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**'The Labour Party and the Monarchy'**

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### Summary of Thesis.

This work examines periods and episodes which illustrate the Labour Party's developing attitudes towards the monarchy. Chapter One traces the historical background in the nineteenth century, identifying those aspects of radicalism, republicanism and a changing monarchy which had a subsequent bearing on Labour views. It finds that the lack of a serious challenge to the monarchy resulted from its increasing popular acceptance, the prevalence of anti-monarchic sentiment over republicanism, and the indifference of social democracy to strictly political reform. Chapter Two finds the monarchy increasingly accepted by Labour during the Great War, and includes sections on republicanism during the war, patriotism, anti-Germanism, royal visits, civil liberties, and the Crown and royal philanthropy. Chapter Three concentrates on the early 1930's, and examines Labour's concerns about the powers of the Crown in the aftermath of 1931. The ideas of Laski and Cripps receive particular attention, as does the paradox of the left's fear of the use of the Crown's powers to frustrate them, whilst recognising the necessity of its use to realise their Jacobin plans. The next two chapters incorporate discourse analysis techniques. Chapter Four takes an extended look at the 1935 Silver Jubilee and 1937 Coronation celebrations, and analyses the range of Labour responses to the events, at local as well as national level. The chapter includes a section of textual analysis, contrasting Labour's *Daily Herald* with its popular rivals in their coverage of the two celebrations. The contrastive analysis points up the centrality of Labour's constitutionalism to its approach to the monarchy. Chapter Five deals with the Abdication crisis, again analysing the spread of Labour opinion, contrasting those ready to exploit the political opportunity with the constitutionalists. Chapter Six looks at the Honours System, and at the development of Labour's attitudes and conduct in the matter. It finds Labour drawn into the system it inherited and examines the justifications offered.

## CONTENTS.

Introduction	1
1. Labour and the Monarchy: analysing the background.	39
2. Labour, the Monarchy and the Great War.	96
3. The Royal Prerogative: 1931 and after.	172
4. Two Celebrations and a Funeral.	206
5. The Abdication of Edward VIII.	314
6. The Labour Party and the Honours System.	388
Conclusion.	419
Appendix	
A note on readership figures for the popular press in the 1930's	424
Bibliography	430

## ABBREVIATIONS.

The following abbreviations are used in the text or in the endnotes.

B.S.A. Birmingham Small Arms Co.

B.S.P. British Socialist Party

CAB Cabinet papers

C.O.S. Charity Organisation Society

C.P. Communist Party

D.L.P. Divisional Labour Party

D.O.R.A. Defence of the Realm Act

HO Home Office papers

I.L.P. Independent Labour Party

L.C.C. London County Council

N.A.C. National Administration Council

N.E.C. National Executive Committee

N.C.C.L. National Council for Civil Liberties

N.F.R.B. New Fabian Research Bureau

N.U.W.M. National Unemployed Workers' Movement

O.T.C. Officers' Training Corps

P.E.P. Political and Economic Planning

P.L.P. Parliamentary Labour Party

PRO Public Record Office

S.D.F. Social Democratic Federation

S.L.P. Socialist Labour Party

S.S.I.P Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda

T.L.C. Trades and Labour Council

T.U.C. Trades Union Congress

W.N.C. War Emergency Workers' National Committee

## Introduction.

This introduction will contextualise the content and explain the approach to be found in the succeeding chapters. First, it will provide a brief account of the recent and contemporary states of Labour opinion on the monarchy; examining where we are now as a prelude to where we have come from. Next, it will review some themes (and recent literature on those themes), which have a particular bearing on the general topic. These can be measured against the historical account which follows. The three introductory thematic sections are intended to raise issues, pose questions and indicate patterns which are developed at various points later in the thesis. The themes are: Labour, the monarchy and social class; Labour, the monarchy and the ideology of Englishness; Labour, the monarchy and the British Constitution. These three sections are not considered, and are not to be regarded, as discrete thematic categories. They impinge upon each other in myriad ways, obviously and subtly. The complexity of Labour attitudes to the monarchy derives, in part, from the complexity of its attitudes in these three areas. A further section will summarise the scope and orientation of the thesis. Finally, there is a description and justification of the methodology (or methodologies) employed in the body of the work.

### 1. Topicality and Relevance.

When this thesis was started, in 1976, it lacked the obvious topicality which it may now (1999) possess. In the middle to late 1970s, the monarchy was hardly a burning issue in Labour politics, apart from the specific matter of royal expenditure. An indication of the timidity with which Labour approached the constitutional aspects of monarchy is to be found in its "Machinery of Government Study Group", set up by the Home Policy Committee of the National Executive Committee (N.E.C.). Despite its stated intentions of examining the question of the monarchy, all that it ever produced was an anodyne memorandum by Michael English, which observed that,

"The monarchy is popular and without effective power and we do not wish to change it in either of those respects, though we should like an appropriate commission or committee to consider how it might be democratised further, as has been done in the Scandinavian monarchies and the Netherlands."<sup>1</sup>

The committee did not return to the subject. As for the Parliamentary Labour Party (P.L.P.), the balance of attitudes towards the monarchy at

this time is difficult to gauge, with the estimate of the republican Willie Hamilton neither an entirely reliable nor a disinterested one.

"...my own estimate is that at least one MP in three would vote for a republic given the chance. A majority of Labour MPs and Liberals certainly regard the Monarchy with a mixture of tolerance, healthy contempt, ridicule and apathy."<sup>2</sup>

This figure is almost certainly a gross exaggeration. In 1975, eighty-nine Labour M.P.'s had voted to oppose the increase in the Queen's Civil List payment, with a further fifty abstentions. Criticism from constituency parties seemed similarly to focus on royal expenditure. Most resolutions received by the Home Policy Committee in 1977 concerned either the cost of the monarchy or the taxation of Civil List payments, with only one demand, from Edinburgh, that the Labour Party campaign for the abolition of the monarchy. The republicanism which found voice remained almost beyond the pale, with Willie Hamilton exhibiting what Pimlott labels an "obsessive republicanism" which encouraged "sober people to equate republicanism with crankiness".<sup>3</sup> The Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 may have had its "Stuff the Jubilee" protests, but the *New Statesman* had to acknowledge that "there has been little of the furore and controversy over the monarchy and Jubilee which accentuated the divisions between the Labour Left and Labour's leaders in the 1930s."<sup>4</sup> A study of British

social attitudes in 1977 found that 77% of Labour voters believed that the continuation of the monarchy was "important for Britain".<sup>5</sup>

By the time the thesis was disinterred for completion in the mid-1990's, the atmosphere was transformed. It was not unthinkable for front-bench figures in the P.L.P. to seek to draw the question of the monarchy into political debate (Jack Straw did so in 1993), or even to declare republican sympathies (Ron Davies in 1996). A poll of Labour M.P.'s in 1994 revealed that 44% wanted a republic.<sup>6</sup> The scope of criticism of the royal family and the monarchy had widened from the narrow focus on expenditure in the mid-seventies. Straw had wanted the party to initiate a debate on the constitutional role of the monarchy. The *Fabian Review* carried articles in which republicanism was vigorously advocated, as part of the process of 'democratisation' of British society, in which hereditary institutions would have no place.<sup>7</sup> The Fabian Society published a pamphlet calling for changes to: the Royal Prerogative; the funding of the royal family; the honours system. Perhaps most radically, it advocated a ten-yearly referendum on whether the monarchy should continue.<sup>8</sup> The *New Statesman* regularly carried critical articles on the royal family, and editorially it adopted a position of unequivocal republicanism.<sup>9</sup>

Two things had helped to bring about this shift in attitude. The royal family had been brought into disrepute by the behaviour of several of its most prominent members. Many Labour M.P.'s interviewed

by the *Independent on Sunday* referred to the revelations of "misbehaviour".<sup>10</sup> Secondly, constitutional reform had become a fashionable topic, and the monarchy could not be altogether excluded from it, although some bodies concerned with reform of the constitution did not seem to regard the reform of the monarchy as either imperative or politically viable (Charter 88 has eschewed either republicanism or detailed proposals for major reform of the monarchy). For the Labour Party, constitutional reform became a major policy area, comprising an element in the broader "modernisation" project. Democratisation of the British Constitution, and in particular the abolition of the legislative role of hereditary peers, led some to believe that the time had come to tackle the other major pre-democratic part of the Constitution, the monarchy. A future bill of rights would inevitably call into question the royal prerogative. Amongst those convinced that the monarchy should be included in the reform project was the *New Statesman*, which had changed from its old advocacy of modernising the monarchy on Scandinavian lines, first adopted by its long-time editor, Kingsley Martin, in the late 1930s.<sup>11</sup> Now, the journal believed,

"For their own survival, it might be enough for the Windsors to turn themselves into a Scandinavian-style monarchy... But there comes a time when this is not enough – when the issue becomes not the royal family's dissoluteness or its cost to the taxpayer, but whether the the hereditary

principle has any role at all to play in the government and politics of a democracy.”<sup>12</sup>

The journal was under no illusions about the party leadership's disinclination to engage with the issue, but felt that in the long run it would have to. Despite the apparently propitious moment for beginning a debate on reform (in the aftermath of Diana's death, even *The Economist* had declared itself republican), the depth of Labour's reluctance and fear about reform is clear in the comments of one backbench M.P., Denis MacShane.

“The modernising of Britain requires a modernisation of the monarchy....Now we need a policy on royalty. It might begin with a debate in the Commons, but who dares to call for one or let one take place?”<sup>13</sup>

MacShane omits to mention that, under the royal prerogative, it is extremely difficult for any debate on any specific proposals concerning the monarchy to be initiated without the sovereign's prior consent, and that adjournment debates on the monarchy have been refused on the grounds that the “subject does not fall under an area of ministerial responsibility”.<sup>14</sup>

From the conduct and words of Tony Blair, both in the period following Diana's death and during the celebrations of the Queen's golden wedding, it would appear that he is no less a monarchist than MacDonald, Attlee, Wilson or Callaghan. If the monarchy is to be ‘modernised’, rather

than reformed (let alone abolished), then it is in good hands. For one sharp observer of the current scene, Steve Richards, the medium-term future appears thus:

"The closer ties now established between Downing Street and the palace will greatly benefit the monarchy. For the modernisation of the monarchy is the perfect project for the team that modernised the Labour Party...Although the 'people's princess' is dead, we will soon have the 'people's monarchy'.<sup>15</sup>

It may well be that the 1990's wave of interest in radical reform of the monarchy has already passed. It may well be true, as Crick suggests, that "institutional republicanism ebbs and flows".<sup>16</sup> *The New Statesman*, despite its own republicanism, fears that "we (the nation) are resuming our usual deferential, pro-monarchical habits".<sup>17</sup> If constitutional reform under a Labour government leaves the monarchy essentially untouched, this thesis may offer some explanation of a notable omission from the project.

