespread support from within the community. The other main factor was a dispute between Batey and T. Richardson. After being elected to the Federation Board in 1905 Batey resigned in 1906 and issued a circular on the situation signed by himself and Richardson. Richardson then publicly disclaimed any responsibility for the letter and openly criticised Batey<sup>2</sup>. After this Batey and Richardson did not appear on the same platform, even on the minimum wage issue, for over a year.

In 1907 Batey was made a Justice of the Peace, the first Labour J.P. in the town<sup>3</sup>. He was also elected President of the South Shields Equitable Co-operative Society. After 1907 Batey continued as a county figure due to his close involvement with the minimum wage issue. He lectured regularly on the subject up until 1914<sup>4</sup>. He was elected as a prospective M.P. by the Durham Miners in 1914<sup>5</sup>, but did not become an M.P. until 1922. In 1915 following the death of Wilson, he was elected an agent of the D.M.A., after two earlier defeats.

1. Durham Chronicle, 25:9:03.
2. Durham Chronicle, 16:11:06.
3. Durham Chronicle, 10:5:07.
4. G.Metcalf, op.cit. p314.
5. Durham Chronicle, 20:3:14.

J.W. Taylor

J. Wilkinson Taylor was one of the most distinguished labour leaders in the North East. The Chairman of Annfield Plain Co-operative Society from 1890 until 1906<sup>1</sup>, and a well-known Primitive Methodist preacher, Taylor was typical of the early Socialist leaders in the North East.

Taylor became a member of the Lanchester Board of Guardians in the early 1890's and remained a member until 1896. In 1895 he became Chairman of Collierley School Board<sup>2</sup>. Two months later he was elected as the County Councillor for Collierley, a position he held up until 1906.<sup>3</sup> He became a Justice of the Peace in 1896 and the same year was made Chairman of Annfield Plain Urban District Council<sup>4</sup>.

In 1897 he became Secretary of the Durham Colliery Mechanics Association in succession to Lancelot Trotter<sup>5</sup>. He held the secretaryship until 1906. He was also a nominated member of the Federation Board between the same dates.

Taylor, a staunch Socialist, was active on a limited scale in the early I.L.P. He lectured the I.L.P. branches in the county as early as 1904<sup>6</sup>, but was not a frequent speaker. Part of the reason for this was the poor health which he suffered from throughout the last twenty years of

1. T. Ross & A. Stoddart, History of Annfield Plain Co-operative Society, p99.
2. Durham Chronicle, 25:1:95.
3. Durham Chronicle, 29:11:96.
4. Durham Chronicle, 20:11:95.
5. Durham Chronicle, 30:7:97.
6. Durham Chronicle, 1:4:04.



life. Despite his illness Taylor was chosen as a Labour candidate for North West Durham in 1905. Following L. Atherley-Jones' refusal to retire Taylor was switched to the Chester le Street division in 1906. After considerable dispute with the local Liberals Taylor was opposed by a Liberal and a Conservative. He won with a 3,100 majority<sup>1</sup>. Two electoral victories in 1910 ensured the safety of the one Labour-held mining seat in the North East up until Taylor's retirement in 1918. After this he remained active up until he died in 1935, in local affairs, particularly in the Methodist Church.

1. Durham Chronicle, 2:2:06.

F. Mackay

One local leader who was in many ways typical of the average mining candidate of the period was Frank Mackay. Mackay first came to prominence as a hewer at Ryton, when he was elected to the Ryton Parish Council in 1894 as a Labour candidate<sup>1</sup>. He held the seat until 1898 when he was elected Checkweighman at Marsden Colliery. In the same year he was elected to the D.M.A. executive.

Mackay's stay at Marsden was short, since in 1899 he was elected a Checkweighman at Chopwell, already well-known for its radical views. In the same year he was elected to Chopwell School Board<sup>2</sup>. In 1904 he gained election to Blaydon Urban District Council as a Labour member<sup>3</sup> and held the seat until the war. There is no record of any other local political activity by him.

Mackay was outspoken on two topics, the eight hour day for miners, and the need for public baths in mining communities. He was a regular correspondent to the local press on both issues<sup>4</sup>. It was the Socialists like Mackay who were the backbone of the I.L.P. in the coalfield.

1. Durham Chronicle, 7:11:94.

2. Durham Chronicle, 17:5:07.

3. Durham Chronicle, 18:3:04.

4. Durham Chronicle, 17:5:07.

William House

William House was an early miners' leader who only gradually became converted to the Labour viewpoint. House first came to prominence in the first County Council election when he stood for West Auckland. He was defeated, but in the post Aldermanic election of 1892 he was elected for West Auckland<sup>1</sup>. He was returned again in 1895, and was made an Alderman the same year, ensuring this continued presence on the council.

House was very active in mining politics. He was elected to the position of Checkweighman at West Auckland colliery, and elected to the D.M.A. executive in 1890-1. In 1900 he became an agent and in 1901 he was elected President. He remained President of the D.M.A. until his death, in 1917.

House was active in local affairs. A member of Bishop Auckland District Council, he became the chairman of the Bishop Auckland Education Committee<sup>2</sup>. A member of the Bishop Auckland Board of Guardians he became engaged in several philanthropic schemes in the areas, including the Lady Eden Cottage Hospital and the Aged Miners Homes.

An ardent co-operative, House was elected to the Committee of the Bishop Auckland Co-operative Society in 1891, keeping his seat until 1900<sup>3</sup>. In 1903 he was elected President of the Society, a post he held until 1907<sup>4</sup>. In 1907

1. Durham Chronicle, 11:3:92.

2. T. Readshaw, 'History of the Bishop Auckland Industrial Co-operative Flour and Provision Society Ltd.' (Manchester 1910) p282.

