

## CHAPTER III

### THE SPLIT

#### *I The Theory of Socialism*

THE Hyde Park Franchise meeting was held at the end of July. In August Morris was writing in a private letter

"The time which I have foreseen from the first seems to be upon us, and I don't see how I can avoid taking my share in the internal conflict which seems likely to rend the D F into two or more. More than two or three of us distrust Hyndman thoroughly. I have done my best to trust him, but cannot any longer. Practically it comes to a contest between him and me. I don't think intrigue or ambition are amongst my many faults, but here I am driven to thrusting myself forward and making a party within a party. However I say I foresaw it, and 'tis part of the day's work, but I begin to wish the day were over."<sup>1</sup>

Clearly Morris was already reconciled to the split which was to take place in December and had been thinking over the possibility for some time before.

Little can be understood of this first serious schism unless it is constantly born in mind that the movement was in its very earliest stages. On the most general questions of theory—"What is Socialism?"—it is true that there were few differences of opinion in 1884.

"Let us state in the briefest possible way what socialism means to some of us (1) That there are inequality and misery in the world, (2) that this social inequality, this misery of the many and this happiness of the few, are the necessary outcome of our social conditions, (3) that the essence of these social conditions is that the mass of the people, the working class, produce and distribute all commodities, while the minority of the people, the middle and upper classes, possess these commodities, (4) that this initial tyranny of the possessing class over the producing class is based on the present wage system and now maintains all other forms of oppression, such as that of monarchy, or clerical rule, or police despotism, (5) that this tyranny of the few over the many is only possible because the few have obtained possession of the land, the raw material, the machinery, the banks, the railways—in a word, of all the means of production and distribution of commodities. (6) lastly, that the approaching change in 'civilised' society will be a revolution. The two classes at present existing will be replaced by

<sup>1</sup> Mackail, II, pp 125-6

a single class consisting of the whole of the healthy and sane members of the community, possessing all the means of production and distribution in common "1

The authorship of the passage matters little (it is by Edward and Eleanor Marx-Aveling) since with varying emphasis, Hyndman, Morris (with an additional clause on the arts), and most active Socialists in 1884 would have accepted the definition. Apart from the Henry George-ites loitering on one fringe of the movement, and a handful of Anarchists on the other, all Socialists accepted a certain body of principles which to-day, after half a century of close theoretical controversy, would be known as "Marxist" but which at the time went under no other name than "Socialism" Only a minority of the Socialists, it is true, had read any of Marx's work, but the number included a majority of the effective leaders of the movement—among them Hyndman, Bax, Morris, Shaw,<sup>2</sup> Scheu, Banner, Harry Quelch, Joynes, Mahon, the Avelings, and some of the early Fabians and Christian Socialists<sup>3</sup> It is true that a challenge was developing among the very small group of Fabians, which first became explicit in October, 1884, with an article by the Rev P H Wicksteed in *To-day* criticizing Marx's theory of value But until 1886 the explicit differences between the Fabians and other Socialist groupings were less ones of theory than of "temperament and character" <sup>4</sup> "The Fabians", Shaw wrote to Scheu, in October, 1884,

<sup>1</sup> Edward and Eleanor Marx-Aveling, *Shelley's Socialism* Although privately printed in 1888, this simple exposition well sums up the generally agreed principles of 1884

<sup>2</sup> Shaw read *Capital* in the British Museum early in 1883 "From that hour I became a man with some business in the world" (Archibald Henderson, *Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet*, p 155)

<sup>3</sup> In June and July, 1884, the *Christian Socialist* published two brief and very favourable articles on Marx's life and views by R T Ely, Lecturer on Political Economy at Cornell University The July issue also included an editorial article on "Surplus Value", refuting some criticisms of the theory which had appeared in the *Quarterly Review*

<sup>4</sup> *The Fabian Society* , by G Bernard Shaw, Fabian Tract No 41 (1892) Shaw continues "When I myself, on the point of joining the Social-Democratic Federation, changed my mind and joined the Fabian instead, I was guided by no discoverable difference in program or principles, but solely by an instinctive feeling that the Fabian and not the Federation would attract the men of my own bias and intellectual habits "

"are a body of middle-class philanthropists who believe themselves to be Socialists I took advantage of this erroneous impression to induce them to adopt and print my manifesto It is, of course, meant for distribution among the middle-class I do not see why the tail of the middle-class, which constitutes a numerous and partly educated proletariat, should not be worked a little"<sup>1</sup>

This first Fabian Tract ("Why are the Many Poor?") was certainly an address by members of the middle class to the middle class but its tone was militant, and it was based on a strict class analysis of society

"You who live dainty and pleasant lives, reflect that your ease and luxury are paid for by the misery and want of others! Your superfluities are the parents of their poverty! Surely all humanity is not burnt out of you by the gold your fathers left you!"<sup>2</sup>

This tone was to be almost extinguished in the *Fabian Essays* of 1889.

When the split took place, both parties asserted their acceptance of Marxist theory "We uphold the purest doctrines of Scientific Socialism", Morris declared two weeks after the split, identifying his views with those of Marx and Engels<sup>3</sup> while Hyndman, on his side, made repeated claims to be the English inheritor of Marx's mantle. The progress of the Democratic Federation had been one of ever closer approximation to the acceptance (at any rate in the abstract) of Marxist theory *Socialism Made Plain*, the pamphlet of 1883, after setting forward a number of Radical demands, had gone forward to an outright attack on the capitalist class—

"the loan-mongers, the farmers, the mine-exploiters, the contractors, the middlemen, the factory lords who turn every advance in human knowledge, every further improvement in human dexterity, into an engine for accumulating out of other men's labour and for exacting more and yet more surplus value out of the wage-slaves they employ So long as the means of production are a monopoly of a class, so long must the labourers on the farm, in the mine, or in the factory sell themselves for a bare subsistence wage"

This analysis was repeated with increasing clarity and wealth of

<sup>1</sup> G B Shaw to Andreas Scheu, October 26th, 1884, Scheu Correspondence, Int Inst Soc Hist

<sup>2</sup> *Why are the Many Poor?*, Fabian Tract No 1

<sup>3</sup> Interview in the *Daily News*, January 8th, 1885

historical illustration during 1883 and 1884, in pronouncements of the Federation, articles in *Justice*, in Hyndman's *Historical Basis of Socialism in England*, and above all in the *Summary of the Principles of Socialism*, published in the spring of 1884 over both Morris's and Hyndman's names.<sup>1</sup> And the conclusion that flowed from this analysis was equally agreed and understood. "Whatever Socialism may lead to", Morris wrote to a young correspondent in July, 1884,

"our aim, to be always steadily kept in view, is, to obtain for the whole people, duly organized, the possession and control of all the means of production and exchange, destroying at the same time all national rivalries."<sup>2</sup>

Hyndman, Bax, Aveling, Shaw—all would have agreed.

## II Socialist Strategy

If there was agreement as to the general aims of Socialism, this does not mean that there were no theoretical differences in the early movement. On the contrary, whenever the strategy and tactics necessary for the achievement of Socialism or the exact form of Socialist institutions were discussed, it was usual to find that there were as many viewpoints as there were people in the room. The pioneers were, at this time, the merest amateurs at revolutionary politics. An understanding of Socialism had come to them with the force of an intellectual or emotional conversion: the poverty of East London, Gladstone's "damned little wars", the Irish question, the atrocities exhibited in the Royal Academy<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hyndman claimed the *Summary* as mainly his own work. See Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (1911), p. 357. Also Hyndman to Alf Mattison, August 16th, 1920. "I wrote it all with the exception of about a page and a half which William Morris wrote. Now which is that page and a half? Nobody has guessed this riddle yet" (Mattison Letterbook). But Hyndman is an untrustworthy witness. He claimed also the main authorship of the *Joint Manifesto of Socialist Bodies* (1893), a fact which Shaw denied (see p. 695). So we must leave Hyndman to keep his "riddle."

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> In the first two years of the propaganda, Morris wrote several articles on exhibitions of paintings, e.g. *Justice*, May 24th, 1884. "To a Socialist hoping for speedy changes in the basis of society, a visit to our picture exhibitions is not altogether lacking in encouragement, though to a serious artist who has not conceived hopes of revolution, it would surely be most discouraging. It is with a certain exultation that one walks through the wild jumble of inanity

—all seemed in a flash to fit into the same pattern, to be explained in a completely consistent manner by the central fact of the class struggle, the irreconcilable interests of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The next thing to do was to work for “the Revolution”. So clear and simple did the matter appear to some of the pioneers that it seemed only necessary to go to the street-corners and explain it to the workers, and they would be ready to rise. Britain was already losing her privileged economic position—only let the crisis deepen, and the thing would be done.

But how was it to be done? Only twelve years before, the workers of Paris had organized their own Government. For all the pioneers the Commune was a constant source of inspiration, “a torch lighting us on our way towards the complete emancipation of labour”<sup>1</sup> for some of them it seemed a pattern and forecast of the English Revolution. The half-expressed theories of insurrection based upon the Commune<sup>2</sup> gave birth to a feeling that “the Day” might well be more imminent than appearances suggested. “We are approaching the end of the century”, Hyndman remarked with dark suggestiveness at the conclusion of *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England* (1883)

“1889 is the centenary of the great French Revolution. The ideas of the enfranchisement of mankind from capitalist domination are everywhere abroad among the working men. In these days, when communication is so rapid and news spreads so fast, simultaneous action has a cumulative effect, economical, social, and political.”

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that clothes the walls of the Royal Academy to-day, when one thinks that the dominant class—who have deprived the people of art in their daily lives, can get for themselves nothing better than this for the satisfaction of their intellectual craving for beauty.”

<sup>1</sup> “The Socialist Platform—No. 4.” *A Short Account of the Commune of Paris* by E. Belfort Bax, Victor Dave and William Morris (Socialist League, 1886.)