## 2) Labour, the monarchy and social class.

The intent behind this section (and behind the following two sections) is not to provide an exhaustive summary of every item of recent opinion on the subject. It is rather to provide an overview of one aspect of Labour's relationship with the monarchy, including reference to recent scholarly work which offers illumination or insight, and through which the relevant parts of the thesis may be viewed. This section considers the paradoxes underlying, and possible explanations behind, Labour's attitude and behaviour towards the monarchy in respect of questions of social class.

Scholarly commentators on the monarchy are in little doubt about its essential social character and location. Notwithstanding some differences of nuance, there is agreement, amongst those who adhere to the notion of an hierarchically organised, class based British society, that the monarchy sits at the apex of the upper class.

"At the apex of the upper class, however we define it, was the monarchy and the royal family. The royal family was, of course not typical of the upper class...but it was inextricably linked to it by marriage and culture..."<sup>18</sup>

The character and attitudes of the royal family reflect this social class.

"The Queen and her family are at the top of the social ladder; and they must be expected to hold the views and prejudices associated with very rich landed aristocrats and other members of the uppermost layers of the upper classes."<sup>19</sup>

For Cannadine, monarchy during the inter-war years stood at "the apex of traditional society", and was "crucial to the survival of hierarchy as a way of seeing inter-war Britain".<sup>20</sup> A potentially significant qualification to the location of the royal family at the apex of the upper class has been made by McKibbin, who believes that to some extent "the monarchy stood outside the class system but it was inextricably part of the upper class".<sup>21</sup> Commenting on the post- Second World War period, Muggeridge offered a similar argument to that of Cannadine.

"The impulses out of which snobbishness is born descend from the Queen, at the apex of the social pyramid, right down to the base. Social distinctions, at the lowest as at the highest level are given a validity."<sup>22</sup>

If the observations of this range of commentators are accurate, several questions are raised. How and why was Labour, generally

speaking, happy to co-exist with a royal family which represented a social class, an hereditary principle, and an hierarchical conception of society which seem, on the face of it, to be at such variance with its own class composition, democratic values and egalitarian ideology? The royal family not only symbolised social distinctions, but helped to reinforce them. Historians have recognised this apparent paradox.

“....it would appear difficult to reconcile the acceptance of monarchy with a vision of a Socialist Commonwealth based on equality, democracy and representative institutions.”<sup>23</sup>

Here is Pimlott on Labour’s “traditional, expected set of attitudes”; its “heritage”.

“Labour is known to be against privilege, social hierarchy, capitalism, personal wealth, inequality, unregulated markets, the powerful, the Establishment, the upper classes, nationalistic fervour, military might...”<sup>24</sup>

Of these eleven anathemas, the monarchy could comfortably be identified with seven, and a Marxist critique might establish the monarchy’s links with all of them. Pimlott adds that little in this list has changed in a hundred years. How, then, has Labour come to accept and even to

enthuse about monarchy? Simplifying, there would seem to be two possible explanations: that Labour swallowed its objections (on the grounds of social principles) to the monarchy because it recognised its political/constitutional value; or that Labour (in general) accepted an hierarchical, unequal society despite so much of its rhetoric. The former position is articulated by Kenneth Morgan, albeit with reference to the late 1970s.

"Of course, the monarchy is defensible neither on democratic nor on socialist grounds. Of course it is inextricably a part of the class system of the country. Of course, there are no rational grounds for an hereditary monarch...But the monarchy stands or falls not on the grounds of abstract logic or political theory, but on whether it is justifiable in the light of the specific historical needs of Britain today. In my view, it probably is."<sup>25</sup>

This attitude may underly the position of many in the Labour Party over the years, who saw value in its constitutional role whilst wishing to detach the monarchy from some of the anathemas listed above, by "simplifying" or "modernising" the institution. The alternative position, that Labour (or, at least, a sufficiently influential element within it) accepted the social inequalities which were reflected in the British type of monarchy and royal family, is argued by Cannadine. He cites Ramsay MacDonald as a powerful voice in the Labour Party in defence of the hierarchical nature of

British society. MacDonald is quoted as not wishing "to defy or even to subvert the established order" or "to sweep away the elaborate gradations of status and position so characteristic of the British social system".<sup>26</sup> Cannadine attributes MacDonald's veneration for the monarchy to his belief in the value of the social binding which derived from tradition and convention. He also makes much of the Labour right's rhetorical emphasis on co-operation and social harmony, to the exclusion of class politics. This, of course, begs the question of whether Labour tolerated or venerated the monarchy because of its lack of what Wertheimer called "a class-struggle ideology", or whether its lack of a class-struggle ideology may in part be due to the influence of the monarchy upon British life and politics.<sup>27</sup> The lack of a broad and enabling perspective of class on the British left is identified by Nairn as a consequence of royalism.

"....Romantic-national Royalism had little to fear from a Socialism based on 'class' – quite the contrary, it found a new and secure foundation in that brand of parochial ideology. 'Class' in this sense has been little more than the resentful but ultimately acceptive social anthropology of Royalism." <sup>28</sup>

Finally, one must not ignore the ways in which the monarchy itself acted to soften its class image, or avoided the battlegrounds of class conflict. It came increasingly to project an image of "ordinariness"

particularly during the reign of George V. Nairn remarks on "the public relations of ordinariness".<sup>29</sup> The second point is one elaborated by McKibbin, who observes that the "theatrical element" of the British state, which includes the monarchy, was successful in "divorcing itself from that area of social relations – labour and capital – where there was least value consensus".<sup>30</sup>

Turning the point round, if it is extremely problematic to explain how the monarchy's class identity squared with Labour's tolerance of and reverence for the monarchy, it seems more straightforward in the case of Labour critics of the monarchy. It will be seen that "class consciousness" was a consistent feature of the rhetoric of Labour anti-monarchism, from Hardie, through the pages of *Forward*, right up to the more recent example of Willie Hamilton. However, the fact that the anti-monarchism of both individuals named here, heavily based upon class rhetoric, earned for Hardie "a reputation for political instability and extremism" and for Hamilton the charge that he had helped encourage people to "equate republicanism with crankiness", suggests that objections to the monarchy on the basis of its class identity failed to generate support, either within the Party or amongst its supporters.

"The mass of devoted subjects knows perfectly well that the Queen and her entourage belong to the topmost social crust, and have a

fair notion of 'how much it all costs'. Alas, such knowledge has no effect whatever on royal popularity."<sup>31</sup>

The only qualification one might offer to this observation is that this knowledge alone may not have an effect, but may do so when combined with other contingent sources of discontent.

### 3) Labour, the monarchy and the ideology of "Englishness".

At some points of the narrative of this thesis, national pride and patriotism find powerful expression through Labour voices. Most striking, for obvious reasons, was the period of the Great War, but the Silver Jubilee of George V was also an occasion for celebrating what were believed to be the blessings of being English/British. The relevant chapters chronicle this phenomenon in some detail. At this stage, it is intended to indicate in general terms the possible nature of this national identity, as it relates both to the Labour Party and to the monarchy. What kind of identity was being celebrated? To what extent was the institution of the monarchy bound up with this identity?

Scholars who have examined this area have tended to emphasise the influence upon Labour of hegemonic ideas of national identity.

"Socialists, unless isolated, do take on the colour of their surroundings. Nationalism does penetrate socialism to the extent that the latter is located rather than flown in from the outside."<sup>32</sup>

Although Yeo employs the term 'nationalism' rather than national identity, the point remains. Nairn does not restrict his comments to socialists or to the Labour Party, but the breadth of his sweep cannot but implicate elements, at least, of Labour and its supporters.

"...it is a fact that all classes have an inevitable stake in the nation and overall national culture, however defined. In England-Britain that definition has, since the defeat of chartism (and the virtual elimination of republicanism), been overwhelmingly - and on the whole successfully – archaic, traditionalist, politically deferential and royal."<sup>33</sup>

Nairn goes on to argue that British self-definition for the same period was also liberal, and argues powerfully that what he calls "Whig-Labour" interpretations of national identity "consistently inverted the truth by pretending that tradition inevitably served progress".<sup>34</sup> At this point, it may be stated that evidence emerges throughout this thesis to support Nairn's contention.

Categories must not, however, be carelessly conflated. Within the ranks of Labour and its supporters were a range of positions: some

were unabashed monarchists; others were more ‘semi-detached’ in their monarchism, indulging in the comfortable belief that the traditional enabled the progressive; others found themselves obliged to accept the monarchy on the grounds that its popularity was too broad and deep to challenge; very few (and often a Scottish very few), consistently advocated republicanism. This raises the question of whether the apparent preponderance of Scots amongst the republicans indicates that attachment to the monarchy was stronger within English Labour than within Scottish, and whether it was the ideological power of monarchy within Englishness that underlay this. This particular sub-topic is not examined sufficiently in this work to offer a definitive conclusion, but the indications point to affirmative answers to both questions.

One point to consider is whether Labour had a distinctive version of patriotism. When, at moments of national crisis or national festivity, it celebrated Englishness, was it a form which differed in tone or content from conservative expressions? It is in this sphere that careful attention to language is rewarding. If all expressions of patriotism make claim to a special (and usually superior) status for the nation in question, then the bases for that claim may vary considerably. The mid-1930s provide a particularly fertile ground for examining this subject. Several major events involving the monarchy occurred within less than three years, and against a international backdrop of the growth of fascism and nazism. Labour’s attitudes to the former were heavily marked by

awareness of the latter. It is hoped that the analysis of this period proves a corrective to Miles Taylor's too narrowly conceived portrayal of the British left's reaction to the monarchy, at this period, which draws its evidence almost exclusively from the Communist Party. Taylor asserts that,

"...both the British communist movement and the left in general continued to equate patriotism with jingoism – indeed the jubilee and the abdication crisis actually revived the notion of jingoism in a new form."<sup>35</sup>

This distortion requires the corrective of a more subtle and differentiated interpretation of the 'left's' position on the monarchy and patriotism at that juncture.