3. ibid. pp374-5.

4. ibid. p368.

House was chosen as the prospective Labour candidate for South East Durham<sup>1</sup>. His adoption is slightly unusual since he was not active in the county I.L.P., his presence is not recorded at any I.L.P. meeting and only once, in 1906, at a party celebration, for Taylor's victory at Chester le Street, did he attend an L.R.C. meeting concerning someone other than himself<sup>2</sup>.

After the retirement of the local Liberal at Bishop Auckland House was transferred by the D.M.A. to contest the Bishop Auckland division. The local Liberals refused to agree to his claiming the seat and put their own candidate into the field. In the 1910 election House finished bottom of the poll<sup>3</sup>, obviously having suffered from the adverse treatment of the eight hours agreement. In December he again contested the seat to finish second of the poll.

In 1913 he was selected as the Labour candidate for Houghton le Spring at the ensuing by-election. Again opposed by a Liberal, House again suffered from some miners' hostility on the eight hours question<sup>4</sup>. He finished bottom of the poll with 22% of the vote. When offered the chance of standing in the N.W. Durham by-election in 1914 House wisely declined the offer and retired from active party politics.

1. R. Gregory, op.cit. p77,
2. Durham Chronicle, 1:6:06.
3. Durham Chronicle, 14:1:10.
4. Durham Chronicle, 14:3:13.

James Gilliland

James Gilliland was one of two brothers who played an important part in Durham politics before 1950. In 1897 he was elected Checkweighman at East Lintz colliery, a position he held for the next ten years<sup>1</sup>. Largely through his brother John Gilliland entered politics at the turn of the century. In 1899 he was elected to the Lanchester Board of Guardians, his first political success.<sup>2</sup>

A Primitive Methodist local preacher for sixty-five years, Gilliland always put his religious beliefs to the fore. His religion developed a desire for self-improvement which found itself an outlet in a passion for education, both for himself and for others. This plea for education was a central theme of his early political demands.

A member of the D.M.A. executive, Gilliland regularly received a high number of votes when he was re-elected<sup>3</sup>. His own personal interest in the minimum wage movement coupled with a natural fluency of speech pushed him to the fore of the minimum wage movement. In 1907 he started lecturing to mass meetings<sup>4</sup> which he kept up for the next six years.

Despite a paucity of information on the subject Gilliland was obviously a man of considerable stature within the I.L.P. In 1907 he was appointed the Parliamentary Agent for the

1. Durham Chronicle, 7:6:07.
2. Durham Chronicle, 17:3:99.
3. Durham Chronicle, 24:6:06.
4. Durham Chronicle, 4:10:07.

Labour Party in the Chester le Street division<sup>1</sup>, a full-time job, succeeding the part-time agent Tom Richardson. In 1908 he resigned from the job to return to the mines as Checkweighman at the Ouston Pit Birtley.

There has been no work done on the Birtley Parish Council or the Board of Guardians, but it is probable that Gilliland contested both. In both 1910 and 1913 he unsuccessfully contested the Birtley seat on the Chester le Street R.D.C., both times standing as a Labour candidate<sup>2</sup>. Similarly in 1910 he contested the Birtley seat on the Durham County Council, but was defeated<sup>3</sup>.

In 1924 he became an agent of the D.M.A. He was elected to the County Council where he became Chairman of the County Education Committee. He became a Justice of the Peace and an Alderman. He died in 1952 aged eighty-six.

1. Durham Chronicle, 4:10:07.
2. Durham Chronicle, 18:3:10 and 14:3:13.
3. Durham Chronicle, 25:2:10.

John Edward Gilliland

John Gilliland was the more politically active of the Gilliland Brothers. Although little is known of his early political career he was involved in the Labour movement late in the nineteenth century. He became a man of some stature in the movement and in 1902 played an active part in the Stanley conference on Labour representation<sup>1</sup>.

In 1903 he was a helper for Arthur Henderson, in his campaign at Barnard Castle. This was to set the pattern on his later political life when he served as Parliamentary agent for Barnard Castle, Chester le Street, Blaydon and South Shields. He obviously excelled in this work and was prevented from becoming an M.P. by his expertise in organising the election of others<sup>2</sup>.

An ardent Methodist Gilliland shared with his brother a keen interest in education. As early as 1904 he became a governor of Bishop Auckland Grammar School. He later became a governor of Chester le Street Grammar School from 1917-1942. He was elected to the County Council after the war and was elected to the Education Committee<sup>3</sup>.

Despite his Methodist upbringing Gilliland does not appear to have become prominent as an I.L.P. lecturer until 1913, although he had lectured on earlier occasions<sup>4</sup>. In

1. Durham Chronicle, 23:5:02.

2. R.Wearmouth, 'Social and Political Effects of Methodism'. p252.

3. ibid. p253.

4. Durham Chronicle, 25:7:13 subsequent. He had lectured earlier in Durham Chronicle, 6:9:07.

1910 he received his first political appointment as sub-agent to Arthur Henderson at Barnard Castle. In the same year he was elected to Crook U.D.C.<sup>1</sup>, a body of which he became chairman in 1913.

In 1914 he was elected as a prospective Labour M.P. by the Durham miners in a D.M.A. poll. He received more votes than any of the other I.L.P. men elected<sup>2</sup>. This was followed in 1915 by his election as Parliamentary agent for the D.M.A.<sup>3</sup>, a position which made him the central organiser of the miners' political goals. He retained this position until the second world war. He died in January 1951.