<sup>2</sup> The dark suggestion that gunpowder had brought feudalism to an end, and that capitalism would not long survive the invention of dynamite, appeared in several early writings. In *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England* (1883), Hyndman hinted in the final paragraph “That there are different schools, some of which desire at once to resort to that destruction which modern explosives so readily lend themselves to, is undoubted.” *Summary of the Principles of Socialism* “Gunpowder helped to sweep away feudalism—now far stronger explosives are arrayed against capitalism, while the ideas of the times are as ripe with revolution as they were when feudalism fell.” Both passages are in a context which disclaim the use of force, but they were noticed by opponent and supporter alike.

For the pioneers such words were full of emotive overtones—the international proletarian revolt might begin at any point and spread throughout the world

"In all probability England will go first—will give the signal, though she is at present so backward Germany with her 700,000 Socialists is pretty nearly ready France, sick of her republic of stock-jobbers and pirates, is nearly as far on Austria is ready any moment America is finding out that mere radicalism is bringing her into a *cul de sac* Everywhere the tale is the same The old party politics are being openly jeered at I have heard the G O M mentioned in crowded meetings of working men without a cheer being raised for him, over and over again within the last month You may be sure the thing is moving, though of course I make no prophecies as to the beginning of the end ."<sup>1</sup>

The author is William Morris, and the date is November, 1884<sup>1</sup>

But there was a gap between the Paris Communards of 1871 and the London Radical working men, disgusted with Gladstone's parliamentary compromise with the Tories on the Reform Act of 1884 Some early Socialist writings give point to Shaw's criticism of the "enthusiasts who mistake their own emotions for public movements"<sup>2</sup> The problem for the pioneers was that of bridging the gap between their new-found faith and the political movements of the masses But about the real lives and aspirations of the workers many of them knew little to Joynes the workers were the heroes and martyrs of Freiligrath's songs to Bax they were

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. 217 Morris is writing to his old acquaintance, William Allingham The letter is a good deal more "alarmist" than was usual for him, it is possible that there was a touch of mischief in it, and Morris wanted to make Allingham's—and possibly Tennyson's—flesh creep The contents of the letter were duly discussed by Allingham with the Poet Laureate

"Tennyson He's gone crazy"

"I said I agreed with many of Morris's notions Labour does not get its fair share

"T There's brain labour as well as hand labour

"W A And there are many who get money without any labour The question, how to hinder money from accumulating into lumps, is a puzzling one

"T You must let a man leave money to his children I was once in a coffee-shop in the Westminster Road at 4 o'clock in the morning A man was raging 'Why has so-and-so a hundred pounds, and I haven't a shilling?' I said to him, 'If your father had left you £100 you wouldn't give it away to somebody else' He hadn't a word to answer I knew he hadn't" (W Allingham, *A Diary*, p. 339)

<sup>2</sup> Fabian Tract No. 41

the antithesis to the bourgeois thesis to Aveling they were (at least for a brief period) the source from which complex algebraical equations illustrating surplus value could be drawn to Shaw they were one part heroic dynamitard, and three parts duffers and dupes to Hyndman they were the raw material of Revolution who—never quite conscious agents of history themselves—would under the leadership of himself and his few trusted companions be the dark force which would bring down Cabinets to Morris they were the artisans of Merton Abbey, good fellows enough, who had only to be got to listen to reason—until the end of 1884 he had never even entered a house in the slums of the East End. All these are caricatures, of course but, nevertheless, all these attitudes were present to some degree And because this was a movement of ideas and not of the masses, one error in particular was prevalent in the early days The pioneers were impatient They were looking for a short cut And precisely because the one thing they held in common was a theory, it seemed reasonable to push this theory above all else

The moment they were awaiting, the revolutionary moment, was the time when the two classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat, would stand opposed to each other, face to face Any policy which tended to delay this moment was one which gave assistance to the enemy Even trade unions, in Hyndman's view, served only to mask the antagonism of classes

"Trade Unionists are, all told, but a small fraction of the total working population They constitute, in fact, an aristocracy of labour who, in view of the bitter struggle now drawing nearer and nearer, cannot be said to be other than a hindrance to that complete organisation of the proletariat which alone can obtain for the workers their proper control over their own labour"<sup>1</sup>

Limited reforms were looked upon by most Socialists in 1884 with intense distrust. On the one hand they were delusory a simplification of economic theory, the "iron law of wages", led to the belief that whatever concessions the workers won they must inevitably lose in one form or another, unless they were wrung from one section of the workers at the expense of another<sup>2</sup> On

<sup>1</sup> Hyndman, *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England*, p. 287

<sup>2</sup> See article by Hyndman, "The Iron Law of Wages", *Justice*, March 15th, 1884

the other hand they were "palliatives"—sops to the workers, bribes to buy off revolution. What did the Irish Question matter? Or the abolition of the House of Lords? Or the struggle for the Eight-hour Day? "The Revolution" would answer all.

The issue of "palliatives" provoked some of the first dissension within the movement. Several members of the Council, including Champion and (later) Aveling, held that the "Stepping Stones" adopted in 1882 (see p. 344) should serve as the centre of an agitation, which would bring the Socialists into contact with the Radicals, and educate the workers in Socialist ideas. Others, like Scheu and Joseph Lane of the Labour Emancipation League (who joined the Council in August, 1884) rejected them outright as a mere trifling with the people.<sup>1</sup> The attitude to this question of both Morris and Hyndman was (for different reasons) ambiguous.

The ambiguity of Morris's attitude arose primarily from confusion. In his public lectures of 1884 he was taking pains to hammer home the central lesson that no partial reforms whatsoever could serve as a *substitute* for Socialism.

"What can give us the day-spring of a new hope? What, save general revolt against the tyranny of commercial war? The palliatives over which many worthy people are buying themselves now are useless because they are but unorganized partial revolts against a vast wide-spreading grasping organization which will, with the unconscious instinct of a plant, meet every attempt at bettering the condition of the people with an attack on a fresh side, new machines, new markets, wholesale emigration, the revival of grovelling superstitions, preachments of thrift to lack-alls, of temperance to the wretched, such things

<sup>1</sup> In an article in *Commonweal* shortly after the split, Lane denounced the "stepping stones" of the "Democrats." Of the Eight-hour Day "We, as Socialists, of course condemn long hours, but the essential thing we condemn is the capitalist making a profit out of our labour at all. It is the whole wages system we contend against." School feeding "If children are entitled to one free meal, they are entitled to all their meals free. We hold that they should be fed, clothed, sheltered and educated free by the community." Of workers' dwellings "With the overthrow of the competitive system large towns will disappear" (Some comfort, this, to those in the slums.) Of cumulative taxation of large incomes "Under a proper system of society we should have no large incomes." In conclusion "It is possible that the governing classes might make a show of legislating in the direction of these palliatives, their doing so would certainly put off the revolution. True Socialists should not take up such catch cries. There is no half-way house in the matter." (May, 1885)



as these will baffle at every turn all partial revolts against the monster we of the middle classes have created for our own undoing"<sup>1</sup>

Several of the demands of the S D F—in particular that for decent housing for the workers—lay very close to Morris's heart but in a letter to Bruce Glasier in 1888, he referred to "the 'stepping stones' of the S D F, *which I always disagreed with* . . . since I don't believe in their efficacy"<sup>2</sup> As early as August, 1883, Morris was writing to "Georgie" Burne-Jones

"Small as our body is, we are not without dissensions in it Some of the more ardent disciples look upon Hyndman as too opportunist, and there is truth in that, he is sanguine of speedy change happening somehow, and is inclined to intrigue and the making of a party, towards which end compromise is needed, and the carrying of people who don't really agree with us as far as they will go I think the aim of Socialists should be the founding of a religion, towards which end compromise is no use, and we only want to have those with us who will be with us to the end"<sup>3</sup>

In this dissension, he continued, "I find myself drifting into the disgraceful position of a moderator and patcher up, which is much against my inclination" In January, 1884, he was writing to his daughter, Jenny

"We had a good quarrel last night telling each other our minds pretty plainly . . . the real subject in dispute was really whether or no we could drive the matter by means of supporting the parliamentary programme of the Radicals of course I say no Mr Scheu made an excellent speech on my side"<sup>4</sup>

But both these passages refer rather to interventions in the current political scene than to the Federation's own demands, of one of which, the Eight-hour Day, Morris was writing with some enthusiasm in July—"the most important thing to press upon the notice of the people . . . it is of all our stepping stones at once the most possible to carry within a reasonable time, and the most important . . . all the more so because it would at once become an international affair"<sup>5</sup> In November his position was reversed at last "the thing is moving"

"Like enough it will come with attempts at palliatives tubs to the whale cast out first by one party then the other every one of which we

<sup>1</sup> "Art and Socialism", *Works*, Vol XXIII, p 208

<sup>2</sup> Glasier, *op cit*, p 192

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, p 181

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 193

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p 205

shall take without misgiving, for the better the condition of the working class grows, the more capable they will be of effecting a revolution Starvelings can only riot "

But then, these attempts would be bound to fail good housing—"a bourgeois government cannot deal with it" The Eight-hour Day "is good as a cry, but again how can a bourgeois government ever think of that?"<sup>1</sup>

A striking example of this confusion was found in the actions of Morris's own branch of the Federation.<sup>2</sup> In the latter half of 1884—and in the next year or two—the questions of the Disestablishment of the Church and of Irish Home Rule were in the forefront of Radical agitation the Federation—with Morris's wholehearted support—had expressed its strong sympathy with the cause of Irish independence, and taken some part in the agitation on the other hand, when the two demands were included in the Federation's official *programme* Morris regarded them as "ineptitudes" His branch at Hammersmith promptly resolved that any statement by the S D F on these two questions was "superfluous" the general feeling of the meeting being that details of this kind were redundant.<sup>3</sup> At exactly the same time an agitation broke out among the Hammersmith Costermongers, who were threatened by the Board of Works with eviction from their kerbstone market site the Hammersmith Branch came to their aid, Morris wrote an eloquent article for *Justice* on their claims, and reported to Scheu, "we, the S D F have been helping them and gaining credit and recruits."<sup>4</sup> If only Morris had taken to heart the lesson of the Hammersmith Costermongers—to support the workers in their struggle for limited ends, and to show them thereby that (in his own words)

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. 217

<sup>2</sup> The Hammersmith Branch of the Democratic Federation was formed on June 14th, 1884. It started with eleven members, one of whom—a Ruskinite—soon resigned. Thereafter the Committee met either once or twice a week, and lectures were held either fortnightly or weekly. Morris was present at 21 of the 27 meetings up to the end of the year and his absences were probably all to be accounted for by "duty." Twenty-nine new members were won during the same period. Emery Walker was the Secretary of the Branch (Minutes of Hammersmith S D F, Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 45891.)