#### 4) Labour, the monarchy and the British Constitution.

Throughout the periods covered by this thesis, the role of the Crown in politics received intermittent Labour attention. Most notably, it came in for critical scrutiny in 1910, 1914, 1931 and 1936. To a lesser degree, it was also under hostile gaze during the Great War. Such periodic suspicion and concern should not disguise the fact that these incidents were temporary exceptions to an underlying positive evaluation of the Crown, and of the potentialities and workings of the unwritten Constitution. It is difficult to disagree with Wright's generalisation.

"The starting point is the history of satisfaction with British constitutional arrangements on the part of British socialists, certainly of most of them at most periods, coupled with an attitude towards radical reconstruction which ranged from indifference to apathy."<sup>36</sup>

If Labour had such a thing as an "ideology of the Constitution", then that would reflect not only the arrangements and practices they saw or read about, but how they saw themselves and their interests within that context. It would also reflect something of attitudes to political struggle which had derived from Labour's radical roots in the nineteenth century.

The obvious exception to Wright's generalisation must be stated; the House of Lords was a constant target of Labour attack, and throughout the period under review in this work there were plans for its reform. Its pre-democratic and hereditary character may have been shared with the monarchy, but its continued legislative role and overt hostility to progressive change were distinctive. So, acceptance of the following conclusion implies excluding the case of the upper chamber.

"Historically, Labour has adopted a constitutionalist approach, and adhered to the institutions, procedures and norms of the British state."<sup>37</sup>

If this has, indeed, been true of Labour, then it would coincide with what McKibbin claims to have been the attitude prevailing in the working class, which had,

"....inherited ideologies which emphasized a common citizenship, the fairness of the rules of the game and the class-neutrality of the major institutions of the state."<sup>38</sup>

The monarchy lay at the heart of the Constitution, and if the opinions cited above are accurate, then Labour's faith in the constitutionality of the Crown and in the impartial exercise of its powers must have comprised one aspect of that ideology. If it did so, then it was not without periodic lapses into doubt and even hostility. These lapses were the result of the impact of the actual working of the Constitution upon Labour's idealised conception of it.

The nineteenth century had seen a series of concessions to radical demands for more representative government, and these successes generated optimism about the capacities of the Constitution to accommodate and even to enable further change. The convictions and strategy of those radicals bear a strong resemblance to Labour's own.

"Political radicals, taking the institutions of the state largely for granted, persisted with a constitutionalist approach, a pragmatic strategy

and settled for incremental change in the fairly optimistic expectation that their rights as 'freeborn Englishmen' would be recognised by Whig governments and that concessions would eventually be made."<sup>39</sup>

Nairn perceptively quotes Herbert Butterfield on the Whig interpretation of history, which Butterfield believed was itself "a product of history, part of the inescapable inheritance of Englishmen".<sup>40</sup> The Labour Party was composed of Englishmen who would seem to have appreciated this inheritance. In more polemical tone, Nairn condemns "left-wing genuflexions at the altar of Crowned Whiggery".<sup>41</sup> The Constitution which had emerged from the nineteenth century appeared not simply to offer no obstacle to Labour's political aims, but to provide the opportunity to achieve them.<sup>42</sup> Throughout this work, Labour figures praise and celebrate the way in which the workings of the Constitution had enabled the Labour Party to enter Parliament and then government. Mild surprise and strong delight are frequently expressed at the "fair play" which Labour received, particularly from the Crown. There is an eagerness to find the latter; evidence that Labour shared a more general predisposition.

"The British like to believe, and most do so genuinely, that the monarchy is above politics, that the very essence of constitutional queencraft or kingcraft is that the sovereign reigns but does not rule..."<sup>43</sup>

Labour may also have liked to believe this, but there were, periodically, events which shook the belief. These moments of crisis arose from the “fluidity surrounding the bundle of custom, precedent and procedure at the very heart of the Constitution”.<sup>44</sup> The royal prerogative, without defined legal status, afforded the possibilities both of the monarch’s political intervention and of ministerial deployment of the prerogative’s powers, thereby avoiding the customary parliamentary route to legislation. Thus George V was able to convene a “Buckingham Palace conference” over the pre-war Ulster crisis; the wartime government could introduce Orders in Council, by-passing Parliament; the King was able to call upon MacDonald to form a government without his party’s participation. These incidents, and others, led Labour not necessarily to challenge or question the powers of the Crown under the unwritten Constitution, but rather to criticise the specific actions of the King. It was only in the aftermath of 1931, and then only in the writings of Laski, that the dangers and potentialities inherent in the royal prerogative were systematically examined.<sup>45</sup> For the most part, Labour seemed to take on trust that the machinery of the Constitution would be operated “fairly”, and seemed to share “an implicit belief in the existence of certain anchorages of restraint [which] still informs, conditions and disciplines the apparently uninhibited interplay of politics within a political constitution”.<sup>46</sup> When those anchorages of restraint appeared to have been slipped, Labour

reacted. However, the reaction did not extend to re-appraisal of the vestigial powers of the Crown, let alone to any impulse to reform.

### 5) Scope and orientation.

The thesis does not claim to cover the general topic exhaustively. There was neither the time nor space for such treatment. The chronological coverage ends with the coronation of George VI, and there remains a vast amount of fruitful enquiry to be had into the periods of the second world war, the post-war Attlee government and subsequently. Secondly, the study does not include the first two periods of Labour government. Whilst the thesis does not ignore or fight shy of "high politics", to cover those periods would involve a detailed analysis of royal involvement in such areas as ministerial appointments and the direction of some aspects of government policy (foreign policy, particularly, comes to mind).<sup>47</sup> Not only would this have been to enter the time- and space-consuming field of government and Cabinet politics, but it would, to provide an adequate coverage, have required access to sources denied to the research student (especially the Royal Archives). For this latter reason also, the thesis concerns what the Labour Party made of the monarchy, and not what the monarchy made of the Labour Party.

As hinted earlier, the study does not restrict its coverage to high or low politics. The distinction is regarded as artificial, in the sense that there was a constant interplay of forces at work, with mutually determining processes and outcomes. It shares Lawrence's rejection of the "artificial and debilitating gulf" between high and low politics.<sup>48</sup>

"In studying popular politics, we are...studying the interaction between the worlds of 'formal' and 'informal' politics, conscious that the relationship between the two is never unmediated, and that our analysis must therefore always be sensitive to the tensions and ambiguities in the relationship between 'leaders' and 'led'."<sup>49</sup>

Thus the description and analysis shifts constantly between national and local politics, and between national and local press sources.

Likewise, whilst using the label "Labour Party" in its title, the thesis is not narrowly focused only on that organisation. Besides the party's leadership, membership and affiliated press, there remains the constant presence of its supporters, and of its opponents. The former imposed an unquantifiable weight of influence upon party attitudes and policy. The latter helped to define what Labour was for, by demonstrating what it was not. Thus, at various points in the thesis, attention is given to Labour's rivals on the left; and to its Conservative opponents; particularly

to the evidence relating to ideology, embedded in right-wing press accounts of events in the 1930s.

Finally, there is a dimension noticeable by its absence; gender. Whether or not there were (or are) important distinctions to be drawn between male and female attitudes to monarchy, inside or outside the Labour Party, is an important question. Raphael Samuel has no compunction in identifying such a distinction in contemporary terms.

"It is now the domestic rather than the dynastic preoccupations of the monarchy which fascinate the public (or at any rate the female half of it)."<sup>50</sup>

This is a bold claim, and no evidence is presented in its support. In this thesis, no claims are made about gender variations, because no evidence emerged to indicate such. Perhaps other, untapped, sources may have added this dimension, but the uncomfortable truth is that in every aspect, period and source referred to, the masculine voice is not merely dominant; it is exclusively present. The social psychologist, Michael Billig, gathered his own evidence of contemporary gendered interest in monarchy, and presents a suggestive account of distinctive attitudes.<sup>51</sup> No evidence emerged to illuminate this field for the period covered by the thesis

## 6) Methodology.

The thesis draws upon two forms of academic discourse. The first comprises a fairly conventional historiographical account, in which description and analysis of a series of historical events follow a chronological sequence. Parts of the thesis are handled differently. The sections dealing with the 1930s present detailed textual analyses of press coverage of specific events dealt with in the accompanying chronological account. The discourse of these sections comes from linguistics, albeit a 'practical', text-analytical type of linguistics. The text analysis is placed adjacent to the conventional history, for fear that integration might have led to unnecessary confusion and to a clash of discourse types. It is hoped that these sections of text analysis possess an explanatory power which deepens and refines the accompanying historical account.

As indicated, much attention is given to press coverage of the historical events under examination, primarily as a source of contemporary evidence. The weight of coverage is given to what may be termed the "Labour press", and in particular to the *Daily Herald*. As the daily newspaper institutionally embedded in the Labour movement, it is the one likely to provide the most comprehensive and informative accounts of Labour's attitudes and conduct vis-a vis the monarchy. However, this is far from being the only reason to attend to the Labour press. The overt

functions of reporting and commenting upon current affairs were not pursued in an ideological vacuum. In reporting and commenting upon the monarchy, for example, the newspaper's content reflected not simply some external and material "reality", but two other crucial influences: a view of the world in which the monarchy and Labour were represented in particular ways, along with a representation of an historical context in which both were located; secondly, an understanding or perception of what the newspaper's readership believed, were interested in, and wanted to read. Contemporary textual analysis correctly emphasises the significance of investigating readers' response to text. At the period covered by this thesis, no systematic studies were made of readership profiles and attitudes. However, from 1938 onwards, Mass Observation published findings about the readership of national newspapers. Much may be inferred from this source about the earlier 1930's. In addition, Political and Economic Planning produced their *Report on the British Press* in 1938.

Thus the focus of the study shifts from a conventional historical analysis of events to analysis of press representation of those events. The approach shifts from historical narrative to one which draws conceptually and methodologically from other disciplines. The objective of this section is to expose, compare and analyse the ways in which a cross-section of popular British newspapers represented three royal events. These events were the Silver Jubilee of George V, the Coronation of George VI and the

Abdication of Edward VIII. Press coverage of them will be subjected to a form of textual analysis which aims to uncover the ideological framework which underpins and informs their accounts. The narratives which the newspapers present serve ideological and political functions, as well as embodying a partial representation of the ideology from which they are constructed. Evidence about the respective ideological characters of the newspapers is to be sought in the "discourse" of popular monarchy. Given this shift of focus, towards a concern with ideology and its realisation through discourse, some explanation is necessary of theoretical assumptions, interpretative methodology and the criteria for selection of textual evidence.