1. Durham Chronicle, 18:3:10.

2. Durham Chronicle, 20:3:14.

3. R.Wearmouth, op.cit. p252.



J. Peacock

John Peacock of Shildon was one of the early active local Labour leaders. A native of Shildon, Peacock was one of the founders of the Shildon I.L.P. branch, in 1898. In Shildon as at Usworth the miners soon gained control of several local bodies. Peacock as an I.L.P. candidate became a parish councillor, was on the Shildon Urban District Council from 1901-1913 and sat on the Shildon Board of Guardians from 1904-1907<sup>1</sup>. He was also the manager of the St. John's Church Schools in the Shildon area<sup>2</sup>. An ardent co-operative man Peacock served on the committee of the Bishop Auckland Co-operative Society from 1897-1910 inclusive<sup>3</sup>.

Because of his radical views Peacock experienced considerable difficulty in finding employment in the late 1890's, but during the early 1900's was elected Checkweighman of Adelaide Colliery. He was elected to the D.M.A. executive committee in 1909<sup>4</sup>. He was also on the executive of the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund<sup>5</sup>.

Besides his activities with the Shildon I.L.P. Peacock played only a minor part in the county I.L.P. meetings,

1. T. Readshaw, op.cit. p328.

2. ibid. p328.

3. ibid. pp375-377.

4. G. Metcalfe, op.cit. p450.

5. T. Readshaw, op.cit. p329.

occasionally lecturing or presiding over a meeting<sup>1</sup>.

This was probably due to the large number of bodies he was on taking up most of his time.

Peacock stood for the Durham County Council in 1901 for the Shildon division, but was heavily defeated<sup>2</sup>. In 1910 he stood again and was narrowly beaten<sup>3</sup>, but in 1913 he ~~was~~ won the Shildon seat after a poll<sup>4</sup>.

1. South Durham and Auckland Chronicle, 30:7:08.

2. Durham Chronicle, 11:3:01.

3. Durham Chronicle, 25:2:10.

4. Durham Chronicle, 28:2:13.

T.H. Richardson

The career of T.H. Richardson, a Checkweighman of Sherburn, is interesting for one main reason, that is that Richardson was a prominent local Liberal who changed to membership of the I.L.P. in 1904<sup>1</sup>. We are thus able to see Richardson's career as a Liberal, and then as an active I.L.P. member.

Richardson's first significant political achievement came in 1893 when he won the seat for Sherburn on the Durham R.D.C.<sup>2</sup>. He retained the seat until he was defeated in the 1898 elections<sup>3</sup>. He was elected to the Sherburn Parish Council in 1897, and retained the seat in 1898. The seat was lost in 1899 and he did not contest it again.

Richardson took little part in local politics in the early 1900's., but changed from the Liberal party to the I.L.P. in 1904. Little was heard of him before 1906 when he was elected to the D.M.A. executive<sup>4</sup>. He only held the seat for a year.

His first appearance as an active I.L.P. member came in 1907 when he presided over the formation of the Durham City I.L.P. branch<sup>5</sup>. Two months later he stood for the Sherburn seat on the Durham R.D.C. but was defeated<sup>6</sup>. He did a little

1. Durham Chronicle, 1:3:07.
2. Durham Chronicle, 7:12:94.
3. Durham Chronicle, 18:3:98.
4. Durham Chronicle, 29:6:06.
5. Durham Chronicle, 1:3:07.
6. Durham Chronicle, 18:3:07.

lecturing for the I.L.P. after this<sup>1</sup>, but never participated in any more local elections.

1. Durham Chronicle, 29:5:08.

J. Lawson

Jack Lawson was to become one of the most important Labour leaders in the inter-war era. His early history is not however so well-known. Born in 1882 at Whitehaven, Lawson was down the pit at the age of twelve<sup>1</sup>. His insatiable desire to read soon marked him out as a future leader. On joining the I.L.P. in 1904 he was immediately asked to become a lecturer, but declined, feeling he was not yet ready for it<sup>2</sup>. Despite his youth he was made Checkweighman at Boldon in the same year.

In 1907 Lawson went to Ruskin College, Oxford, one of the first of the new breed of Labour leaders in the county to do so. After a distinguished year and a half he returned to Boldon as a hewer. On his return Lawson soon spread his socialist beliefs around. In 1909 he embarked on a long lecturing career<sup>3</sup>.

In January 1910 Lawson was Pete Curran's agent in the Jarrow election. Due to Curran's illness he had to take much of the lecturing upon himself. Immediately after Curran's defeat he was elected Checkweighman at Alma Pit, Pelton, a well-known radical area.

Lawson became very active with W.P. Richardson and J. Batey in the minimum wage movement. He lectured regularly and chaired several meetings<sup>4</sup>. These activities combined

1. J. Lawson, op.cit.

2. ibid. p74.

3. South Durham and Auckland Chronicle, 10:6:09.

4. Durham Chronicle, 22:3:12.

to make him a well-known figure in the coalfield. It came as no surprise in 1913 when he was elected to represent Pelton on the Durham County Council, at his first attempt<sup>1</sup>. There is no record of his election to the Guardians or Chester le Street R.D.C., but it seems probable that he was on the parish council. In 1914 the D.M.A. chose him as prospective M.P.<sup>2</sup> After the war Lawson came to prominence when he succeeded J.W. Taylor as M.P. for Chester le Street in 1918. In 1924 he was appointed Financial Secretary to the War Office in the first Labour Government. He was made Baron Lawson by the post-second world war Labour Government.