<sup>3</sup> Morris to Scheu, *Letters*, p. 211. Hammersmith Minutes, September 24th, 1884.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, p. 212.

"we are striving to make them gain a better living for themselves—themselves now living, not the generations a thousand years to come"<sup>1</sup>—then many of the wasteful errors of the next few years might have been avoided

If Morris's attitude was confused, Hyndman's was ambiguous for another reason. On the one hand, Hyndman was from the outset one of the most uncompromising and doctrinaire of the Federation's speakers. Morris deplored his "perpetual sneers at, and abuse of the radicals, who, deluded as we must think them, are after all the men from whom our recruits must come"<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand (in the view of his opponents) Hyndman's attitude to political activity was deeply influenced by the agitations of Bradlaugh and even of Dr Kenealy in the extraordinary "Tichbourne Case" in the 1870s. "He had the intention", recalled Scheu, "as he often put it unceremoniously, of bringing down the Government by the creation of a democratic workers' party, and forcing it [the Government] by threats to carry out his wishes"<sup>3</sup>. Such an intention was consistent with a half-concealed feeling of contempt for the workers. At one moment he set forward the "palliatives" as a cry to rally discontent; at another he spoke with utter contempt of such half-measures. The "stepping stones" were the carrot for the donkey and the donkey was the people. The most striking illustrations of the truth of these criticisms are to be found in Hyndman's attitude to the unemployed agitation and the Eight-hour Question *after* the split but even before it was becoming apparent. Hyndman rarely gave the impression of wanting to conduct a serious and sustained fight for any of the "stepping stones" possibly, like Morris, he had no faith that the workers could ever win them this side of Socialism. But they—or any other issue which arose in the political scene—would serve for a useful temporary peg on which to hang an agitation, to advertise the Federation and himself not with the intention of using it for the education of the workers in Socialism, but in order to build up a loyal mass following who could be called upon when the next agitation arose. Already he had visions of

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. 206

<sup>2</sup> Morris to Thompson, *Letters*, p. 228. Morris himself had written several appeals to the Radicals in *Justice* in 1884.

<sup>3</sup> Scheu, *op cit*, Part III, Ch. V.

entering the field like the Irish party of holding both political parties to ransom with his following. For such a policy—which implied at the outset an underestimation of the people's intelligence—it was necessary that there should be some figurehead—a Bradlaugh or a Parnell and who was more suited for this than he, Hyndman himself? “*I am sure that the split was unavoidable*”, Morris wrote to Joy nes on Christmas Day, 1884.

“Hyndman can accept only one position in such a body as the S D F, that of master. You must not suppose that this is a matter of mere personal likes and dislikes: the cause lies much deeper than that. H has been acting throughout (to my mind) as a politician determined to push his own advantage (if you please along with that of the party) always on the look out for anything which could advertise the party he is supposed to lead. His aim has been to make the movement seem big, to frighten the powers that be with a turnip bogie which perhaps he almost believes in himself. Hence all that insane talk of immediate forcible revolution, when he knows that the workers in England are not even touched by the movement, hence the founding of branches which melt away into mere names, the neglect of organization for fruitless agitation, and, worst of all, hence discreditable intrigue and sowing of suspicion among those who are working for the party. Amidst such elements as this I cannot and will not work.”<sup>1</sup>

And one of the most serious results of the consequent split was that Morris in disgust at Hyndman's tactics was driven into the impossible “purism” which coloured his outlook for the next five years.

### III Dissension Begins

Throughout the disputes which preceded the split, one point became clear time and again: Hyndman's critics were convinced that he was guilty of dictatorial behaviour in all the Federation's affairs. On June 22nd, 1884, Engels wrote to Kautsky:

“Hyndman is thinking to *buy up* all the little movement here. Himself a rich man, and in addition having at his disposal resources supplied by the very rich artist-enthusiast but untalented politician Morris—he wants to be the sole master. Hyndman is a skilful and good business man, but a petty and hard-faced John Bull, possessing a vanity considerably in excess of his talent and natural gifts.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> May Morris, II, p. 590

<sup>2</sup> *Labour Monthly*, September, 1933. The letter continues: “Bax and Aveling have most excellent intentions, but everything has gone to pieces, and those literateurs alone cannot do anything. The masses still will not follow them.”

Hyndman is "a *pushful* party chief a clever fellow" he had written earlier in the year.<sup>1</sup> Morris, recalling the events which led up to the breach, wrote to his friend Carruthers<sup>2</sup> on December 28th, 1884

"The unfortunate spirit of political ambition has led Mr Hyndman to attempt to carry on beyond the due period of leading-strings the absolute authority which at first might have been desirable in the Federation whose founder he certainly was when I first knew of the Fed it really almost consisted of Mr H and a few agents of his working under his directions but then independent men came into it who worked very heartily in the cause, and who could not submit to be under his despotism Mr H I think ought to have shown his devotion to the cause at this point by becoming simply an influential member of the Council but it would seem as if he could take no place in the organization save that of master"<sup>3</sup>

In the summer of 1884 the two factions within the Executive Council began to crystallize. Prominent in opposition to Hyndman was Andreas Scheu, who had come into collision with Hyndman's submerged Jingoism—the same hostility to foreign influence within the movement which had led to his suppression of acknowledgement to Marx in *England for All*. "On every possible occasion", Scheu recalled, "Hyndman . . . related how . . . Gladstone mocked at the appeal of the . . . Federation because it contained the name of a foreigner (Andreas Scheu), which proved that the basic ideas of the social-democratic propaganda could not be wholly home-grown" On the Executive Hyndman was visibly impatient at each intervention by Scheu, who may (perhaps) have regarded the young British movement with an air of patronage On one occasion, he interrupted Scheu to explain "that everything Marx and Lassalle had said had already been said previously by English economists"<sup>4</sup> Since Scheu, on his side, was not devoid of vanity, a bitter feud grew up between

<sup>1</sup> *Labour Monthly* Also, "Bax is fine, but still rather green, Aveling good, but too busy to swot up economics—a subject entirely foreign to him"

<sup>2</sup> John Carruthers, a constructional engineer, and author of *Commercial and Communal Economy* (1883) joined the Hammersmith Branch of the S D F on October 22nd, 1884 (Minutes) On his application Morris wrote to Scheu "A certain Carruthers joined us, a steady-going man, I think, and not at all likely to belong to the paddle-your-own-canoe sort" (*Letters*, p 215) For further details of Carruthers, see p 896

<sup>3</sup> May Morris, II, p. 593

<sup>4</sup> Scheu, *op cit*, Part III, Ch V.

the two men, in which Morris's sympathies were drawn to the Austrian's side<sup>1</sup> Scheu, in turn, pressed Morris forward to assume a position of leadership in opposition to Hyndman

Morris's instinct at first was to patch up the division on the Executive, and get on with the real work "I had Bax here last night", he wrote to Scheu (who left London for Edinburgh early in July, 1884), "and begged him to be more 'politic' "

"To be 'politic' and not able to say exactly what one thinks is a beastly curse, and makes one hate the infernal bourgeois more for driving one to such stupidity in carrying on the war against him but I cannot yet forgo the hope of our forming a Socialist *party* which shall begin to act in our own time, instead of a mere theoretical association in a private room with no hope but that of gradually permeating cultivated people with our aspirations Banner is to come to me on Saturday I want to encourage him and also keep him from running amuck ."<sup>2</sup>

Bax and Banner were clearly highly restive under Hyndman's leadership In response to a further plea from Scheu, Morris wrote on July 18th

"As for myself and my position in the movement, I wish to write as frankly and seriously as I can if I have any influence amongst our party it is because I am supposed to be straight and not to be ambitious and feel sure that any appearance of pushing myself forward would injure my influence, such as it is *very much*, therefore I will not secede for any mere matter of *tactics* but if I find myself opposed on a matter of principle, such as a French war, I will secede if I am driven to it and in that case of course will join any men if they be only two or three, or only yourself to push the real cause Meantime I know enough of myself to be sure that I am not fit for the rudder, at least not yet, but I promise to take my due share in all matters, and steadily to oppose all jingo business, but, if I can, with coolness, or I shall be bowled over, since I have not got hold yet of the strings that tie us to the working-class members, nor have I read as I should have Also my habits are quiet and studious and if I am too much worried by 'politics', i.e. intrigue, I shall be no use to the cause as a writer If in the long run I am pushed into a position of more importance, I will not refuse it from mere laziness or softness ."<sup>3</sup>

If Engels was to complain in his letters during the next two years at "these muddle-headed people [who] want to lead the English

<sup>1</sup> See Morris to Thompson, January 1st, 1885, where he complains of Hyndman's "attacks on foreigners as foreigners or at least sneers at them" (*Letters*, p. 228)

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, p. 202

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 203-4.