#### Theoretical assumptions.

Concern with "discourse" is widespread and fashionable throughout the social sciences. The term itself carries much ambiguity, as definitions vary according to which discipline embraces it. However, historiography has, in the last ten years, been riven by the implications of a particular approach to discourse and history, labelled both by proponents and sceptics as the "linguistic turn". Essentially, this approach has taken up the post-structuralist interpretation of Saussurean linguistics, in order to attack what it characterises as a fundamental misconception at the heart of the materialist programme. The basis of this misconception is held to be a naive and simplistic belief in "reality" and "experience" as

existing outside, but being represented through, language. Patrick Joyce, the foremost British proponent of the "linguistic turn" summarises the conflict thus:

"For historians, there is the danger that 'the real' and 'history' themselves become a new foundation upon which to base a defence of truth against the perils of what is taken to be the chaos of relativism evident in post-modernism. This outlook tends to rest on a view of language in which there is still a direct correspondence between it and the world. Whereas it is the burden of the view of language that underlies the advent of 'post-modernism'....that this is not so. Rather, what has been called the 'semiotic challenge' questions our assumption that 'the difference between the signified and the signifier is the categorical difference between a phenomenal entity and its epiphenomenal representation'.<sup>52</sup>

Admitting the failure of his *Visions of the People*<sup>53</sup> to adhere to this approach because of its ultimate recourse to the foundation of "experience", Joyce prefers the label "hermeneutic turn" rather than "linguistic turn", in which "the only true foundation is that there is no true foundation, only the making of meaning".<sup>54</sup>

Objections to this particular direction of the linguistic turn are many, but the central charge is that language and 'reality' are conflated; that there is no reality beyond language and discourse.

"..if reality does not extend beyond representation in language and discourse, then how can we logically and practically investigate....the links between the 'linguistic', the 'social', the 'political' and the 'economic'?"<sup>55</sup>

For the current work, the basic inadequacy of this version of the "linguistic turn" is summarised in Eagleton's observation that:

"The category of discourse is inflated to the point where it imperializes the whole world, eliding the distinction between thought and reality. The effect of this is to undercut the critique of ideology - for if ideas and material reality are given indissolubly together, there can be no question of asking where social ideas actually hail from."<sup>56</sup>

As will be evident from the approach demonstrated in the rest of this thesis, the existence of a material reality beyond discourse is not in dispute here. However, that does not entail simple-minded belief in the correspondence between language and that material reality, nor does it deny the crucial significance of discourse and language in the construction of social reality. The approach does not seek to attribute determinist

power either to material factors or to rhetorical construction. Instead, it comes close to Wahrman's notion of a "space of possibilities between social reality and its representation".<sup>57</sup>

### Methodological Approach.

This study does agree with Joyce in the importance he attaches to the field of hermeneutics.<sup>58</sup> However, the form of hermeneutics from which it draws its methodology has quite different assumptions and procedures, which avoid the charges of idealism and subjectivism which have been levelled at Joyce and others. This study draws upon "depth hermeneutics", which has been most eloquently expounded by Paul Ricoeur.<sup>59</sup> His approach to cultural analysis gives a central role to the process of interpretation of the object, but only within a consideration of the social-historical context. The process of interpretation is mediated by what Ricoeur calls "objectifying techniques", which deepen and enrich the interpretation and which attend to the complexity of the object domain. There are essentially three procedures which are employed simultaneously in the depth-hermeneutic methodology. The first is "social-historical analysis", the study of the social-historical context within which cultural phenomena occur. In the present study, much of this dimension is approached through the historiographical account of contexts which form

part of the chapters which also incorporate text analysis. The second procedure is "discursive analysis". All symbolic constructions (of which the texts dealt with in the sections of linguistic analysis constitute a generic type), possess structural features, patterns and relations. These are susceptible to formal analysis, which in the case of written texts will involve the deployment of linguistic techniques. The third procedure involved in depth hermeneutics is "interpretation". This builds upon the two previous procedures and is:

"...a creative, imaginative activity which transcends the closure of symbolic constructions treated as structured systems, and embroils the interpreter in a necessarily risky, conflict-laden arena...Symbolic constructions are already an interpretation, so that to take undertake an analysis of them is to produce an interpretation of an interpretation, to re-interpret a pre-interpreted domain."<sup>60</sup>

### Ideology and Discourse.

Before passing on to a consideration of the specific set of events and texts to be dealt with, some general statements of definition and orientation need to be offered. The term "ideology" has been applied to a shifting and conflicting range of ideas, but as used in this work, the term

has a particular value.<sup>61</sup> It is well-summarised by Thompson in the following way:

"To study ideology..is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination..(It) has often been assumed that ideology operates like a sort of social cement, binding the members of a society together by providing them with collectively shared assumptions and norms....Yet however pervasive it may be, this assumption is highly questionable..Rather (we should) redirect this theory away from the search for collectively shared values and towards the study of complex ways in which meaning is mobilized for the maintenance of relations of domination."<sup>62</sup>

This extract has been quoted at length because its critical conception of ideology is central to this study. Not only is it concerned with power relationships between social groups or classes, and the ways in which those relationships are represented, and legitimated or subverted, but the approach presupposes a complex and heterogeneous process of achieving these ends. It performs the valuable task of predisposing the text analyst towards seeking, and seeking to explain, divergences as much as similarities, thereby reducing the tendency towards simplistic and distorted accounts of ideological processes. A useful concept to invoke here is that of the "social imaginary". The texts under consideration here

played their part in producing an image of social groups and the relationships between them; of the past and the present, and the relationship between them. Ideology has an "integrative" function, of closing gaps between social classes and between the past and the present. It does so by way of justifying the system of authority as it is; and by distorting the existing order of reality to conceal certain features of the social world.

#### Texts and Contexts.

The text analysis sections of this study examine the coverage given by a group of British newspapers of the three royal ceremonies indicated above. In the broadest terms, these ceremonies, and the reporting of them, reflected the current social and political status of the monarchy, the political condition of the country, the international context, and the historical background to the events. The events provided the occasion for reflecting upon these and other aspects of British society, and for projecting an understanding of that society. Through its reports and commentary, a newspaper constructs not only a representation of the society in which it is embedded, but a social framework within which it then locates its reader. This complex process involves an implicit situating of the "ideal reader" within the interpreted and projected social framework. Newspaper editors may claim that what they produce is what their

readership demands or expects, but as Stuart Hall indicates, this is an inadequate explanation of the relationship between press and readership:

"Newspapers must continually situate themselves within the assumed knowledge and interests of their readership, consciously or unconsciously adopt modes and strategies of address: they must 'take the attitude of their significant other', in any particular case about any particular person or event. Language, style and format are therefore products of a process of symbolic interaction between the newspaper and its audiences.."<sup>63</sup>

The principal interest of the current study is to identify similarities and differences within a group of popular British newspapers in their interpretation and representation not just of the historical events themselves, but of how their readership can and ought to be situated towards those events.

The criteria for selecting the newspapers from which to draw texts were straightforward. As the thesis attempts to explain Labour's unfolding relations to the institution of monarchy, those newspapers with institutional links to the Party, and whose readership was most likely to be drawn from its members or sympathisers, are obvious candidates for study. Thus, the *Daily Herald*, *Reynolds Illustrated News* and the *Town Crier* are three of the newspapers examined. Additionally, this choice provides scope for

analysing variations and conflicts of interpretation within the Labour movement, as these three newspapers differed considerably in their treatment of events. It will appear much less obvious why, in a work dealing with the Labour Party, extensive analysis is made of the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*. The first reason for doing so relates to the notion of context of situation, introduced above. These newspapers provide alternative reactions, against which the response of Labour can be assessed. Their role here is that of a foil, necessary to any exercise in contrastive analysis. To analyse the responses of the Labour press to events in isolation from the broader press and ideological contexts, is to present an impoverished picture. The *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* were "popular", as distinct from the "quality" or the merely "pictorial" newspapers, and are thus broadly comparable in type with the *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds*. The contrastive value of including these two right-wing newspapers is not the sole reason for their presence in this work. These two publications were read by large numbers of Labour voters and sympathisers. Figures cited below suggest that 32% of *Mail* and *Express* readers were supporters of the Labour Party, whilst 41% of this group identified themselves with the Conservative Party. Notwithstanding questions concerning the influence which newspapers might have upon the world-views of their readership, the sheer fact that large numbers of Labour supporters were textually immersed in these conservative representations of events must be a factor in our understanding of where

Labour stood vis-a-vis the monarchy. The way in which events were represented would have helped to frame the terms in which those events were understood by individuals and social groups from whom Labour drew its support. Underlying the treatment of the monarchy and royalty are wider and deeper concerns: beliefs and perceptions about the nation, its past, present and future; attention to those social groups for whom the newspaper purported to speak; and commercial considerations, as prestige events such as a jubilee or a coronation had a significant effect upon a newspaper's advertising revenue. The social profiles of the respective readerships of the four national newspapers under analysis were distinct in quite complex ways. The distinctions will be discussed later. Some Labour critics charged the *Daily Herald*, in particular, of being no different to the Conservative popular press in its treatment of the events under analysis. It should be apparent from the following study that this allegation ignores important distinctions which require more subtle handling if one is to understand how Labour perceived and reacted to popular monarchy in the 1930's.