1. Durham Chronicle, 28:2:13.

2. Durham Chronicle, 20:3:14.

G. Jaques

George Jaques was one of the best known radicals in the coalfield. A Checkweighman at Chester le Street Jaques came to prominence in 1898 when he chaired the very large North East Socialist Federation meeting at Chester le Street<sup>1</sup> which was addressed by Keir Hardie and Bruce Glasier. At the same period Jaques started to write regularly to the local newspapers on socialism and connected issues<sup>2</sup>. He was to keep up this regular correspondence until the outbreak of war.

In 1901 Jaques stood as an I.L.P. candidate for the Chester le Street R.D.C., but was heavily defeated<sup>3</sup>. Subsequent attempts in 1904<sup>4</sup> and 1907<sup>5</sup> were also without success. As a build-up to each of his campaigns he wrote a series of letters to the local newspapers, highly critical of the existing Board, proposing his own views, concentrating largely on the housing problem. He stood as a parish councillor for Chester le Street in 1903 but was defeated<sup>6</sup>. In 1904 he stood again and received his election<sup>7</sup>; he held the seat up to the war. He never stood for the County Council.

1. Durham Chronicle, 24:6:48.
2. Durham Chronicle, 26:8:98.
3. Durham Chronicle, 29:3:01.
4. Durham Chronicle, 18:3:04.
5. Durham Chronicle, 22:2:07.
6. Durham Chronicle, 3:7:03.
7. Durham Chronicle, 1:4:04.

Jaques was well-known for his great interest in both housing and sanitation. He wrote frequently on both subjects, urging the local authorities to take the initiative on these matters. He was also known for his very ardent views on temperance; a Primitive Methodist, he actively supported the temperance legislation<sup>1</sup>.

Jaques, although an ardent Socialist, did not take the lead in political activities. He was secretary of the local Trades and Labour council<sup>2</sup>. Despite his long standing links with the I.L.P. he only became the financial secretary of the Chester le Street branch<sup>3</sup>. He never gave lectures, and rarely spoke in discussions. This might have been due to a weakness as a speaker, or due to the large number of prominent I.L.P. men in Chester le Street, i.e. J. Bruce, V. Vivian and R. Bell. His letter-writing compensated for this deficiency.

1. Durham Chronicle, 8:4:04.
2. Durham Chronicle, 29:5:03.
3. Durham Chronicle, 10:11:11.



J. Adair

Jack Adair was one of the later I.L.P. leaders in the county. The Checkweighman from Brandon colliery, little is known of Adair's early life. The parish council for Brandon has not been studied, so his activities here are unknown. He did not stand for the Brandon U.D.C. or the Durham Board of Guardians during the pre-war period. Despite this lack of political activity he became the President of Brandon I.L.P. in 1909<sup>1</sup>.

In 1910 he rose to prominence when he was elected to the Durham County Council for the Brandon division after a contest<sup>2</sup>. The victory was a considerable achievement, especially since the I.L.P. did not do as well as they might have done in the elections. In 1913 he stood again for Brandon, but was defeated. He was the only I.L.P. candidate to fail<sup>3</sup>.

In 1913 Adair was made the secretary of the Durham Aged Miners Homes Movement<sup>4</sup>. The work proved ideally suited to his own beliefs and abilities and he remained in office for the remainder of his life. In later years he was said to have become more or less symbolic of the movement.

1. South Durham and Auckland Chronicle, 4:6:09.

2. Durham Chronicle, 22:2:10.

3. Durham Chronicle, 28:2:13.

4. G. Metcalfe, op.cit. p315.

S. Whitely

Samuel Whitely was one of the early Liberal activists in the county. A Methodist preacher<sup>1</sup> Whitely was a Checkweighman in the Brandon district. He came to prominence in 1894 when he was returned to the Durham Board of Guardians for Brandon centre ward<sup>2</sup>. In the same year, he unsuccessfully contested the Brandon centre ward seat on the Brandon U.D.C.<sup>2</sup>. Whitely held the seat of the Board of Guardians in 1898, 1901 and 1904, retiring before the 1907 elections. Similarly, he won the centre ward seat on the Brandon U.D.C. in 1898<sup>3</sup> and retained it in 1901 and 1904 before retiring in 1907.

Whitely contested the county council elections on two occasions. In 1904 he was narrowly defeated when he stood for Brandon<sup>4</sup>. Again in 1907 he stood for Brandon, but was convincingly defeated<sup>5</sup>. His successor as the mining candidate, Jack Adair, won the seat in 1910.

One of the most interesting points about Whitely is his conversion from Liberalism to the I.L.P. between 1904 and 1905. In the 1904 elections he stood as a Liberal candidate, but in 1905 he was presiding over meetings of the newly-formed Brandon I.L.P.<sup>6</sup> After his affiliation with the I.L.P. Whitely, like many other ex-Liberals, withdrew from local elections, contesting only the 1907 county council election.

1. Durham Chronicle, 24:4:07.
2. Durham Chronicle, 7:12:94.
3. Durham Chronicle, 18:3:98.
4. Durham Chronicle, 4:3:04.
5. Durham Chronicle, 15:3:07.
6. Durham Chronicle, 22:9:05. 15:11:05.