working class",<sup>1</sup> he certainly had abundant justification: but Morris, for his part, knew well that he was an "untalented politician" "What we want is real leaders themselves working men, and content to be so till classes are abolished", he had himself written in August, 1883

But Engels—although he could see more clearly than anyone the weakness and errors of the Federation—could see no way out for the moment "When the men are sorted out a little, things will be better", he wrote and, again, after recounting to Kautsky on July 19th some of Hyndman's intrigues, he concluded "I hope that the end of this *first* phase of the movement is not far off, it is becoming terribly dreary" Bax and Aveling "have most excellent intentions", but on their own "cannot do anything" The mass movement, which he was confident would sort the men out, by dispelling abstract disputes and driving matters of personality into the background, was still to come

#### IV *The Executive and "Justice"*

In July matters gathered rapidly to a head During the previous two years Joseph Lane and the Labour Emancipation League had continued their agitation in the East End, but, owing in part to their mistrust of Hyndman, and in part to their dislike of coming in "under discipline",<sup>2</sup> they had refused to affiliate to the Democratic Federation It was agreed, however, that the L.E.L. should send delegates to the Annual Conference of the Federation, at the beginning of August, with a view to affiliation Joseph Lane, together with Scheu, spent the night before the Conference at Morris's house and, from this time, he was for several years to exercise some influence over Morris's political views.<sup>3</sup>

The Conference took several steps of great importance First, the Federation became known henceforward as the Social-Democratic Federation (S.D.F.), with an explicitly Socialist programme the attempt to keep the organization partly within

<sup>1</sup> Engels to Sorge, April 29th, 1886, *Labour Monthly*, November, 1933

<sup>2</sup> Morris to Scheu, July 18th, 1884, Scheu Correspondence, Int Inst Soc Hist

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Lane to Ambrose Barker, 1912, Nettlau MSS, Int Inst Soc Hist

the extreme "left" of the Radical movement was finally abandoned. The Object of the S D F was declared to be

"The Socialization of the Means of Production, Distribution, and Exchange to be controlled by a Democratic State in the interests of the entire community, and the complete Emancipation of Labour from the domination of Capitalism and Landlordism, with the establishment of Social and Economic Equality between the Sexes "

For its Programme it took over, almost without alteration (and as the price of affiliation), five of the first six points of the Programme of the L E L (equal direct adult suffrage "direct legislation by the people" a National Citizen Army in place of a Standing Army—the people to decide on Peace or War free secular education, and free administration of Justice), while its final two points (see p 331) were adopted in a simplified form.

Next, it was resolved unanimously not to fight any parliamentary elections,<sup>1</sup> a certain ambiguity of wording disguising that here there was already growing a serious division of principle among the members of the Federation. While the issue of parliamentary action was not one of the actual occasions for the split in five months' time, it was certainly in the background during this period. A general election was thought to be imminent, should a deadlock be reached between Lords and Commons on the Third Reform Act. Should the Act pass into law, a very large section of the population would receive the vote for the first time, and Hyndman was seriously considering the possibility of the S D F making a vigorous entry into the election. If this view was not pressed at the Annual Conference, it was owing to the Federation's evident unpreparedness for an election contest, and not (as the anti-parliamentarians later suggested) owing to any agreed opposition in principle among members of the Federation's Executive to parliamentary action.

A third step of some importance was taken when Hyndman was displaced as President of the S D F. In the view of Lane and Scheu, a "truly democratic party" would have no personal President at all, the Executive Council ("a chosen elite") electing a different Chairman at each session. "Unfortunately" (but not surprisingly) "Hyndman felt this opinion was directed against himself, and opposed it with all the energy of wounded pride"

<sup>1</sup> *Justice*, August 9th, 1884



Finding that feeling was running against him, he nominated Morris for his place, but Morris declined

"I do not know", he said, "whether I have the necessary qualities for such a post, but if, as I believe, I do not possess them, then you would be burdened with a president who could not do his job right, and you would not be able to rid yourself of me for fear of offending me" <sup>1</sup>

Despite an unsuccessful attempt by Hyndman's supporters to reinstate him at the next Executive meeting,<sup>2</sup> it seemed that Hyndman's opportunities for dictatorship were gone

Finally, the opposition to Hyndman on the Executive Committee was strengthened by the election of Joseph Lane and (more important) of Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling (see p 428 f). For several weeks it appeared that Hyndman would no longer assert his old dominance.<sup>3</sup> But the presence on the Executive of the last two brought renewed bitterness. Hyndman regarded them as the emissaries of Engels (the "foreign" influence again), and seems also to have been jealous of Aveling's evident ability, which challenged his position as Theoretician of the movement. Aveling, a Vice-President, and leading publicist of the National Secular Society, had come under bitter attack from his old colleagues when, shortly after the Bradlaugh-Hyndman Debate, he declared for the Socialist side. His step of joining the Federation was taken at the same time as he and Eleanor Marx decided to live together, despite the fact that their marriage could not be made "legal" (see p 432). His looseness in money affairs (later to become notorious) made it possible for Bradlaugh to accuse him of "irregularities" with regard to the accounts of the N.S.S. (an accusation which, it seems, Bradlaugh could not substantiate)<sup>4</sup> and to demand his expulsion as Vice-President of the Society. Aveling then resigned from the N.S.S., whereupon

<sup>1</sup> Scheu, *op cit*, Part III, Ch VI

<sup>2</sup> See Morris to Scheu, August 13th, 1884, *Letters*, pp 210-1. It appears from the MS (Scheu Correspondence, Int Inst Soc Hist) that "Mrs A" (p 211) should read "Mrs. H" (i.e. Mrs Hyndman)

<sup>3</sup> Morris to Scheu, August 28th, 1884 (*Letters*, p 212) "A row and secessions we may have, but I think that the days of personal dictation are over"

<sup>4</sup> Morris to Scheu, September 8th, 1884, and September 13th, 1884. Morris thought it unlikely that Bradlaugh "in his character of Solicitor's clerk" would have brought a completely groundless charge against Aveling (Scheu Correspondence, Int Inst Soc Hist)

Hyndman demanded his resignation from the Executive of the S D F as well "I want to keep Aveling if we can", Morris wrote to Scheu on September 8th "The worst of it is that Aveling is much disliked by many of our best men, Lane for instance . ." And, a week later, "Aveling is undoubtedly a man of great capacity, and can use it too"<sup>1</sup> The row blew over, once Aveling had made a public disclaimer of Bradlaugh's charges, but the bitterness remained On both sides there were men totally incapable, or, at the best, inexperienced in subordinating their personal feelings in the interests of unity The dispute, even, began to exercise a fascination of its own, to the expense of serious business. On one side, Lane and (despite the disclaimers in his own *Reminiscences*) Bax were particularly quarrelsome<sup>2</sup> on the other, Hyndman appeared determined to create bad blood with the Avelings.

By October the atmosphere at Council Meetings was becoming intolerable "Altogether matters are going very badly with them", Engels wrote to Kautsky on October 20th.

"Last Tuesday Madame Lafargue was present at a meeting of the Council of the S D F, they were squabbling over some trifle, but so furiously that the words 'damned liars' were scattered freely about"

The Council had become, in the words of Morris, "quite honey-combed with distrust and jealousies".<sup>3</sup> Six days later Shaw sent a graphic account to Scheu of the state of the S D F Executive, as he saw it from outside Ever since Hyndman's attempt to "elbow" Aveling off it ("Aveling being a man to be thrown out of the window or shaken hands with cordially, as the case might be, but not such a fool as to let himself be elbowed out") the bad blood had continued in being, between "the Marx-Aveling party and the Hyndman party" Aveling, in Shaw's view, was sounder than Hyndman, since he placed great emphasis on the need for political education in the movement, while Hyndman would only ply the membership with "stimulants"

<sup>1</sup> Morris to Scheu, September 8th, 1884, and September 13th, 1884

<sup>2</sup> Morris to Scheu, September 28th, 1884, Scheu Correspondence, Int. Inst. Soc. Hist. "Bax is in a very rash state at present—wants to hurry on a quarrel, which I disagree with"

<sup>3</sup> Morris to Joyes, December 25th, 1884, May Morris, II, pp. 588-9

"What we have got at Palace Chambers now is a great deal of agitating, very little organizing (if any), no educating, and vague speculations as to the world turning upside down in the course of a fortnight or so Aveling is on for educating, but he is hard up, heavily handicapped by his old associations and his defiance of Mrs Grundy in the matter of Eleanor Marx, personally not a favourite with the world at large, and quite excluded from all influence in the management of Justice"<sup>1</sup>

Morris (it seemed to him) "wanders along between Hyndman and Aveling rather uncertainly" and this may perhaps be taken as a tribute to the neutrality which Morris was still seeking to preserve in all but his private letters to Scheu

Striking confirmation both of Hyndman's arbitrary tendencies and of the impossible situation on the Council can be found in two letters written by Hyndman to Morris at this time in connection with the control of *Justice* Started with Carpenter's money, and financed largely by Morris,<sup>2</sup> the paper was in the hands of Hyndman as Editor, and under his sole control "All this time", wrote Morris, there were "sorenesses against the conduct of the paper which were irritating the quarrel, and the question was stirred as to the control of the executive over it H was determined to resist it"<sup>3</sup> "It is, of course, impossible"—he wrote to Morris on November 27th—"to recognize any right on the part of the present Executive to claim control over a journal which has been made what it is by the extraordinary efforts of a few persons" Indeed, rather than that this should happen—Hyndman implied—it would be better that the paper should be closed altogether Neither Carpenter nor Morris should subsidize it longer Hyndman himself could no longer give the same time to it—"the toil and the anxiety has, as you know, been very severe indeed for me" Should the paper cease publication,