<sup>1</sup> Michael English, *The Constitutional Structure*, Machinery of Government Study Group Labour Party Archives, RE 1633K

<sup>2</sup> W. Hamilton, 1975, *My Queen and I*, London, p13

<sup>3</sup> B. Pimlott, 1997ed., *The Queen*, London, p424

<sup>4</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 93 No. 2411, June 3, 1977, p733

<sup>5</sup> Cited in T. Nairn, 1988, *The Enchanted Glass*, London, p20

<sup>6</sup> *Independent on Sunday*, October 23, 1994

<sup>7</sup> *Fabian Review*, Vol. 106, No. 6, December 1994, and Vol. 107, No. 1, February 1995

<sup>8</sup> P. Richards, 1996, *Long to reign over us?*, Fabian Pamphlet 576, London

<sup>9</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 124, No. 4261, November 24, 1995 & August 28, 1998

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- <sup>10</sup> *Independent on Sunday*, October 23, 1994
- <sup>11</sup> For Martin's unchanging views, see K. Martin, 1962, *The Crown and the Establishment*, London, pp167-176
- <sup>12</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 124, No.4261, November 24, 1995
- <sup>13</sup> *Fabian Review*, Vol. 108, No. 6, Winter 1996
- <sup>14</sup> M. Foley, 1999, *The Politics of the British Constitution*, Manchester, p109
- <sup>15</sup> *New Statesman*, September 12, 1997
- <sup>16</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 122, No. 4137, June 4, 1993
- <sup>17</sup> *New Statesman*, August 28, 1998
- <sup>18</sup> R. McKibbin, 1998, *Classes and Culrues: England 1918-1951*, Oxford, p3
- <sup>19</sup> R. Miliband, 1982, *Capitalist Democracy*, Oxford, p126
- <sup>20</sup> D. Cannadine, 1998, *Class in Britain*, London, p141
- <sup>21</sup> McKibbin, op.cit., p15
- <sup>22</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, October 19, 1957
- <sup>23</sup> J.A. Thompson, "Labour and the Modern British Monarchy", in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol.lxx, 1971
- <sup>24</sup> B. Pimlott, 1994, *Frustate Their Knavish Tricks*, London, p383
- <sup>25</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 93, No.2411, June 3, 1977
- <sup>26</sup> Quoted in Cannadine, op.cit., p140
- <sup>27</sup> E. Wertheimer, 1929, *A Portrait of the Labour Party*, London, p91
- <sup>28</sup> T. Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass*, p188
- <sup>29</sup> T. Nairn, "Britain's Royal Romance", in R Samuel (ed.), 1989, *Patriotism: the making and unmaking of British national identity*, Vol. 3 London, p83
- <sup>30</sup> R. McKibbin, 1994 ed., *The Ideologies of Class*, Oxford, p32
- <sup>31</sup> T. Nairn, "Britain's royal romance", p76
- <sup>32</sup> S. Yeo, "Socialism, the State and some oppositional Englishness", in R. Colls & P. Dodd, 1986, *Englishness*, London, p312
- <sup>33</sup> T. Nairn, "Britain's royal romance", p77
- <sup>34</sup> ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> M. Taylor, "Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain", in *The Historical Journal*, 33, 4 (1990), p980
- <sup>36</sup> A. Wright, "British Socialists and the British Constitution", in *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.43, No.3, July 1990, pp323-4
- <sup>37</sup> B. Jones & M. Keating, 1985, *Labour and the British State*, Oxford, p183
- <sup>38</sup> McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class*, p24
- <sup>39</sup> Jones & Keating, op.cit., p17
- <sup>40</sup> Quoted in Nairn, op.cit., p124
- <sup>41</sup> ibid., p345
- <sup>42</sup> Wright, op.cit., p324
- <sup>43</sup> P. Hennessy, 1995, *The Hidden Wiring*, London, p54
- <sup>44</sup> ibid., p33
- <sup>45</sup> For example in H.J. Laski, 1933, *The Labour Party and the Constitution*, London
- <sup>46</sup> Foley, op.cit., p37
- <sup>47</sup> Royal involvement in the first two periods of Labour government receives some attention in, amongst other works, D. Marquand, 1977, *Ramsay MacDonald*, London, and D. Carlton, 1970, *MacDonald versus Henderson*, London
- <sup>48</sup> J. Lawrence, 1998, *Speaking for the People*, Cambridge, p62
- <sup>49</sup> ibid., p61
- <sup>50</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 112, No.2886, July 18, 1986
- <sup>51</sup> M. Billig, 1992, *Talking of the Royal Family*, London, pp172-201
- <sup>52</sup> P. Joyce, 1994, *Democratic Subjects*, Cambridge, p8
- <sup>53</sup> P. Joyce, 1991, *Visions of the People*, Cambridge
- <sup>54</sup> Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*, p13
- <sup>55</sup> Neville Kirk, "History, Language, Ideas and Post-modernism: a materialist view", in *Social History*, Vol.19, No.2, May 1994, p221

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<sup>56</sup> T. Eagleton, 1991, *Ideology*, London, p219

<sup>57</sup> D. Wahrman, 1995, *Imagining the Middle Class*, Cambridge, p8

<sup>58</sup> See Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*

<sup>59</sup> P. Ricoeur, 1981, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, Cambridge

<sup>60</sup> Thompson, op.cit., p369

<sup>61</sup> See R. Williams, 1983 ed., *Keywords*, London, pp153-157

<sup>62</sup> J.B. Thompson, 1984, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, Cambridge, pp4-5

<sup>63</sup> in A.C.H. Smith, 1975, *Paper Voices*, London, p22

## Chapter One: Labour and Monarchy: analysing the background.

### Introduction.

This chapter attempts to contextualise Labour attitudes towards the monarchy by examining the nineteenth-century political environment from which they emerged. It covers the period up to the Great War, follows a chronological course, but in one or two instances introduces relevant material from a later period. It contends that Labour attitudes reflected both the political traditions which the Labour Party drew upon from the nineteenth century, and the particular cultural and political changes affecting the monarchy and the nation in the period 1870-1900. The analysis incorporates events, periods and ideas which predate the formation of the Labour Party, or even of the socialist organisations which preceded it and figured in its formation. However, a central theme in this analysis will be that of continuity; if not necessarily of personnel, then of attitudes and ideology.

### Republicanism, radicalism and the working class.

The alliance of forces which joined at the beginning of the twentieth century to form the Labour Party, drew upon a broad and varied political and ideological inheritance. However, the new party was overwhelmingly working-class in its composition, and it was to the working class that it looked for support, a fact which did much to influence its attitude to the monarchy. The

Party reflected, and had to reflect upon, the dominant attitudes towards the monarchy current amongst the working class.

Two relationships need to be considered separately. The first is between popular opinion and the institution of monarchy, including the role of the Crown. The second is between republicanism and the working class. To start with the former; historians have noted several shifts in public attitudes towards the monarchy during the nineteenth century, whilst at the same time detecting a long-term trend of increasing popularity. That popularity was not simply an accident of history, but the result also of deliberate attempts to manipulate public attitudes. Some of the phenomena associated with the popularizing of the British monarchy in the late nineteenth century have been recognised as originating as far back as the reign of George III.<sup>1</sup> A popular cult of monarchy was fostered, with careful attention to pageantry and ceremonial, culminating in the jubilee celebrations of 1809; power and splendour were demonstrated through large and expensive constructions of royal residences; newspapers publicised royal events as never before. Colley makes the point that the reign of George III left significant and durable legacies.

"By the end of his reign, the monarchy was more genuinely and assertively British than it had been before; it was indisputably more splendid; and it was more securely at one with the politics of unreason and emotionalism. It was now axiomatic that royal celebrations should ideally involve all political

affiliations, all religious groupings and all parts of Great Britain...This had by no means always been the case."<sup>2</sup>

More positive perceptions of the monarchy derived also from the Crown's gradual withdrawal from political life during the nineteenth century. By the end of the century it had exchanged its earlier political role for a ceremonial one which was "emotionally pleasing and politically uncontentious"<sup>3</sup>.

One theme thrown up by the "Queen Caroline" episode which had resonance in popular politics throughout the century is that of the royal defender of the Constitution and of "fair play". Thus, even the republican William Benbow could proclaim:

"And a QUEEN will now bring down the corrupt conspirators against the Peace, Honour and Life of the Innocent."<sup>4</sup>

A similar theme emerges from the popular agitation over the Tichborne case, in the form of a demand for:

"....straight dealing in social behaviour. The term helps us to understand how 'politics' was constructed by the working class - the feeling that a corrupt world can be restored by purity amongst the rulers."<sup>5</sup>

The agitation in support of the Claimant in the Tichborne affair produced a weekly newspaper devoted exclusively to the case, nationally organised defence funds, and the Magna Carta Association. The latter included amongst its aims support of the House of Lords and "to restore the Crown to the Queen". The principle behind such demands was radical constitutionalism, which looked to the good king to provide a check on despotic ministers. That the destiny of the Association should have been its eventual evolution into a radical club, and subsequently an element in the formation of Hyndman's Democratic Federation, is suggestive of the complex derivation of values and beliefs affecting popular attitudes towards the monarchy. Antipathy towards monarchy within popular radicalism was not automatic, so long as that monarchy represented acceptable values, and upheld or defended constitutional principles, for "the traditions of British popular radicalism had in fact from their very inception been predominantly legalistic and constitutional."<sup>6</sup> This characteristic of the radical tradition can be seen as particularly significant for a new party, such as Labour, of political "outsiders" seeking to use the existing constitutional framework to achieve their political objectives. The appeal to the Crown as the guarantor of "fair play" was recurrent in later periods, as Labour strove for influence and then office:

"...there was, even among radical and labour politicians, a residual constitutional rhetoric which saw the crown as an essentially British institution

which had on occasion - mostly in the distant past in which myth and history fuse - been the defender and preserver of British liberties."<sup>7</sup>

Significantly, the Chartists did not include the abolition of the monarchy in their six points, and their slogan in 1848 was, "France has the Republic, England shall have the Charter". However, Chartism was infused with the rhetoric and ideas of anti-monarchism.<sup>8</sup> The general attitude taken by Chartists was precisely that adopted by many in the Labour Party, even well into the twentieth century.

"Although most Chartists would have declared themselves to be republicans, they did not identify the throne as the seat of reaction or even as a serious threat to reform."<sup>9</sup>

However, some Chartists did want to abolish the monarchy. Harney's London Democratic Association claimed a membership of 3,000 in 1838, and its aims were both political and socio-economic. It wanted to abolish the monarchy, the House of Lords and the profit system. Unlike many other Chartists, and later politicians who shared their relative indifference to its abolition, Harney did not regard the monarchy as a mere relic of a passing order, but recognised its active role in conserving inequality and injustice.

"The nature of Harney's republicanism rested on his belief that monarchy was a shield for the rule of a privileged aristocracy and the support for a privileged Church. Democracy and social equality can be achieved only in a republic."<sup>10</sup>

The extent of popular support for republicanism at this period is difficult to determine, but appears to have been small. One explanation may be that it fell victim to the split in the Chartist movement. Republicanism was a central element in Harney's political programme. He sought the abolition of the monarchy as well as the establishment of social and economic equality, and around 1848 there was evidence of widespread republicanism within the Chartist movement. However, this development proved weak, damaged by events on the Continent and by the strength of Feargus O'Connor's appeal. He opposed the republicanism and socialism of Harney's wing.