APPENDIX G

THE SELLING PRICE OF DURHAM COAL PER TON<sup>1</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Jan.-March</u>	<u>April-June</u>	<u>July-Sept</u>	<u>Oct-Dec.</u>
1885	4s. 6.01d.	4s. 7.20d.	4s. 6.13d.	4s. 7.62d.
1886	4s. 5.49d.	4s. 4.79d.	4s. 4.63d.	4s. 5.56d.
1887	4s. 5.65d.	4s. 5.21d.	4s. 4.04d.	4s. 6.45d.
1888	4s. 4.69d.	4s. 3.91d.	4s. 5.5d.	4s. 7.04d.
1889	4s. 7.77d.	4s. 10.49d.	5s. 2.93d.	5s. 9.88d.
1890	6s. 10.84d.	7s. 4.66d.	7s. 5.62d.	7s. 4.85d.
1891	7s. 3.16d.	7s. 1.64d.	6s. 8.78d.	6s. 7.93d.
1892	6s. 5.86d.	6s. 2.20d.	6s. 2.43d.	5s. 11.00d.
1893	5s. 4.48d.	5s. 1.38d.	5s. 6.77d.	6s. 1.77d.
1894	5s. 4.80d.	5s. 4.38d.	5s. 7.29d.	5s. 5.04d.
1895	5s. 2.25d.	5s. 1.65d.	5s. 0.21d.	5s. 1.83d.
1896	5s. 0.23d.	5s. 0.54d.	5s. 0.93d.	5s. 3.12d.
1897	5s. 2.08d.	5s. 4.01d.	5s. 7.84d.	5s. 5.27d.
1898	5s. 4.18d.	5s. 10.22d.	6s. 0.09d.	6s. 0.35d.
1899	6s. 3.12d.	6s. 7.44d.	7s. 2.02d.	7s. 7.59d.
1900	8s. 7.71d.	9s. 11.19d.	11s. 4.12d.	11s. 3.86d.
1901	9s. 4.90d.	8s. 7.11d.	7s. 10.97d.	7s. 5.93d.
1902	7s. 5.68d.	7s. 1.89d.	7s. 3.32d.	7s. 4.26d.
1903	7s. 1.85d.	7s. 1.14d.	7s. 0.26d.	6s. 11.53d.
1904	6s. 7.66d.	6s. 5.60d.	6s. 5.29d.	6s. 5.31d.
1905	6s. 4.32d.	6s. 4.38d.	6s. 5.45d.	6s. 7.05d.
1906	6s. 7.32d.	6s. 10.85d.	7s. 0.88d.	7s. 3.00d.
1907	7s. 9.63d.	8s. 6.00d.	9s. 2.11d.	9s. 4.42d.

1. D.M.A. Changes in Wages in the Durham Coal Trade.  
pp31-39.

1908	9s. 1.31d.	8s.10.43d.	8s. 6.54d.	8s. 2.82d.
1909	7s. 6.91d.	7s. 6.68d.	7s. 5.96d.	7s. 6.19d.
1910	7s.11.53d.	7s.11.73d.	8s. 1.03d.	7s.10.18d.
	<u>March</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>
1911	7s. 6.2d.	7s. 7.50d.	7s. 5.91d.	7s. 7.18d.
1912	8s. 1.47d.	8s. 0.65d.	8s. 7.18d.	8s.11.80d.
1913	9s. 9.83d.	10s. 2.49d.	10s. 3.75d.	10s. 2.17d.
1914	9s.11.79d.	9s. 9.08d.	9s. 4.62d.	9s. 0.37d.

APPENDIX H

ABSENTEEISM IN THE DURHAM COALFIELD

<u>Year</u>	<u>%age of Hewers absent</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Year</u>	<u>%age of Hewers absent</u>
1885	7.81	1900	11.76
1886	6.84	1901	11.66
1887	7.18	1902	10.14
1888	7.55	1903	9.58
1889	8.95	1904	8.60
1890	11.50	1905	8.32
1891	11.43	1906	9.19
1892	8.71	1907	10.16
1893	7.62	1908	12.74
1894	7.85	1909	11.61
1895	7.79	1910	11.36
1896	7.33	1911	11.90
1897	7.75	1912	10.33
1898	8.78	1913	13.29
1899	9.85	1914	11.99

1. Royal Commission on the Coal Industry 1919. Vol.III  
Appendix 23 p42.

APPENDIX I

MINES SUNK 1885-1914

<u>Mine</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Owners</u>	<u>Area</u>
Blackhall	1909-15	Horden Colliery	Blackhall
Bowburn	1908	R.W. Jackson	Durham
Witton 'Merchant'	1893 (2nd sinking)	Cochrane & Co.	Brandon
Chester South Moor	1889	Sowerby, Phillips & Co.	Chester le Street
Chopwell 1,2, 3 Maria	1897 (2nd sinking)	Consett Iron Co.	Chopwell
Clara Vale	1893	Stella C.C.	Ryton
Crake Scarr	1893	J. Hardy	Cockfield
Dawdon	1907	Londonderry	Seaham
Dean & Chapter	1904	Bolkow Vaughan	Ferryhill
Easington	1899	Easington C.C.	Easington
Eldon John Henry	1896 (2nd sinking)	Pease & Pinter	Shildon
Framwellgate Durham Main	1894 (2nd sinking)	Northern Mining C.C.	Durham
Greenside 'A'	1902	R. Simpson	Ryton
Heworth Ade- laide et al.	1894 (2nd sinking)	Stella C.C.	Heworth
Horden	1900-04	Horden C.C.	Horden
Hylton	1897, 1900	Wearmouth C.C.	Sunderland
Kimblesworth	1894	Charlow-Sacrison C.C.	Chester le Street
Mansforth	1904-6	Carlton Iron Co.	Ferryhill
Morrison North & South	1896	South Moor C.C.	Stanley
Randolph	1893	Pease & Pinter	Evenwood
Washington Globe	1904	Washington C.C.	Washington

Taken from Bill Dowding. Durham Mines. Unpublished.  
Copy in Palace Green Library, Durham.