"We can retire with flying colours But I am sure you would not wish that a paper which has stood so high and stands so high to-day should be handed over to a body of men who could certainly not, as a body, handle it, or be placed in the hands of others who might use its reputation to further their own ends"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G B Shaw to Scheu, October 26th, 1884, Scheu Correspondence, Int Inst Soc Hist

<sup>2</sup> See Annual Report in *Justice*, August 9th, 1884

<sup>3</sup> May Morris, II, p 588, Morris to Joyes

<sup>4</sup> Brit Mus Add MSS 45345

This "body of men" was Hyndman's own Executive! Morris appears in reply to have suggested some compromise. the Executive should have at least some right of veto over the material printed Hyndman, replying on December 8th, was quite specific

"Dear Morris,

"I think I made the position of myself and those who have worked *Justice* into its present proud position quite plain this morning Neither I nor they intend to submit to the 'control' of the Executive Committee of the S D F in regard to what goes into the paper Such a system has always meant and must always mean ruin, and it is worth notice that the change is specially wanted by the very persons—Dr Aveling and Mrs Aveling—who, owing to Bax's disastrous weakness, ruined *To-day* by their prejudices and advertising puffery of themselves<sup>1</sup> Joyes is well aware of that I am sure—knows it to his cost in fact But the best Council possible cannot manage a journal such as *Justice* "

Hyndman was ready to consider one concession the Committee might "say, if they wish" if they disagreed with an edition He would even be prepared to hand over the Editorship to any man whose honesty and competence "we all trust". or to stop the paper. or to continue it as it was BUT—he swept to his rhetorical conclusion

"Without a spark of personal feeling in the matter, I cannot consent to sacrifice my own work and that of others (including yourself ) to what is a wholly unworkable and hopeless arrangement, suggested by people who have never done the paper any good whatever

"Yours very truly,

"H M Hyndman"<sup>2</sup>

So that was that! Clearly Hyndman felt no love for Bax or Aveling. Equally clearly he had no time for his own Executive and (for some reason which is by no means clear) regarded *Justice* almost as personal property On the evidence of these two letters alone the charges against him can be sustained

<sup>1</sup> See Engels' opinion (to Kautsky) June 22nd, 1884 "Hyndman has done everything possible to ruin *To-day* Bax, who put money into it, has erred in his calculations and will quickly be ruined" Eleanor Marx had contributed notes on the international movement to the early numbers, and Aveling two rather poor one-act "curtain-raisers" Possibly this is what Hyndman meant by "advertising puffery"

<sup>2</sup> Brit Mus Add MSS 45345

Whoever it was that was shouting "damned liars" in the Executive, it was not—despite the immediate picture brought to mind—William Morris. Even at this point he had hopes of acting the part of peace-maker. There was one matter he meant to fight, it is true. A member of the Executive, W J Clark, had made charges of self-seeking against Hyndman in conversation with other Council members and Hyndman had moved his expulsion. Morris thought Clark had behaved foolishly in talking so freely but he was not the only one guilty of factionalism "certainly Messrs Frost, Champion and Hyndman had"—"probably we all had".<sup>1</sup> Yet this need not necessarily split the Federation. On the question of *Justice*, Morris was prepared to put it off to the next Annual Conference.<sup>2</sup> He even managed to force a grin at Hyndman, who "can't help it, you know. I really begin to think he *will* be Prime Minister before he dies"<sup>3</sup>. But at this critical stage in the quarrel—in the second week of December—he paid a visit to Scotland which brought him back in a towering rage, and for the next two weeks the British Socialist movement was at war within itself.

#### V. *The Scottish Land and Labour League*

The S.D.F. was in reality a London organization. Morris told Engels at the time of the split that the entire London strength was less than 400, and there were not 100 supporters in the provinces.<sup>4</sup> Genuine branches existed at Battersea (where John Burns was hard at work), Clerkenwell, Marylebone (where Lane and his friends had done hard pioneering), Croydon, Tottenham, Hammersmith—perhaps at one or two other centres. The Westminster branch enrolled the unattached. At Birmingham John Sketchley was Secretary of a group. At Blackburn something still survived from the agitation of the previous year. At Bristol something was stirring. At one or two other centres where Hyndman or Morris had lectured, a few copies of *Justice* were sold and nuclei were forming. Clearly if the movement was to advance, and make any contact with the great centres of industry, hard

<sup>1</sup> Morris to R. Thompson, *Letters*, p. 226

<sup>2</sup> Morris to Joyes, *May Morris*, II, p. 589

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, p. 218

<sup>4</sup> Engels to Bernstein, December 29th, 1884

work had to be done in the provinces, and the Federation must lose its London bias. In particular, the Scottish workers must be brought into the movement.

The first stirrings in Scotland showed themselves, not in Glasgow, but in Edinburgh. This may have been in part accidental. Andreas Scheu had worked there at the turn of the decade, and had set afoot discussions on Socialism among the Secularists and some Radicals. He had met there Robert Banner, the book-binder, who had become an enthusiastic convert, and who had later followed him to London. When Scheu returned to Edinburgh in July, 1884, he found a small but vigorous propaganda was already under way. The leading spirit was a very young engineer, John Lincoln Mahon, of Irish stock. However erratic Mahon might later prove to be, he gave way to no one in his early fervour. By June, 1884, he had already thrown up his job and launched an ambitious venture—"The Social Reform Publishing Company"—for the supply of advanced Social Literature,<sup>1</sup> which by the end of August had ended in failure.<sup>2</sup> Thenceforth he became, for nearly ten years, a floating agitator in the movement.

From Mahon Scheu learned that the S D F "as an organization did not stand a chance in Scotland"<sup>3</sup> There, indeed, a mass agitation was already in being: its centre not on the Clyde, but in the barren Western Highlands and the Isle of Skye. The forcible depopulation of the Highlands (for the benefit of Scottish lairds and English sportsmen) had not ended with the "Clearances"—less spectacular, but quite as callous and tyrannical, they had continued throughout the century, until the crofters were driven to the point of despair. In 1882 the crofters in Skye were goaded into virtual revolt, and the spark set the whole Highlands aflame.<sup>4</sup> The crofters began to organize in earnest. In a noble and moving appeal they addressed the workers of the Lowlands and of England:

"Brothers and sisters of the South, we beg you to pull us out of the mire and Slough of Despond, and help us to show the lawyers, the

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Socialist*, June, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> Scheu, *op cit*, Part III, Ch. V.

<sup>4</sup> See Alexander Mackenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances* (1883), pp. 407-517.

sheriffs, and Lord Advocate, who is the king of lawyer-eaten Scotland, that the God we worship in common with you intended the soil to provide for the necessities of the many and of the poor, and not to serve as a pleasure-ground for the few and of the rich

"May God save the people in future from Lords, Lawyers, and Liars, and all other such evildoers and unlawful persons who prevent just laws being made for the poor"

The appeal was not ignored. Many of the Lowland workers were still close to their Highland origins: moreover, Henry George's theories were at that very time coming into the forefront of the attention of the politically-conscious Radicals. A Georgeite Scottish Land Restoration League was formed, whose aim was "to Restore the Soil of Scotland to the people for whom it was intended, and to remove this great shame and crime from the land we love". On its first Executive were several who later became prominent in the Socialist movement, including Shaw Maxwell, and a young architectural draughtsman, John Bruce Glasier (himself the son of an island crofter), who was to become a leading Socialist propagandist in Glasgow. The League at once became a more formidable force than its English associate. At the Glasgow Franchise Demonstration of September 6th, several thousand of the processionists wore the cards of the League in their hats. 85,000 leaflets and pamphlets were distributed ("the total weight of which was over 10 cwt.")<sup>1</sup> At the General Election next year five League candidates were put up in the Clyde area, Shaw Maxwell polling over 1,000 votes in Blackfriars, Glasgow; while Dr. G. B. Clark (at one time a member of the First International) was elected as a crofter's candidate in Caithness. Clearly this was no paper agitation: something serious was afoot.

In these circumstances, Scheu and Mahon took the decision not to form an Edinburgh Branch of the S D F, but to form a native organization, the "Scottish Land and Labour League", which could affiliate to the Federation. Morris did not like the new name at first, and foresaw trouble. "It will be looked on here as a secession I am afraid, and whatever may be the discouragements I don't like to think that we have done nothing in London, and must throw the whole thing to the dogs, and begin again."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See account in *The Christian Socialist*, October, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> Morris to Scheu, July 18th, 1884, *Letters*, p. 203.

But the expected row blew over the League was accepted as an affiliate at the August Annual Conference, where Scheu's explanations for the new form of organization went unchallenged by Hyndman or any other.<sup>1</sup> Despite the prominence given to the land in the League's objects,<sup>2</sup> the Manifesto of the League (drawn up in October) was addressed almost exclusively to the industrial workers and might indeed have been open to criticism more for neglecting to include a specific paragraph relating to the crofters' struggle, than for breaking with the general line of propaganda of the S D F. Nevertheless, the slight acknowledgement to national feeling brought immediate returns. Scheu made propaganda visits to Glasgow and the West of Scotland "with good success" and in Edinburgh the League began to gather strength.

But the old enmity between Hyndman and Scheu still smouldered under the surface, and probably both men were equally responsible for keeping the feud alive. Hyndman, however, acted in an arbitrary and irresponsible manner. Instead of openly challenging the policy of the Edinburgh comrades on the Executive, he resorted to intrigue. As early as August he prompted the Federation's Assistant Secretary, C. L. Fitzgerald, to write to a Glasgow comrade, throwing suspicions on Scheu's motives and *bona fides*.<sup>3</sup> A small Branch of the S D F had been formed in Glasgow in the summer of 1884, including Bruce Glasier and a stonemason, W. J. Nairne. In October Hyndman officially inaugurated the Branch with a highly successful lecture to an audience of 1,200 in the Albion Hall. Glasier, although later he was to become an uncompromising Morris partisan, found the

<sup>1</sup> Morris to R. Thompson, *ibid*, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> The objects were declared to be "(1) To restore to the people the land, the primary source of wealth, and (2) To make accessible to the workers the mechanical instruments wherewith to win from the land the raw material, and to shape it into goods for the use and enjoyment of all."