"The real centres of working-class radicalism and militancy in the Chartist period were not in the London area but in the North. And here republican propaganda was blunted by the 'magic' of O'Connor."<sup>11</sup>

In examining attitudes to the monarchy amongst political radicals, fundamentally different positions are identifiable. On the one hand, monarchy was represented as the defender of constitutional liberties, upholder of the rights of the ordinary man in the face of attempts to corrupt the system and

defraud the people. In contrast, another strain of radical opinion identified the monarchy as parasitical and part of an old, discredited system. In this latter perspective:

"Corruption, tyranny and the polarity between wealth and poverty within existing society was ascribed to the political depredations of a parasitic class...At least into the 1870's radical rhetoric of a republican kind referred contemptuously to the inequality of treatment meted out to royal paupers at the top of society and workhouse paupers at the bottom."<sup>12</sup>

The tension between these two strands of opinion could still be felt more than half a century later, when even those who condemned the opulence and extravagance associated with the monarchy looked to the royal prerogative to defend parliamentary democracy against attack from reactionary forces.

The brief revival of republicanism in the early 1870's can be attributed to several factors: dissatisfaction with a royal family which was seen as failing in its responsibilities; economic depression; and the fall of the French second empire.<sup>13</sup> This episode must be treated with care, as there were many strands to the agitation. The political leadership of the republican movement had, within months of the formation of the first republican club, split into a moderate and an extreme tendency. The former was associated with Bradlaugh, who was keen that they should remain strictly constitutional and avoid accusations of sedition and treason. The latter, associated with the International Working

Men's Association and Marx, unequivocally supported the Paris Commune and all that it represented. In terms of numbers of people attracted to public meetings, and in terms of the dissemination of its case, it was Bradlaugh's "constitutional" wing which prevailed.

Part of the explanation for the greater success of Bradlaugh's campaign lay in its concentration upon the expense of the monarchy and the failings of individual members of the royal family. This drew upon an existing anti-monarchism, described by Antony Taylor.

"Its opposition to the throne is based simply upon a stock of long-standing radical images of corrupt practice in British politics. By drawing attention to these it suggests that aristocratic and kingly rule is irredeemably flawed by the sloth, intrigue and dissoluteness of a leisured and pampered lifestyle." <sup>14</sup>

Whilst the founders and organisers of republican clubs identified the idea of a republic with radical social and economic change, the spontaneous spread and growth of provincial clubs, and the enormous public meetings addressed by Bradlaugh, Dilke and others, drew their impetus from narrower political concerns. The former were often ex-Chartists, members of the International Working Men's Association and of the Land and Labour League, and looked for a "social republic". Their position was summarised by a speaker at an East End republican meeting in April 1871:

"A republic, to be of any use to the masses of the people, must deal with the social question affecting their interest."<sup>15</sup>

The leading public figures of 1870's republicanism, such as Bradlaugh and Dilke, were radical democrats, and were hostile to socialism. It has been argued that the republican movement was a movement from below, of popular radicalism, and was identified with the aim of the social republic.<sup>16</sup> However, a convincing case can be made that the real upsurge in popularity for republicanism drew upon that particular form of anti-monarchism alluded to above. Thus the rapid growth of provincial republican clubs received impetus from the issue of a dowry for Princess Louise in 1871; then of an allowance for Prince Arthur, and then the question of the Civil List in 1872. Furthermore, the case against the monarchy expressed at the great public meetings, in the most popular republican pamphlets such as Bradlaugh's *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*, and in highly publicised parliamentary debates, was that of waste and dereliction of duty.

"Like much - indeed most - British republican writing then and later, these stressed the expense of monarchy and attacked the extravagances and failings of actual figures rather than arguing the case for a republic as a more rational and democratic form of government."<sup>17</sup>

This approach reflected and continued a further traditional concern of popular radicalism; a commitment to retrenchment in central government expenditure. Radicals saw the state essentially as an appendage of the upper classes, and as inherently oppressive, inefficient and corrupt. It was this tradition that Dilke drew upon in addressing the huge public gatherings of 1871:

"Stridently anti-monarchical in tone, his rhetoric relied upon received radical antagonism to the evils of Old Corruption rather than suggesting novel democratic mechanisms for social and economic change."<sup>18</sup>

Favourite targets of radicals included the costs of the army, navy, the national debt and the Civil List. Working-class radicals reacted angrily against Lowe's proposed match tax in 1871 because it,

"...looked like treason against the sacred canons of Cobdenite and Gladstonite taxation committed by a notoriously anti-democratic Chancellor in order to compensate aristocratic officers for the abolition of the purchase system and to provide Princess Louise with a dowry."<sup>19</sup>

Later in the century, Lib-Labs directed their fire on the House of Lords and on grants to royalty. Thus in 1889, Mabon opposed a grant to the children of the Prince of Wales. As will be demonstrated later, it was essentially the anti-monarchical critique which provided the basis of Keir Hardie's attacks on

royalty, and of the protests which the Labour Party intermittently made about the monarchy in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The transformation of the monarchy and the decline of republicanism.

On many occasions, Labour politicians and writers in affiliated journals noted that the rise of Labour coincided with the decline of republicanism.

"The Republican movement, like the Agnostic movement, died out with the advent of the Labour movement. Experience has shown conclusively that it matters not whether a King wears a crown, or a President wears a chain."<sup>20</sup>

Nearly forty years later, J.R. Clynes made the same observation.

"Before the Labour Party was established, there was a considerable republican party in this country. It is significant that as the Labour Party has grown, respect for the monarchy has increased and republican convictions have withered."<sup>21</sup>

There was more than coincidence here. Although remnants of republicanism never entirely disappeared from Labour politics, it is clear that for many in the

new Party, rejection of republicanism as a live political issue performed the same function for Labour as it had for nineteenth-century radicalism. Taylor observes that:

"Republicanism's greatest contribution to nineteenth-century radicalism was...the degree to which it helped define a sphere of operations independent of, and outside, mainstream Liberalism."<sup>22</sup>

There was a sense in which Labour marked out its ground partly by an effective rejection of a republicanism which was strongly associated in many Labour minds with middle-class radicals such Dilke, Bradlaugh and Chamberlain. The virulent anti-socialism of Bradlaugh, as articulated in his debate with Hyndman, helped to reinforce the separability of the two ideas.

The Labour Party emerged towards the end of a period in which the monarchy had undergone a successfully transformation. The latter part of Victoria's reign had seen an orchestrated attempt to change the public image of the monarchy. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Britain became preponderantly an urban, industrial society, with the associated growth of class-consciousness, class loyalty and conflict. For a society suffering from the dislocation of change, the need for a unifying symbol of national community and of stability and permanence in an unstable world, became crucially important.

The decline of republicanism has sometimes been explained as the spontaneous consequence of the serious illness of the Prince of Wales in the winter of 1871, and, more generally, of popular enthusiasm for Empire, with which the monarchy was closely associated. However, there are numerous indications that the perceived threat of both republicanism and of working class political advance produced a deliberate effort to reconstruct popular belief in the monarchy. Gladstone, on a visit to the Queen in December 1871, declared his aim of ,

" [not]...merely meeting (republicanism) by a more powerful display of opposite opinion, but....getting rid of it altogether, for it could never be satisfactory that there should exist even a fraction of the nation republican in its view."<sup>23</sup>

Ceremonial events were crucial. Previously, court pageants had been only locally witnessed, but with the development of a widely read and influential press, the sense of participation could be spread throughout the nation. Pageantry enhanced the symbolic image of royalty, mystically embodying the national will, and was central to the change. The pageants organised by Esher were of a scale and character unknown in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Before the funeral of Edward VII, a quarter of a million people filed past his coffin in Westminster Hall. The attitude of the popular press became positive and favourable, and served to reinforce the intended effect of public

appearances by royalty. When a public holiday was declared on February 27th 1872, large crowds gathered outside Buckingham Palace as the royal family appeared on the balcony. Newspapers the next day contrasted "ideal nationality" with the "soul-less philosophies of English Republicans". After the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, the Archbishop of Canterbury felt that "everyone feels that the socialist movement has had a check"<sup>24</sup>.

One aim of the changes was to help contain and channel the spread of democratic and socialist ideas, by invoking a national identity which recognised itself through the reinvented royal identity. As McKibbin has observed:

"The acceptability of both [Crown and Parliament] to the working class underwrote the existing status-order and preserved the country's institutions and class system more or less intact."<sup>25</sup>

Just as the Crown was seen to stand above partisan politics, thereby providing a unifying symbol of national community, the "sense of oneness" which it inculcated served to render the Constitution itself somehow "natural". Not only did the monarchy become splendid, public and popular in this period, but it went far to achieving the status of a neutral and disinterested arbiter in constitutional matters. From having been partisan and unpopular in the earlier part of the century, by the end it could be heralded as the,

"....even-handed guarantor of the class-neutrality of Parliament, the institution which ensured that the rules of the game would be followed."<sup>26</sup>

It was within this "class-neutral" state and to the rule-bound Parliament that the new political forces of the working class looked to achieve their ends.

### Labour, the Nation and the Constitution

It was in the context of this change in the public image of the monarchy that Labour sought to determine its own position towards the constitution and the monarchy. As the preceding section indicates, the monarchy had moved in public perception away from partisanship in politics, towards an impartiality above the party contest. At the same time as the Crown was represented as the guarantor of the Constitution, an attempt was made to reconstruct the monarchy as the symbol of the nation.

The range of opinions about the monarchy within the early Labour Party was a reflection of the interplay of several distinct issues: the theoretical tensions between monarchism and socialism; the constitutional implications of the Crown's continuing royal prerogative and its potential for political interference; the social power of the monarchy to reinforce and perpetuate caste and class division, and to perpetuate an "immature" political culture; the popularity of the monarchy amongst the working class to which Labour appealed for electoral support.

Of the elements which coalesced to form the federally structured Labour Party, it was the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) which adopted the clearest initial position on monarchy. This might be anticipated, as it comprised in part elements drawn from earlier republican groups. As an individual example, John Sketchley had been an organiser in local Chartist politics in the 1830's, was involved with the republican group organised by W.J. Linton in the 1850's, and then in 1875 founded the Birmingham Republican Association. Sketchley was instrumental in establishing the Birmingham Democratic Federation in 1884. Such individuals carried republican and secularist traditions into the nascent socialist body, the S.D.F. In the official programme of the S.D.F., the first of its "immediate reforms" was the abolition of the monarchy. Bax and Quelch, in their *New Catechism of Socialism*, included an unambiguously socialist rejection of monarchy.