APPENDIX J

MINES CLOSED BETWEEN 1885-1914

<u>Mines</u>	<u>Date</u>
Adelaide-Jans.	1889
Axwell 1 + 2	1887
Beamish Apple	1908
Burn	1903
Edge	1911
Bitchburn North	1908
Bitchburn West	1886
Black Prince (Cornsey)	1907
Broom Park West	1905
Broomside, Lady Adelaide	1890
Butterknowle, Victoria	1903
Butterknowle A.	1903
Byers Green R.	1892
Caterthorne, Constantine	1902
Castle Eden, Maria	1894
Coronation Pit	1903
Crook and Stanley Pit Banks	1907
Decham Hall	1893
Durham South/Eldon (Auckland)	1906
End North + New	1898
Elvet	1908
Etherley, Jane, Railway	1894
Etherley, Grange	1887
Ferryhill, High Pit	1900
Garden House Fell + Garden	1891

Greenhead	1889
Hargill Hill + New	1901
Harperley	1901
Haswell, New Engine	1895
Haswell, Little	1886
Hebburn	1909
High Spen	1909
House + New	1912
Howden	1907
East Howle, Anne	1897
East Howle, Catherine	1901
East Howle, Maria	1905
Humerbeck	1897
Hutton Henry (Morley)	1897
Inkerman	1905
Invesley	1896
Lambton Gill	1903
Lanchester	1904
Littleburn	1890
Lutterington	1895
Lumley + Harraton	1888
Melfield Grange	1911
Marley + Gren	1893
Nettlesworth	1894
Norwood	1904
Osmondcroft	1895
Ouston. 'A'	1895
Pelton North Pit + Moor	1905
Pit Close	1905



Prince Edward (Witton le Wear)	1902
Rainton. Adventure	1896
Redhouse (Crook)	1895
Roddymoor Old	1891
St. Ives	1911
Sherburn Grange	1910
Sherburn, Lady Durham	1904
Shildon, New Pit	1889
Shildon, New Tennants	1892
Shincliffe	1886
South Church	1890
Stanley - Josephine	1911
Stanley East 7th	1912
Stockerley Vetch Role	1910
Stonechester	1912
Storey Mill Lodge	1904
Sunnybrow/Willington	1906
Tanfield South A.B.C.	1912
Tees. Hetton	1890
Tees West	1906
Tees West Cuckoo	1901
Trimdon Southouses	1893
Tudhoe Grange	1902
Tudhoe East	1913
Teesdale Hett Gill	1909
Waldridge A.D.	1910
Woodhouse,close,Emily Tindale + New	1905

Woodhouse North + South	1908
Woodfield + Band Old	1901
Woolland Cust, Barn + Foul	1892
Wooley Hills	1911

Taken from Bill Dowding op.cit.

Dowding fails to mention the closure of the Pittington Pit 1891 and of Littleton in 1913<sup>1</sup>.

1. A. Ross, "History of the Pittington Amicable & Industrial Society." (Pelaw 1924) p19.

APPENDIX K

THOSE WHO STOPPED HEWING AT CONSETT CARESFIELD PIT  
(July 1890-Jan. 91)

J. Mochester	A. Johnstone	T. Maudler
R. Lowes	W. Huild	T. Lamb
C. Greener	T. Davidson	H. Lecaster
R. Greener	J. Millburn	R. Lowder
G. Barker	G. Clangham	
M. Lowden	J. Bell	
G. Jewsbert	W. Patterson	
M. Cowen	J. Johnson	
W. Con	R. Elliott	

A total of 23 out of a hewing workforce  
of 140.

THOSE WHO STOPPED Jan. 1891-Jan. 1892

E. Poole	W. Smith	G. Carter
I. Poole	G. Shotton	G. Lawson
J. Davison	W. Brown	W. Cox
J. Atkin	T. Balmer	R. Henderson
R. Watson	W. Carrick	E. Parker
T. Surtees	E. Armstrong	R. Little
P. Barton	L. Hall	W. Dyson
J. Carter	T. Greenhill	M. Pyhiri
J. Lester	Jas Knotts	A. Henderson
E. Sprintis	J. Spears	Wallace

A total of 50 out of a hewing workforce  
of 166.

THOSE WHO LEFT Jan. 1892-Jan. 1893

F. Maley	E. Parker	Boyers
R. Williamson	R. Rockly	Blakey
F. Goss	Bummell	S. Atkin
Indralson	J. Forrester	W. Little
J. Quin	Iamn	J. Mitchell & son
G. Robson & son	Wales	J. Nesbitt
L. Purvis & son	J. Milpeitch	C. Norris
A. Clarke	Walker	Blair
G. Young	G. Dawson	R. Sittle
W. Steel	S. Cresswell	R. Bankerton

A total of 33 out of a hewing workforce of 195.

HEWERS WHO CAME TO THE COLLIERY  
July 1890-Jan. 1891

R. Charlton	M. Moorland	G. Lawson
G. Rayment	J. Wishart	J. Lowrey
E. Poole	J. Aynes	M. Curran
I. Poole	J. Wilson	M. Pyhiri
J. Davison	R. Wilson	J. Ridley
R. Coates	R. Wetherby	Wallace
T. Surtees	W. Brown	Lee
T. Armstrong	G. Shotton	J. Carter
R. Carter & son	A total of 28 out of a 153 hewing workforce.	
G. Carter		
Rogers		

HEWERS WHO CAME Jan. 1891 - Jan. 1892

J. Proud	J. Goss	G. Robson & son
W. Proud	Blakey	R. Greener
M. Cowen	S. Atkin	R. Bankaton

J. Hugh & son	Indralson	J. Nicholson
E. Carr	J. Malthone	P. Stafford
K. Brown	J. Quinn	C. Purvis & son
A. Clarke	J. Carney	W. Sterling
G. Wishart	J. Long	J. Mitchell & son
R. Eltringham	W. Ritson	J. Nesbitt
J. Bunter	J. Thompson	C. Norris
Daniels	Huntsman	R. Jos & J. Handyside
E. Partier	J. Milpeitch	Blair
Iann	G. Dawson	W. Steel
Wales	E. Sterling	S. Cesswell
W. Dixon	R. Sittle	

A total of 50 hewers out of a 166 workforce.