<sup>3</sup> Scheu in his reminiscences cited as "proof" a letter from Fitzgerald to J. Adams of Glasgow, dated August 7th, 1884. Notes written by J. L. Mahon in 1885 on the causes of the split, in the Socialist League Correspondence, Int. Inst. Soc. Hist., state that Hyndman wrote to the Glasgow Branch. "I have reason to know that he [Scheu] has acted quite contrary to all the best interests of Socialism for many months past," and that Fitzgerald wrote declaring, "Scheu is not a Socialist, but an Anarchist." Mahon states that Hyndman refused to justify these charges in Scheu's presence.



lecture "brilliant and convincing I enjoyed it greatly"

"Racy, argumentative, declamatory, and bristling with topical allusions and scathing raillery, it was a hustings masterpiece The reverberating note, in feeling if not in phrase, was 'I accuse, I expose, I denounce' He seemed to look round on the civilized world and see there nothing but fraud, hypocrisy, oppression, and infamy on the part of the politicians and money-mongers on the one hand, and on the other only wooden-headed ignorance, stupidity, and servility on the part of the working class He was jauntily cynical 'I am an educated middle-class man I derive my living from the robbery of the workers I enjoy the spoil and the workers are content Why therefore should I object to their slaving for my enjoyment if they themselves don't' Yet nevertheless there was in his protagonistism a fiery and even fanatical zeal He appealed for better things—for justice and democracy—for a new system of politics and economics"<sup>1</sup>

Glasier's account is good—it was this sharp and incisive denunciation, this air of a man who knew the capitalist world inside-out and could give all the answers, which won Hyndman his loyal following among the workers groping their way towards Socialism Hyndman (it seemed) knew his facts there was nothing of the dreamer about him anyone could see where he stood

The Edinburgh League sent a deputation to Glasgow, presumably to propose collaboration between the two bodies on the lines of the "Scottish Land and Labour League" "The Glasgow Branch demurred, as they had full right to do, and some of the members seemed to have written to Hyndman for *orders* as to what to do"<sup>2</sup> Once again Hyndman did not trouble to consult the Executive of the Federation instead he wrote a letter attacking Scheu in what Morris "was compelled to call a treacherous manner". Hyndman took his stand upon grounds of rigid Marxist orthodoxy Scheu, he declared, was an anarchist (" 'Anarchist' by the way is a kind of sacramental word with H ", Morris remarked),<sup>3</sup> a friend of Johann Most, he had tried to destroy the organization of the German comrades and would do the same in Scotland if the comrades were not cautious of such foreigners, "in

<sup>1</sup> Glasier, *op cit*, p. 29 I have slightly "doctored" the quotation by cutting out the uncomplimentary reflections which Glasier read back into the speech

<sup>2</sup> Morris to R. Thompson, *Letters*, p. 227

<sup>3</sup> Morris to Scheu, December 6th, 1884, *ibid*, p. 218

short saying just what the witer thought would injure Scheu the most with the Glasgow people" <sup>1</sup>

It was at exactly this moment that Morris arrived in Scotland. On the Saturday he lectured for the League in Edinburgh, in a handsome club-room hired and decorated with the aid of £100 from a wealthy sympathizer, and although he learned something of the friction from his Chairman, the Rev Dr. John Glasse, he went on to Glasgow the next day confident that he could "set matters right" <sup>2</sup> His Lecture here was given, not for the Branch, but under the auspices of the Sunday Lecture Society, to an audience of about 3,000. Once again Bruce Glasier has left an account of the meeting

"He was then fifty-one years of age, and just beginning to look elderly. His splendid crest of dark curly hair and his finely textured beard were brindling into grey. His head was lion-like, not only because of his shaggy mane, but because of the impress of strength of his whole front. I noted the constant restlessness of his hands, and indeed of his whole body, as if overcharged with energy."

The audience gave him "an exceedingly friendly and respectful reception".

"He read his lecture, or rather recited it, keeping his eye on the written pages, which he turned over without concealment. Every now and then [he] walked to and fro, bearing his manuscript in his hand. Occasionally he paused in his recital, and in a 'man to man' sort of way explained some special point, or turned to those near him on the platform for their assent. Of the lecture itself I only remember that it seemed to me something more than a lecture, a kind of parable or prediction, in which art and labour were held forth, not as mere circumstances or incidents of life, but as life or the act of living itself. As we listened, our minds seemed to gain a new sense of sight, or new way of seeing and understanding why we lived in the world. . . " <sup>3</sup>

The description is deliberately pointed by Bruce Glasier, to contrast the manner and attitude of Hyndman and of Morris. But the point is well made. It is not difficult to see why working men and craftsmen like Glasier himself, whose interests were in artistic and intellectual fields, should come to Morris's side. Not difficult also to see why a few middle-class sympathizers, who

<sup>1</sup> Morris to R. Thompson, *ibid*, p. 227. Scheu cites the damaging letter as being written to Moses MacGibbon, December 9th, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> See *Letters*, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Glasier, *op cit*, pp. 23, 26.

were flitting with Socialism—like James Mavor of the Glasgow Branch—would think it more respectable to take Morris's part, even if they would soon find themselves disillusioned.<sup>1</sup> and, equally, not difficult to see why some of the most earnest of the working-class comrades should distrust Morris as a dreamer, and—knowing little of the London issues—instinctively gravitate to Hyndman's party

After the meeting the explosion took place—the explosion which was not only the occasion for the disastrous split in the British Socialist movement, but which also gave birth to a story which had been used for two generations to dissociate the names of Morris and Marx. Morris, accompanied by James Mavor and Bruce Glasier, crossed the city to the room above a warehouse off Gallowgate (no £100 donations here!) where the Branch held its meetings. He found the comrades were torn in two by the London quarrel. Nairne, the Secretary, greeted Morris "frigidly", and said "he supposed Comrade Morris would like to say a few words". After some general remarks on the Cause, and some "careful words" on the friction, Morris was open to questions. Nairne, according to Bruce Glasier, in the only account of the meeting which exists, "immediately proceeded to heckle him, much as he might have done an avowed opponent of Socialism"

"Morris showed no resentment, but answered the questions quite good-naturedly, and it was evident that the meeting felt drawn towards him, though the greater number were, as I knew, ranged with Nairne on the Hyndman side

"On his rising to go, Nairne, as a sort of parting shot, put to him the question 'Does Comrade Morris accept Marx's theory of value?' Morris's reply was emphatic. 'I am asked if I believe in Marx's theory of value. To speak quite frankly, I do not know what Marx's theory of value is, and I'm damned if I want to know.' Then he added 'Truth to say, my friends, I have tried to understand Marx's theory, but political economy is not in my line, and much of it appears to me to be

<sup>1</sup> James Mavor resigned from the Socialist League in 1885 because he took objection to an uncomplimentary reference to missionaries in the League's *Manifesto* against the War in Soudan, to which his name (together with those of the rest of the Executive) had been attached. Morris (as usual) sent him a long letter of explanation. See Mavor, *My Windows on the Street of the World* (1923), which contains the smug remark "The only Social-Democrat with whom I have found it possible to remain on terms of amity is John Burns." Mavor became a professor in Toronto.

dreary rubbish. But I am, I hope, a Socialist none the less. It is enough political economy for me to know that the idle class is rich and the working class is poor, and that the rich are rich because they rob the poor. That I know because I see it with my eyes. I need read no books to convince me of it. And it does not matter a rap, it seems to me, whether the robbery is accomplished by what is termed surplus value, or by means of seifage or open brigandage. The whole system is monstrous and intolerable, and what we Socialists have got to do is to work together for its complete overthrow, and for the establishment in its stead of a system of co-operation where there shall be no masters or slaves, but where everyone will live and work jollily together as neighbours and comrades for the equal good of all. That, in a nutshell, is my political economy and my social democracy."<sup>1</sup>

Leaving the meeting—once again in the company of Glasier and James Mavor—Morris remarked good-humouredly on the stairs

"Our friend Nairne was putting me through the catechism a bit, after your Scottish Kirk-Session fashion, don't you think? He is, I fancy, one of those comrades who are suspicious of us poetry chaps, and I don't blame him. He is in dead earnest, and will keep things going, I should say." "<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that this account is vivid and in character, it must be said that it is unreliable as serious evidence (see Appendix IV). In view of Morris's own anxiety about his reading at this time (see p. 354), he was not likely to have implied that study was unnecessary, nor is it likely that he would have ridiculed the Marxist theory of value, when in his own lectures of this period he was taking such pains to explain it in the simplest language. At the time when Glasier wrote this account he was a strenuous opponent of Marxism, and—whether consciously or unconsciously—he may have touched up the account to meet his own change of views. But, undoubtedly, some such outburst took place, and it followed these general lines. Morris was very conscious of his own disabilities in the field of political economy. "I want statistics terribly", he had written to Scheu the previous August. "You see, I am but a poet and artist, good for nothing but sentiment."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he was enraged at Hyndman's "sacramental" dogmatism, which seemed to be the means he was employing to throw suspicion upon all those who were not ready to accept his personal leadership. "*What we Socialists have got to do is to work together*"—

<sup>1</sup> Glasier, *op cit*, pp. 31-2

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, p. 212

these words are the key to the outburst. Certainly Morris himself, as he made his way back to London, was quite oblivious to the fact that he had set in motion a legend that the root of the dissension lay in his rejection of Marx's theory of value rather, he was filled with fury at this new example of Hyndman's intrigue

"The spectacle of the discord so deliberately sown among these new recruits fairly swept away all doubt in my mind as to what was necessary to be done, I saw that the dispute *must* come off, and that it must be fought on the true grounds, namely resistance to H's absolutism"<sup>1</sup>