"Socialists are essentially thorough-going Republicans. Socialism, which aims at political and economic equality, is radically inconsistent with any other political form than that of Republicanism. Monarchy and Socialism, or Empire and Socialism, are incompatible and inconceivable. Socialism involves political and economic equality, while Monarchy or Empire essentially imply domination and inequality."<sup>27</sup>

Whilst the theoretical grounds for this position might appear to preclude compromise, it is clear that the establishment of a republic quickly receded

from being a priority for the S.D.F. In 1902, the Federation's executive published an open letter to the King.

"We Social Democrats are working for a Social Democratic Republic in which neither king nor aristocrat nor plutocrat will have a place. But we recognise plain facts, and we should be no more inclined than are the overwhelming majority of common Englishmen to depose you in order to set up King Capital, with his horde of greedy sycophants, as President in your stead."<sup>28</sup>

One of the "plain facts" referred to was the degree of popular enthusiasm for the monarchy apparent by the end of Victoria's reign. Theoretical objections were tempered by electoral considerations.

The Fabian Society had no declared position on the question of monarchy, and the evidence indicates divisions both within its leadership and among its wider membership. At the time of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, an appeal was made by the Strand Board of Works for funds to decorate the Strand, and the Fabian Executive Committee voted to make a donation, on the grounds that,

"...the Jubilee is a national festival from which we, as Socialists, should not dissociate ourselves, and that such popular holidays are only too uncommon in England."<sup>29</sup>

This resolution was carried by eight votes to two, with Shaw and Bland in the majority and Ramsay MacDonald in the minority. The Executive Committee received protests "from about ten members", and was obliged to call a special meeting to hear the views of the membership.<sup>30</sup> Wherry Anderson, a long-standing member and a journalist on *Reynold's News*, moved a resolution at that meeting, opposing the Committee's decision to make a donation, on the grounds that,

"...it is the mission of Fabians only to support those public manifestations which make for Socialism and Democracy."<sup>31</sup>

This was passed by 23 votes to 11, and the money not paid. Amongst those opposing the resolution were Shaw and Sidney Webb. The jubilee controversy seems to have reawakened interest amongst Fabians in the question of the monarchy. One of the regular Fabian lectures on contemporary issues was devoted to the subject of "Socialism and Monarchy", and was given by Wherry Anderson. Although there is no account of their contributions, Shaw, Pease and Ramsay MacDonald all spoke at the meeting. Anderson advocated a qualified republicanism, based upon social and political objections to monarchy. Royalty created "an enormous crowd of grovelling flatterers", and public offices tended to be filled with hangers-on. Anderson cited examples of Victoria's and the Prince of Wales' political interference "against the interests of

the democracy". How this position might be translated into political proposals remained vague, and Anderson's contribution illustrates Taylor's point that "anti-monarchism has no blueprint for change, nor does it present a broader agenda for the overhaul of the Constitution".<sup>32</sup> Anderson, in line with that tradition, was more concerned with exposure of corruption than with constitutional change.

"Fabians could not encourage a hopeless conflict for a mere constitutional revolution, but might well support proposals that served to harass the Crown and aristocracy, and further limit their corrupting influence."<sup>33</sup>

It has already been noted that the Fabian Executive Committee and the membership were divided on the issue of monarchy, and that opinion was divided amongst the Old Gang. Shaw and Bland opposed moves to criticise the Executive's conduct during the Diamond Jubilee, although Shaw found the celebrations themselves repugnant, telling Ellen Terry that "the Jubilee business makes me sick - ugh!".<sup>34</sup> An extended discussion of socialism and republicanism took place through a series of letters published by the *Saturday Review* in late 1900. Shaw and Bland from the Fabian Society exchanged views with Belfort Bax of the S.D.F. In opening the debate, Bax made the bold assertion that,

"If there is one point upon which all Socialists are without exception unanimous, it is that socialism of necessity presupposes republicanism."<sup>35</sup>

Acknowledging that a republic might be bourgeois and individualistic, and that republicanism was an aspect of that old radicalism which socialism sought to supersede, Bax nevertheless denounced "such a monstrosity as a non-republican socialism."<sup>36</sup>

The response from Shaw sought to differentiate English politics and political history from distracting and false continental parallels. He regarded the "English constitution" as equally, if not more, likely to enable the realisation of a socialist programme than the French one. Idolatry was as much a phenomenon of a republic as of a monarchy. Far from incorporating republicanism, socialism in England was its rival and antagonist, because of the "inveterately individualistic" character of the former. The republican upsurge in the 1870's saw the working class straining at the gnat of the Civil List whilst swallowing the camel of untold millions going in rent and profit to the capitalist. Bax's reply denied that socialism consisted simply of "state appropriation" and "municipal doles". Socialism implied vast social changes, the overthrow of the present system, and would express itself as republicanism in the political sphere, as it would communism in the economic. To this dialogue was added the voice of Hubert Bland.

"To the Socialism of Mr Shaw, of myself, of a growing number of Englishmen who take the trouble to think about these interesting matters, a monarchy will be no obstacle for the next three centuries."<sup>37</sup>

A significant aspect of Shaw's case emerged in his final letter of the exchange. Those whom socialists sought to win over to their cause were not likely to, nor necessarily needed to, abandon all their existing attachments, including attachment to the monarchy. Shaw welcomed the "ordinary, respectable citizen" who had come to see that there was an alternative to leaving the industrial organization of society to greed and chance, notwithstanding the fact that such a new adherent might arrive "with all his social and religious prejudices in complete working order".<sup>38</sup> In its essence, the argument from within the Fabian Society leadership was that republicanism was unnecessary to the socialist project of economic transformation and was likely to deter ordinary people from identifying with that project. It was an argument echoed by the leadership of the Labour Party throughout the following decades.

If the S.D.F. manifested a qualified republicanism, it had explicitly stated its rejection of monarchy. This was never the case with the I.L.P. At its foundation conference, a programme of political aims was presented, which had been drawn up by a guiding committee. Amongst the aims was the abolition of the monarchy and of the House of Lords, along with demands for adult suffrage, the use of the referendum and shorter parliaments. These specific proposals were immediately dropped by the conference in favour of a

vaguer, blander amendment, which was then incorporated into the "political" section of the I.L.P.'s constitution.

"The Independent Labour Party is in favour of every proposal for extending electoral rights and democratising the system of government."<sup>39</sup>

The prevailing attitude of those leading I.L.P. figures who committed their ideas to paper was not radically different from that of the S.D.F. They acknowledged the incompatibility of socialism and monarchy in theoretical terms, but then denied the importance of the "purely political" question of monarchy or republic, when compared with the issue of economic change. Contemporary expressions of opinion constantly reiterated this theme. Thus, Philip Snowden, speaking in 1900:

"I do not believe in a monarchy, but it would be a waste of energy to spend time in agitation for its abolition. We have to strike at the institutions of which the monarchy is only a symbol."<sup>40</sup>

At this stage, Snowden was quite prepared to declare republican beliefs openly, but always qualified this by asserting the irrelevance of republicanism to the issues of the moment. In Parliament, he declared,

"In theory I am a Republican, but I attach so little importance to this practical question at present that I would not lift my little finger to interfere with the monarchy."<sup>41</sup>

Of the I.L.P. leaders in the early years of the century, it is Keir Hardie whose name is most immediately associated with attacks upon the monarchy. Despite the frequency, and ferocity, of Hardie's attacks, he shared the same premise as others mentioned above. Making a distinction between the political and the economic, Hardie not only gave priority to the latter, but denied any positive role for republicanism as an impetus for political transformation.

"We might get quit of the royal family without getting rid of a single one of our burdens....Therefore, until the system of wealth production be changed, it is not worth while exchanging a queen for a president. The robbery of the poor would go on equally under the one as the other. The king fraud will disappear when the exploiting of the people comes to a close."<sup>42</sup>

Ramsay MacDonald's *Socialism and Government* has the nearest approach to an extended, theoretical discussion of where the I.L.P. version of socialism stood in regard to monarchy in this period. Suffused with MacDonald's ideas about "organic" change, the book exemplifies a different strand of belief in the I.L.P. from those considered earlier. Rather than simply

denying the relevance of republicanism to the immediate concerns of socialism, it identifies positive attributes of monarchy.

"...as a political power, the Monarchy may be said to exist only in potentiality, and so long as it continues to do so, the political reformer may pass it by without notice, even though, on theoretical grounds, he may be a republican. Indeed, he may see in it some utilitarian value."<sup>43</sup>

The advantages included: the avoidance of the "troublesome task" of holding an election for president; the distancing of the head of state from political strife; and the bringing of "dignity and gentlemanly sense" to the execution of formal and ceremonial functions. The last has an ominous ring. As to whether in a socialist state, the monarchy could survive, MacDonald avoided even the semblance of a principled argument.

"In England, the power of the legislature will probably make a Republic unnecessary unless the monarch were to side with the threatened interests. But I am inclined to think that this question will be settled more by accidental events than by the operation of political principle."<sup>44</sup>

A slightly different interpretation of how the monarchy fitted into the legitimate concerns of a socialist was offered by Bruce Glasier. Although this contribution was made at a later period and may also be characterised as

idiosyncratic, it came from one of the I.L.P.'s senior figures, and one of its most prolific writers.

"The fact is that the Government of Great Britain is already Republican in spirit if not in form. The King himself is but a glorified hereditary President, but the people are by no means impatient to take upon themselves the responsibility of having an elected one."<sup>45</sup>

Writing later, as editor of the *Socialist Review*, Glasier provided a further argument to the case for burying republicanism. What he characterised as a "harmless monarchy" had failed to impeded the onward march of democracy.

". . .democracy and liberty came without Republicanism, slowly it is true, but fairly good democracy and freedom nevertheless ...and Republicanism died what can be called a natural death."<sup>46</sup>

In the period following the Great War, there appeared a rash of hypothetical plans for a future Labour government. These, while cautioning against the socially corrupting character of the Court, found no theoretical or practical objections to a continuation of the monarchy. Increasingly, reference was made to the virtues of an hereditary constitutional monarchy. The Webbs, drawing up their *Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain*, did not include the abolition of the monarchy.