HEWERS WHO CAME Jan. 1892- Jan. 1893

Stobort	J. Rouledge	J. Dodd
H. Lowther	J. Clyness	J. Pratt
L. Gibbons	S. Greene	J. Corney
J. Lee	S. Shott	T. Balison
E. Parker	J. Wood	J. Pearson
J. Hard	D. Moses	Graveson
A. Rogers	Spence	J. Bell
J. Watson	H. Philipson	H. Cape
W. Coates	W. Shiel	E. Spinks
L. Barker	A. Johnson	Rochester
J. Brown	G. Benson	W. Bell
W. Schuter	C. Richardson	T. Parker
W. Todd	J. Waters	

A total of 38 out of a hewing workforce of 195.

APPENDIX L

MIGRATION TO AND FROM CHOPWELL 1896-1914

A highly successful approach to the migration problem is through a study of the workmens' engagement books. The majority of the engagement books record the new employee's names, date of birth, and date at which they started work at the colliery. Some collieries did however record other material which proves more useful.

The Chopwell Colliery Engagement books date from 1896-1914<sup>1</sup>. From these records it was possible to list the numbers taken on by the colliery, the occupations of the new employees, their date of birth, in some cases their marital status, in a few cases where they were intending to live, and most important of all, for some of the period a record of the employee's previous place of employment. The records are thus capable of giving a considerable insight into the migration centred around Chopwell.

The exact material available was as follows; the Colliery Engagement Books No.1, 1896-1911, the Colliery Offhand Engagement Books Nos. 2, 1905-1914, with a second series for 1909, 1910, 1912 and 1914. The Chopwell Hewers, Stonemen; and Shifters Engagement books No.1, pit, 1910-1914, No. 2 pit, 1912-14, No. 3 pit 1912-14 and Whittonsall Drift 1913-14.

The sheer amount of material, twenty volumes, forced the limitation of the full study to only certain periods. These were: of the Volume One Engagement Books the whole of 1896 and 1897, October and November 1901, June 1902, November 1903, and

1. Chopwell Colliery Engagement Books, 20 vols. D.C.R.O.-N.C.B.

October, November and December 1911 (The gap from 1903-1911 was due to the loss of the books from 1903-1905, followed by five years of highly superficial records). The Offhand Engagement books number two were studied for the whole of 1913 and January to July 1914 (These again were poorly recorded between 1905 and 1912). The number one pit hewers', shifters' and stonemens' Engagement books were studied from July to November 1910, January to February 1911, May to September 1913 and January - April 1914. The number two and three pits and the Whittonsall Drift records were all superficial in nature and impossible to study in any great detail.

The numbers which were studied in depth constituted 7.14% of the total numbers taken on. Of the remaining 93% the slight majority was not material which could be studied in great detail, the utilisable material which was not fully studied being almost entirely before 1903. In those areas not studied in depth the average age of the men was compiled, those who lived in Chopwell or gave no place of origin were counted (the rest, presumably, being migrants). The numbers of men under twenty-one were counted, as were the number of people who stated they wanted to become lodgers.

The colliery which employed 2,296 men by 1913<sup>1</sup> took on a surprisingly high number of men. Between 1896 and 1911 the No.1 Engagement Book recorded 6,637 men taken on, and the Offhand Engagement Book recorded 1,151 in the first series, and 273 in the second series. The Hewers, Stonemen and Shifters Engagement books' records 1,084 being taken on

1. A.Wilson, 'The Consett Iron Company.' p376.

between 1910-1914 in No.1 pit, 209 in No.2, 177 in No.3 and 154 in Whittonstall Drift. The total numbers taken on by the colliery between 1896 and 1914 was 9,687, over three times the total numbers employed by 1913. In the three pits a check in 1912 revealed 1,375 stonemen, hewers and shifters working at that time.

Several pictures emerge from a study of all the material. In the No.1 Engagement Books 1,117 persons under 21 years were taken on, 15% of the total. In the No.2 books 930 persons under 21 years, nearly 75%, were taken on. In the second series 228 out of 273 were under 21 years. After 1910 one can see a change away from the employment of younger men as hewers, stonemen and shifters. Out of 1,624 taken on 1910-14 only 12% were under 21 years. This was reflected in new pits, throughout the coalfield and can be seen as a sign of the aging of the workforce in the colliery.

Another point of interest is the number of people who stated a desire to become lodgers in Chopwell. Between 1896 and 1914 166 people are recorded as lodging with other families. Since such information was not required and thus infrequently given, it is probable that the numbers being lodged were far higher. The importance of such a large number of lodgers, a minimum of nine per year and probably far higher, is that it indicates the inadequacy of the electoral registers.

The most interesting material for us concerned the records which state the previous workplace of the new employee. These details give us a reasonably exact measurement of the scale of migration, the distance involved in it,



and information concerning the people involved in it. Unfortunately the succession of a new manager on January 1st, 1906, who stayed in office until 1911, and did not record the previous place of work robs us of some of our materials. We do however have a series from 1896 to 1905, with parts of 1911, 1913 and 1914. These are still able to provide us with a great deal of information.

Of those recorded in the No.1 Engagement book between 1896 and 1905 only 422 of the 3,035 involved give Chopwell as their previous workplace. (This figure also included every case where the name of the previous workplace was not given, which constituted over 50% of the total number from Chopwell). Atleast 85% of those taken on can be classified as migrants.