He had made up his mind to declare himself, and to have the whole matter out

## VI Resignation

Immediately on his return, the "cabal" was formed, comprising the Avelings, Morris, Bax, Joseph Lane, Sam Mainwaring, Robert Banner, Clarke and Mahon (who had now come to London, bringing with him evidence of Hyndman's intrigue). On December 16th the preliminary round was fought out, the expulsion of Clarke being rejected by the Executive by nine votes to seven.<sup>2</sup> Champion, Quelch, Jack Williams, James Murray, Herbert Burrows and John Burns moved to Hyndman's side. All the suppressed bitterness and intrigue of the past few months came into the open. On the 18th Morris was writing

"The question only is now whether we shall go out of the S D F or Hyndman—we are now only fighting for the possession of the name and the adherence of the honest people who don't know the ins and outs of the quarrel. On Tuesday next we move confidence in Scheu, and the paper *Justice* is to be handed over to the executive under a joint editorship excluding Hyndman. If these are carried I don't see how the beggar can stay in the Federation. All this is foul work yet it is a pleasure to be able to say what one thinks at last."<sup>3</sup>

Morris was rejoicing to be rid of Hyndman with his incurable "politician-nature." "what a pleasure not to have to shake hands with H again", he wrote,<sup>4</sup> and—again—"he cannot change his nature and be otherwise than a jingo and a politician even if he tries. I believe that in time [his friends] will be driven to the same conclusion as we have been—that they cannot work with

<sup>1</sup> Morris to Joynes, May Morris, II, p. 589

<sup>2</sup> See *Letters*, pp. 219–20

<sup>3</sup> Morris to his wife, *ibid.*, p. 221

<sup>4</sup> Morris to Scheu, *ibid.*, p. 221

him"<sup>1</sup> Jack Williams, among others, he believed to have no knowledge of Hyndman's intrigues "what a rascal a man must be to delude such innocents!"<sup>2</sup>

Under the pressure of this tide of feeling, Morris forced upon the "cabal" a policy which may well have been a serious mistake. He himself loathed such rows to the point of cowardice: the Tuesday debate (the 23rd) he reported "came off to the full as damned as I expected. It was a piece of degradation, only illumined by Scheu's really noble and skilful defence. The rest mere backbiting, mixed with some melancholy and to me touching examples of faith."

"However, Saturday, I *will* be out of it", he announced.

"Our lot agreed beforehand, being I must say moved by me, that it is not worth fighting for the name of the S D F and the sad remains of *Justice* at the expense of a month or two of wrangling so as Hyndman considers the S D F his property, let him take it and try if he can really make up a bogie of it to frighten the Government, which I really think is about all his scheme, and we will begin again quite clean-handed to try the more humdrum method of quiet propaganda"<sup>3</sup>

Saturday evening, the 27th, *did* see the end. The meeting lasted over four hours. Hyndman "had packed the room with his adherents, who were very noisy", while members of the L E L were kept outside.<sup>4</sup> "People who were not on the Executive spoke all on Hyndman's side." Morris recorded for Scheu's benefit his impressions of the speeches. Champion spoke well enough, but quite off the point. Burrows—"a disgraceful speech . . . incited to personal violence against Mahon." Banner "spoke badly and not much to the point." Mainwaring "began well, but rather broke down." Lane, "clearly, sensibly and damagingly." Aveling, "short and well." Hyndman, "a crafty and effective speech, mostly lies in form, all lies in substance." The vote was then taken, giving the "cabal" a majority of ten to

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. 229

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 225

<sup>3</sup> Morris to "Georgie" Burne-Jones, *ibid*, pp. 222-3

<sup>4</sup> A minor issue on which there was friction concerned the status of the affiliated L E L, the reality of the branches claimed by Lane, the financial contribution it should make to the S D F, and the question of its control. Quite possibly Hyndman had a case here, and this may have deepened his suspicion of the Scottish Land and Labour League.

eight. Thereupon MORRIS—to the surprise of the meeting—read out the prepared resignation of the majority

“Since discord has arisen in the Council owing to the attempt to substitute arbitrary rule therein for fraternal co-operation, contrary to the principles of Socialism, and since it seems to us impossible to heal this discord, we, the undersigned, think it better in the interests of the cause of Socialism to cease to belong to the Council, and accordingly hand in our resignations

“William Morris	E Belfort Bax
Edward Aveling	John L Mahon <sup>1</sup>
Robert Banner	S Mainwaring
J Lane	W J Clark
Eleanor Marx-Aveling	J Cooper ”

The unexpected resignation—Morris thought—“seemed to win us favour” The majority withdrew, and went to Aveling’s rooms to discuss their plans for the future The late Mr Ambrose Barker, who was one of the L E L members waiting outside, still remembered seventy years later the tone of voice in which Morris said “That’s that ”<sup>2</sup>

On the morning of the 27th, Aveling and Morris had called on Engels, at his suggestion, to discuss their plans Already the “cabal” had decided on their next steps, and the name of their weekly paper, the *Commonweal* Engels said that “we were weak in *political* knowledge and journalistic skill”, and advised that the paper should commence as a monthly Morris accepted the advice reluctantly <sup>3</sup> Two days later Engels wrote a long letter to Bernstein in which he described the intrigues of Hyndman (“a

<sup>1</sup> Joynes had retired from the Council with ill health, and Mahon had been elected in his place

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, pp 223–6, gave the account to “Georgie” Burne-Jones and to Andreas Scheu

<sup>3</sup> The tone of his letter to Scheu in which he describes the interview is curious Morris seems to be apologizing to Scheu for accepting Engels’s advice, and to be expecting a rebuke “Though I don’t intend to give way to Engels, his advice is valuable ” Then he proceeds to explain—in a roundabout way—that he *does* intend to “give way” The explanation may simply be that Scheu and Morris had set their hearts on a weekly paper, and Morris was afraid that Scheu would be disappointed at the change On the other hand, Scheu—as an old Vienna “Leftist” and anti-parliamentarian—may have been estranged from Engels (whose work he certainly admired) Certainly, Scheu does not appear to have been a visitor at Engels’s house For Morris’s account of the interview, see *Letters*, p 225

political adventurer and Parliamentary careerist") and Morris's exposure of them in detail

"Thereupon the majority resigned from the Federation . . . *because the whole Federation was really nothing but a swindle* Those who resigned were Aveling, Bax and Morris, the only honest men among the intellectuals—but men as unpractical (two poets and one philosopher) as you could possibly find In addition, the better of the known workers They want to act in the London branches, they hope to win the majority and then let Hyndman carry on with his non-existent provincial branches Their organ will be a little monthly journal Finally, they will work on a modest scale, in proportion to their forces, and no longer act as though the English proletariat were bound to act as soon as a few intellectuals became converted to Socialism and sounded the call"<sup>1</sup>

Morris, who had finally brought matters to a head, felt himself bound to prove his good faith by working wholeheartedly to found the new body "though I think you will believe me when I say I am utterly free from ambition", he wrote to Joy nes on Christmas Day, "I cannot merely stand out of the movement, I feel myself forced in the teeth of all kinds of discomfort, and even shame perhaps, to do my best in it"<sup>2</sup> In the next few days he wrote many letters, to the provincial branches, and to personal friends "We have formed another body, the Socialist League", he wrote in one

"It begins at all events with the distinct aim of making Socialists by educating them, and of organizing them to deal with politics in the end, it expects single-heartedness from its members and fraternal co-operation, and it will not suffer any absolutism amongst it"<sup>3</sup>

In another he wrote that "our immediate aim should be chiefly educational"

"to teach ourselves and others what the due social claims of labour are with the view to dealing with the crisis if it should come in our day, or of handing on the tradition of our hope to others if we should die before it comes"<sup>4</sup>

So absorbed was he in the problem of ridding the movement of Hyndman's leadership that he scarcely seems to have noticed that he was being impelled by events into the position of being one

<sup>1</sup> Engels to Bernstein, December 29th, 1884, *Labour Monthly*, October, 1933

<sup>2</sup> May Morris, II, p 591

<sup>3</sup> Morris to R. Thompson, *Letters*, p 229

<sup>4</sup> Morris to Carruthers, May Morris, II, p 594



of the most notable Socialist leaders in Britain himself. Once or twice in the sound and fury of the dispute he paused for a moment of self-questioning. "This morning I hired very humble quarters for the Socialist League", he wrote to "Georgie" Burne-Jones from his office in Merton Abbey the day after the split.

"We meet to inaugurate the League to-morrow evening. There now, I really don't think I have the strength to say anything more about the matter just now. I find my room here and a view of the winter garden, with the men spreading some pieces of chintz on the bleaching ground, somewhat of a consolation. But I promise myself to work as hard as I can in the new body, which I think will be but a small one for some time to come."

A week before he had paid a lightning visit to Chesterfield to discuss the dissension with Edward Carpenter. The peace of the Millthorpe small-holding contrasted seductively with the wrangles of London.

"I listened with longing heart to his account of his patch of ground, seven acres. He says that he and his fellow can almost live on it: they grow their own wheat, and send flowers and fruit to Chesterfield and Sheffield markets. All that sounds very agreeable to me. Whiles I think, as in a vision, of a decent community as a refuge from our mean squabbles and corrupt society, but I am too old now, even if it were not dastardly to desert."

The vision of "a decent community as a refuge from our mean squabbles" was to grow in his imagination, giving that air of a "compensation-world" which permeates so many parts of *News from Nowhere*. Meanwhile he turned the temptation aside, and got down to the job ahead. "I will never tell you in my letters that I am in bad spirits even when I am", he wrote to Scheu. "But in truth I am now in good fair working spirits, not very sanguine but quite determined. . ."