In the Offhand Engagement book on 1905 records the previous area of employment in this case only 28 out of the 202 taken on were from Chopwell. Once again 85% of those taken on appear to have been migrants. The other complete series for 1914 involves only 116 being taken on, of whom fifteen were of local origin. In this case 87% of the new miners would appear to have been migrants.

The average age of the new workers (there appears to be no difference in age between local people and the migrants) is listed below and can be considered the average age of the migrants.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Age</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
1896	33.5 yrs.	1904	30.4 yrs.
1897	27.0 yrs.	1905	33.8 yrs.
1898	32.8 yrs.	1906	32.0 yrs.
1899	26.5 yrs.	1907	29.0 yrs.

1900	31.78 yrs.	1908	27.6 yrs.
1901	31.8 yrs.	1909	30.7 yrs.
1902	31.2 yrs.	1910	31.9 yrs.
1903	28.7 yrs.	1911	28.85yrs.

These figures suggest that the average age of the migrants, 30.48 yrs. in the sixteen years studied, might be higher than that of other groups. The migrant has traditionally been referred to as the young single man who was free to move. The material available to us on the marital status of the migrants, poor though it is, indicates that the single men were in a minority.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Nos. Single Men</u>	<u>Total Nos.Men</u>
1901	74	471
1902	101	390
1903	176	658
1904	66	229
1905	175	335
1911	91	410

The marital status of men was not always given. Hence the concentration on certain years. Single men are frequently noted, probably as the unusual ones, not entitled to a colliery house. It is thus possible that the above figures may not be as inaccurate as at first appeared. The figures for 1905 are high since the offhand Engagement book, concentrating on the younger unskilled men, provided 168 single men out of 202 and cannot be seen as representative of the miners as a whole.

The detailed study of the miners' records encompassed part of the nine years, and included 694 miners. This group appeared a reasonably unrepresentative cross-section of all

the migrants to Chopwell. The migrants' occupations were:

Hewers	289	Shifters	41
Putters	119	Sinkers	24 (all employed 1896-7)
Offhand Boys	45	Labourers	18 (all employed 1896-7)
Stonemen	44	Drivers	19

Several jobs had fewer than ten taken on: banksmen, brakemen, datal workers, enginemen, firemen, gateway men, handcutters, horsekeepers, helpers up, kibblers, masons, mechanics, onsetters, rolley men, screen boys, and stowers back.

The dominance of certain occupations amongst the migrants appears to reflect the job structure of the pit, although the hewers were slightly over-represented. The extent of the hewers' dominance was heightened by the pit being a new one, thus reducing the number of non-face workers as compared to some of the older pits.

The 694 miners studied gave 151 differing places of origin, including the U.S.A., Canada and South Africa. A breakdown of the places of origin of the migrants was as follows:

<u>Radius of Chopwell</u>	<u>Nos.Migrants</u>	<u>%age total</u>
Chopwell itself	76	10.95%
0-2 miles	71	10.23%
2-5 miles	153	22.04%
5-8 miles	53	7.63%
8-10 miles	54	7.64%
Above 10 miles in Co. Durham	109	15.70%
From Northumberland	98	14.12%

Areas elsewhere in Britain	32	4.76%
Outside Britain	7	1.01%
Areas not identified	41	5.92%

This material on the origins of the migrants indicates that two areas, Hamsterley, 6.3% and Garesfield, 6.2%, were the main contributors of men to the Chopwell pit, although neither experienced local pit closure in the period. Sherburn, over seventeen miles from Chopwell was the third highest contributor with 4.03%. This was undoubtedly due to the closure of two local pits, the Lady Durham pit in 1904, and the Sherburn Grange pit in 1910. The only other County Durham contributor of note was Spen, which provided 3.2% of the total.

Three Northumberland centres, Eltringham, Mickley and North Wallbottle provided 4.47% of the migrants. Cumberland provided 2.01% of the total, a high figure since most of those who arrived came from the west coast.

The main flow the migrants came from was the two to five mile radius of Chopwell, and few of these will have decided to walk to work. Surprisingly, the second largest contributor was the area in Durham over ten miles from the pit, predominantly south of Durham City. The third largest contributor was Northumberland, which in places was only two miles from Chopwell, although much of their coalfield was further North. These three areas contributed over half the total workforce of the Chopwell pit.

From this albeit very limited study we have been able to build up an appreciable picture of those people who participated in the growth of the colliery. The majority of those involved were not local people, they came from

farther than two miles away. We know something of their occupations, their marital status, their age and where they came from. We cannot be certain of the reasons for their migration. In some areas such as Sherburn it is apparent that local pit closures were the prime cause of the movement. In other areas the causes are not so clear; the majority of the migrants came in ones and twos from other collieries throughout the North East.

The attractions of Chopwell colliery were few. Wages were not especially high, and the unpopular three-shift system was worked. Mechanical cutters were used in the pit, which was fully electrified. The main appeal of the colliery was that it was relatively easy to gain employment and housing facilities were readily available. For some the well-known militancy of the local lodge may well have proved an attraction.

A large number of those who migrated into the area must have re-migrated. This is indicated by the fact that the colliery records indicate a turnover of almost exactly 40% of the workforce on average every year. The reasons for the high migration out of the area may well have been the size of the pit, the shifts, the local area, the militancy or even the type of people who came to Chopwell.

The problem concerning the value of this study is that as yet it stands in isolation. Only when further work has been done in the area will we be able to see how representative Chopwell is of the new collieries at the turn of the century. The subsequent history of the colliery suggests that it may well have been different from other collieries in some marked way in its early years.

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