## VII *The Aftermath*

On December 28th Hyndman addressed another letter to Morris:

"Sir,

I should be glad to know what steps you propose to take with

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. 224

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 223

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 226

reference to *Justice*. As it is obviously impossible for us to meet amicably after what has passed I appoint Mr. Champion to act for me

"Yours obediently,

"H. M. Hyndman" <sup>1</sup>

If it had been a hundred years before, no doubt there would have been a duel, with Bax and Champion as Seconds. But the letter serves as an important reminder. This was not just a quarrel in a closed debating society—it was a split—and, as it proved, a real, long-lasting and bitter split—in the British Socialist movement, which, however small and uninfluential it was, held within it the hope of the future emancipation of the British people. More was at stake than the honour of Scheu or Morris or Hyndman or W. J. Clarke. It was all very well for Morris to declare—as he did at a future meeting of the Hammersmith Branch—

"that we met as friends and we wanted agreement and that he hoped as soon as possible we should bury the hatchet. He had nothing to say against his former associates but he disagreed with their tactics. He thought that the Socialist League would work without hostility to the S. D. F." <sup>2</sup>

But the Cause was not likely to be furthered by splitting up the energies of the handful of propagandists in two different organizations working fraternally in different directions. Hyndman himself, when writing his self-righteous reminiscences twenty-seven years later, declared that the split had "set the movement back fully twenty years".

"I cannot exonerate Morris and his group from the responsibility of having done more to hinder the progress of genuine Socialism in England than any people who have ever opposed it or been connected with it" <sup>3</sup>

What basis was there in his charge?

First, supposing that the charge of retarding the movement were true, Hyndman had only himself to blame. Nearly every one of the accusations brought against him by Morris and Engels at the time of the split were proved true in the light of future events—the political intrigue of the 1885 elections, the manner in which he exploited the unemployed agitation in 1886 and

<sup>1</sup> Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 45345

<sup>2</sup> Hammersmith Minutes, January 18th, 1885.

<sup>3</sup> Hyndman, *Record of an Adventurous Life*, p. 360

1887 his dogmatic and authoritarian approach to questions of theory and leadership the jingoism of his "Big Navy" policy before the Great War: his role in the war itself, and his repudiation of the Russian Revolution Only one accusation—of personal self-seeking—was never sustained. His actions both before and after the split prove him to have held a fundamentally anti-Socialist attitude to problems of party organization He was an adventurer by temperament and a politician by background, which meant—as Morris summed up correctly—"waiting about to see what can be made of the political situation, if perhaps at the best one may attain to a sort of Bismarckian State Socialism"<sup>1</sup> Supremely self-confident himself, he saw the question of leadership as a matter of loyalty to himself and his Executive, and neglected the question of theoretical education throughout the movement and the development of leadership at every level The organization of the workers in trade unions which were beyond his own control seemed to him irrelevant If only the workers could be won to follow, *he* would look after the leading the workers were the club which he would swing

Such a man—whatever his personal sacrifice and devotion to the cause—was a danger to the movement, for the simple reason that the logic of his attitude demanded that he could not take a secondary position He must either be in the leadership of the movement, or be driven out of it altogether Morris was perfectly correct the row *was* inevitable—whether the occasion had been the control of *Justice* or of the provincial branches or had been postponed to the election intrigues of 1885 and, moreover, since Hyndman was a man of considerable ability and had a better command of some aspects of Socialist theory than any other member of the Executive—and was the founder of the Federation, to boot—it was inevitable that he should carry at least a small following with him In this sense, the split was unavoidable.

But a second question arises Even if this were so, were the tactics of the majority of the Council correct? On this question Morris himself was to have doubts, only three weeks after the event "I know and knew that our resignation would throw us into the background at first", he wrote to Joynes

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p 228

"I mention this because I am responsible for that step I hope it was not too much because I felt personally that I could not keep up the quarrel, as I certainly could not as far as I myself am concerned"<sup>1</sup>

In fact, once the quarrel broke into the open, Morris's actions were dictated far less by policy than by passion. He and the "cabal"—"men as unpractical as you could possibly find"—allowed themselves to be outwitted and outmanoeuvred by Hyndman. The issues upon which they joined battle were either (like the W. J. Clark affair) dictated by Hyndman, or else—like the final motion of censure on Hyndman—ones of personality rather than principle. Once the battle was joined, everything became coloured by Morris's temperament. In a noble tribute, Andreas Scheu was later to write of him

"Personal dealings with him were so refreshing because he spoke with almost insulting uprightness, straight from the heart. He was a man of 'Yea' and 'Nay', of 'I will' and 'I will not'—a man who did not recognize 'If' and 'However'."<sup>2</sup>

Morris's one instinct was to bring the matter to a decision. It was he who—despite Bax's warnings—pushed the "cabal" into pledging themselves to secede, *even if they controlled the Council*.<sup>3</sup> "Of course we did right to resign", he tried to reassure himself the day after the split

"The alternative would have been a general meeting, and after a month's squabble for the amusement of the rest of the world that cared to notice us, would have landed us first in a deadlock and ultimately where we are now."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Morris to Joy nes, January 18th, 1885. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 45345. "There were obviously two parties, neither strong enough probably to crush the other—we should have had a regular parliamentary faction-fight in our very midst, all very well for parliament, which don't want to do anything—but for a propaganda! Don't you think on reflection that it is much better for the two sides to go on working apart?" This letter also shows that Morris was already, only three weeks after the split, putting a construction on it which had not been in the forefront of his mind at the time, and which would have surprised some of his fellow seceders. "Those whose tendencies lead them toward politics and parliamentarianism will fall naturally towards the Social Democratic Federation, those who are more of purists will fall towards us." This is in line with the *second* statement of the seceders, printed by Tom Mann in his *Memoirs*, pp. 45–6, and dated January 13th, 1885. Part of this letter to Joy nes is in May Morris, II, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Scheu, *op. cit.*, Part III, Ch. VI.

<sup>3</sup> See Bax, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, p. 224.

But that month of squabbling, painful as it would have been, might—if the majority had picked their ground carefully—have transformed the situation. Instead, by their precipitateness they alienated not only those honest members of the Executive who were still under Hyndman's spell,<sup>1</sup> but also the majority of the Federation's rank and file.

The fact was that to the rank and file the whole thing appeared as a mystery. They knew nothing of the history of the dispute: and the majority, by refusing to submit it to a general meeting, seemed afraid to consult them. Hyndman was quick to seize his advantage, and the minority issued a counter-statement calling a general meeting, opening the minutes of the Council to general inspection, and expressing the opinion—

“that in leaving the control of the Executive Council in the hands of a minority accused by them of not acting in accordance with the principles of Socialism, the majority have not fulfilled their duty to those who elected them to the Council.”<sup>2</sup>

It almost seems as if Morris, in his fury, had forgotten that the S D F had a membership. After all, if the issue of resignation was centred upon lack of confidence in Hyndman, how were the rank and file to make their judgement, unless in terms of past service and personality? Bax might be a promising theorist but he was certainly not cut out by temperament as a street-corner propagandist. The Avelings were newcomers to the leadership of the movement. As John Burns was to point out, Hyndman had at least proved his sincerity by speaking at open-air meetings for the previous 66 consecutive Sundays.<sup>3</sup> As to Morris, what were the comrades to think? They might respect him but he

<sup>1</sup> Morris seems to have thought well of Champion (“Of whose singleness of purpose I [do not] have the slightest doubt”), Williams (an “innocent”), and Burns (despite his “usual claptrap style”). Fitzgerald and Quelch (“the stupid”) he seems to have regarded as loyal to Hyndman beyond recall, while he called Burrows “a bad beast”.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, *op cit*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77. See also p. 71 for Edward Carpenter's letter to Bob Sharland of the Bristol Branch. Hyndman had clearly used this argument to Carpenter with great effect, for Carpenter writes “Morris has led out into the wilderness a body of men who undoubtedly have done very little in the cause, and several of whom are ambitious and designing.” Carpenter's letter was probably responsible for keeping the Bristol Branch within the Federation for another year.

had yet to show that he had much understanding of the theory or tactics of a political struggle. The majority of his lectures in 1884 had concerned the relation of Socialism to Art. He had attracted to his side one or two supporters, like James Mavor of Glasgow and Cobden-Sanderson, whom any working-class comrade must have been able to tell at a glance were not in the movement to stay. Not only Nairne, the Glasgow stonemason, but also many of the best of the London rank and file had no choice but to take Hyndman's side.

The split was unavoidable, then. But Morris and the majority allowed themselves to be provoked into taking action on the wrong issues and in the wrong way. Three months before Morris himself had seen this danger clearly, and had warned Scheu and Bax of it.

"At present there is no definite cause of quarrel which those outside the quarrelling parties could understand as anything more than a squabble, and the result would be that the S D F with its present elements minus a few of the best, who would be left out in the cold, would be the representative of Socialism in England."<sup>1</sup>

In the result, not only was Hyndman left in the position of strength, but the split was, of necessity, an ugly, ragged split, rather than a clean break. Rather than clarifying any principles at stake, it confused them further. It divided friends and left opponents in each other's midst. It prepared the way for further splits, secessions and dissension in both bodies. Almost any other form of division would have been preferable. If Hyndman had been driven from the Federation with his supporters, then his disastrous influence might have been cut short, and his best followers might soon have rejoined the majority. If the majority had taken their case to a general meeting, and been defeated on an issue of principle, then at least the motives for their resignation would have become clear. If Morris and Lane had been driven out on the issue of their opposition to "palliatives" and parliamentary action, then Morris might have learned his lesson of the impossibility of anarchism in 1885 instead of in 1890. But speculation is futile. Events took place as they did, and the Socialist League was doomed to further dissension from the start.

<sup>1</sup> Morris to Scheu, September 28th, 1884, Scheu Correspondence, Int. Inst. Soc. Hist.