"It does not seem necessary to propose any change in the system to which the country is accustomed, of this titular or ceremonial headship being vested....in a member....of a particular family."<sup>47</sup>

Very similar themes emerged in an anonymously published account of Labour Party aims. Like the Webbs, the authors drew a distinction between an hereditary monarchy and an hereditary upper chamber. Whilst the latter was "wholly inconsistent with socialist principles" the former could be comfortably accommodated, and on a positive note:

"In a country without hereditary legislators or titles, a constitutional monarchy is perhaps a reasonable solution of the state's needs for some national figure-head...It is likely that constitutional monarchy will be the last element of government to be democratised, and it is important to do first things first....At present it has, on the whole, fewer disadvantages than an elected president who is too often not a figure-head but a politician."<sup>48</sup>

J.H. Thomas declared himself an enthusiast for the monarchy, believing that "the least of all the difficulties facing a Labour Government would be that of the Crown".<sup>49</sup> Thomas cited as a reason for this confidence the respect shown by George V for the Constitution.

Earlier in this chapter, reference was made to the distinction drawn by many Labour and socialist politicians between constitutional questions and socio-economic questions. Republicanism was identified only with the former. Increasingly, the constitutional monarchy was regarded as an irrelevance as an issue in itself, much in line with the observation of Marx and Engels that "republican-minded radicalism had become passé - marginalised by the far greater potential of working class development".<sup>50</sup> The battle, as it was conceived across the Labour and socialist spectrum, was with a hostile economic system and with those who controlled it, whilst the monarchy was seen as either unproblematic or as part of the superstructure that would fall automatically when the economic system fell. Having established for itself the perceived position of disinterested arbiter in constitutional matters, the monarchy was increasingly regarded in Labour circles as politically unobjectionable, and as an element of a constitution which could facilitate the fulfilment of Labour's objectives. It was primarily on the narrow basis of the constitutional role of the Crown that Labour approval of the monarchy grew. Clynes, writing after Labour had held office, gave expression to these convictions.

"Whatever complaints we may have about the working of the Constitution, the most extreme of our economic doctrines are quite consistent with the continuance of a Constitutional Monarchy. We believe that the King is a guarantor of fairness to all political parties, ours among the rest."<sup>51</sup>

The image of political neutrality and fairness which the monarchy cultivated was not without a few stains. Labour's growing confidence that the constitutional monarchy constituted no barrier to its social and economic aims was subject to intermittent setbacks, and it became apparent that neutrality was relative rather than absolute.

Clearly, there was scope within the vague limits of the Constitution for an active and determined monarch to become closely involved in the concerns of government. The extent of involvement depended not just upon the restrictive conventions, but how much was allowed to happen by contemporary opinion. The nature and scope of the royal prerogative was not clearly defined, and there was potential for its extension in extraordinary political circumstances. For the Labour Party, concerns about the monarch's propensity and capacity to become involved in politics were heightened by the strong suspicion that the King's political opinions rarely coincided with their own. Edward VII's involvement in politics was far less extensive or intrusive than his mother's, but then the political influence of Queen Victoria had not been widely known during her reign. Particularly in diplomatic and military matters, Victoria was not just highly attentive, but demanded that her opinion be heard and acted upon. However, Hardie's attacks on the monarchy towards the end of her reign did not raise these issues. During the reign of Edward VII, at least some of the instances of royal "mischief" became public knowledge.

Underlying the objections voiced within the I.L.P., and then within the Labour Party, to Edward's involvement in foreign affairs, was a deep suspicion of the King's circle of friends. The burden of complaint was not simply that the King was exceeding his constitutional duties, but that his interest was highly partial. This was especially the case with South Africa. Edward had a network of links to the South African interests of those closely connected to the Jameson Raid. His circle of plutocratic friends included some of the most prominent financial figures implicated in the raid: Rhodes, Beit and Wehrner. The Duke of Fife, the King's son-in-law was a director of the Chartered Company, and according to the *Labour Leader* was "steeped to his lips in the Jameson Raid".<sup>52</sup> The banker Horace Farquar, "the only peer who was elevated to the Upper Chamber at the direct request of the King" and who later held an appointment in the Royal Household, was involved in the Raid.<sup>53</sup> It was from Hardie and the *Labour Leader* that the loudest objections came. Following the establishment of a committee of enquiry into the Jameson Raid, the newspaper foresaw danger for the monarchy.

"Whether the loss of South Africa will mean the break up of the British Empire I am not prepared to say. The break up of the British monarchy is certain when the facts come out and come home."<sup>54</sup>

Not only was Edward VII implicated, through his friends, in the raid itself, but was further accused of attempting to interfere with the work of the committee of

enquiry. Hardie accused the King of personally intervening to prevent Liberal committee members from seeing papers which would have proved Colonial Office complicity in the raid, and of supporting the interests of his guilty friends.

"While the King lingers fondly in the company of Lord Farquhar and the Duke of Abercorn - men neck deep in the Raid - the tongue of gossip will never be stayed."<sup>55</sup>

Whilst more recent accounts of the period have modified our understanding of the degree of Colonial Office complicity, as far as Hardie was concerned, no doubt existed about Edward's complicity.<sup>56</sup>

"It is no secret that His Majesty has all along been a party to the policy of the war gang in South Africa. What his holding may be in Rand shares I have no means of knowing."<sup>57</sup>

A more widespread disquiet amongst Labour politicians sprang from their belief that Edward was exceeding his constitutional rights in attempting to formulate foreign policy. The true extent of Edward's involvement and influence has remained a matter for argument, although claims have been made for a significant and "perhaps even decisive role" in bringing about the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale.<sup>58</sup> It is a claim repeated in a recent work on royal involvement in political events.<sup>59</sup> In contemporary Labour circles, there was fear that the

Court and the King were attempting to restore the monarch's role in initiating policy. The S.D.F. newspaper declared that the King had "more control over the foreign policy of England than any monarch since the Plantagenets".<sup>60</sup> The *Clarion* expressed fears that the King, "in his admirable zeal for peace", should have outrun his constitutional rights in his friendly overtures to the French, thereby alienating Germany.<sup>61</sup> MacDonald suggested that the Court was trying to increase "the personal power of the King, suggesting to his mind certain points of view...certain courses of action, certain lines of policy".<sup>62</sup> Jowett condemned the King's attempts to involve himself in politics, and also those politicians who allowed him to do so.

"The growing practice among Ministers of State of deferring to the King's desire to play an important part in the direction of public affairs is especially dangerous because there is an unwritten, but none the less inexorable rule, among the leaders of both political parties, that where Royalty is concerned there is to be no discussion between them."<sup>63</sup>

Jowett developed his argument to include what he termed "the power of social influence in politics". Starting with the King and spreading outwards to the Court and to "Society", this undemocratic influence stifled democratic control of policy-making. Jowett indicated that this tendency had assumed particularly serious proportions, and openly manifested itself around Westminster.

"The swell mob swarms all over the place. It flaunts its finery with swaggering impudence and mocks at the world and its problems."<sup>64</sup>

The King's perceived transgression of the unwritten boundaries of his constitutional responsibilities caused MacDonald, for one, to warn that the issue of the royal prerogative was not a dead one, and that the process of stripping political power from the Crown was incomplete. The King's personal diplomacy, and his attempt in 1908 to ostracise certain M.P.'s, suggested that the monarchy might become the "centre of a political party" and the struggle between it and the people might be renewed.<sup>65</sup>

The reference by MacDonald to the exclusion of M.P.'s alludes to the "Garden Party incident". Although it has been mentioned in histories of the period and in biographies of those involved, it deserves to be addressed here, as the first, and a rare official, clash between the Labour Party and the monarchy. On the eve of the King's meeting with Tsar Nicholas at Reval, Hardie criticised the visit because of the recent shooting down of demonstrators in Russia. Hardie was part of a small group of radicals which had then voted against a parliamentary motion congratulating the King on his visit. When, shortly afterwards, invitations to a royal garden party were sent to M.P.'s, four names were missing, including Hardie, Victor Grayson and Arthur Ponsonby, then a Liberal. Grayson had referred to the Tsar as "the bloodiest monster in existence" and "a loathsome brute".<sup>66</sup> Ponsonby's offence of

criticising the visit was aggravated by his class treason: he was the son of Lord Ponsonby, Queen Victoria's private secretary, and had himself been the Queen's page. Such slights, by those whose families had previously been associated with the royal family were deeply resented and never forgotten.<sup>67</sup> Initially, the cases of Hardie, Grayson and that of Ponsonby were considered distinct and different. As to the responsibility for excluding Ponsonby's name, *Reynolds Newspaper* was in no doubt that it was an official who had taken the decision, on the basis that the King's "great tact" in such matters would have precluded such a move.

"In well-informed quarters there seems a disposition to accept the semi-official explanation that the King himself was entirely ignorant of the omission of Mr Ponsonby's name from the list of guests."<sup>68</sup>

Hardie's omission was regarded as less surprising, because it was known that even if invited, he would not have attended the party. A meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party (P.L.P.) had been held and concern expressed about the exclusion. Ponsonby later claimed that, having discovered the omission of the names, he had approached Hardie, who at first showed indifference. In Grayson's case, it was understood that he attached no importance to the matter. However, the alarm was raised, an enquiry was made to the King's private secretary, but no answer was forthcoming for a week. When a reply came, it was to say that the enquiry should have been

directed to the Lord Chamberlain. Correspondence with the Lord Chamberlain followed, and there were reports that the Lord Chamberlain's letter, the contents of which could not be made public, was unsatisfactory and that the Parliamentary Labour Party would meet to decide on a course of action.<sup>69</sup> That meeting took place on 11th July, under Henderson's chairmanship, and subsequently MacDonald issued a statement.

"The Party is of the opinion that an attempt has been made by the Court to influence Members of Parliament in the discharge of their duties and in expressing their opinions honestly on political questions."<sup>70</sup>

The P.L.P. had passed a resolution supporting Hardie and removed the names of all its members from the list for invitation to future garden parties. Hardie threatened to resign his Merthyr Tydvil seat and seek re-election "on a straight issue of King versus People" if no satisfactory answer was received.<sup>71</sup> Hardie spoke at length about the matter at a miners' meeting near Merthyr. He characterised his exclusion as interference and a penalization of free speech. Although he had never attended a garden party and probably never would, he had always in the past received an invitation, as the M.P. for Merthyr. Hardie did not seem in any doubt as to the responsibility for his exclusion.

"Since the days of Charles I, the King had stood outside politics, and if the present King was foolish enough to interfere with the politics of members of Parliament, it would be a very bad day for him."<sup>72</sup>

Other Labour M.P.'s took up Hardie's case. Will Thorne denounced the "scurvy treatment" of Hardie, and declared that much of the respect which the working class may have had for the King had been lost by the incident. There followed an vigorous declaration of his republicanism, which within a few years, was to be replaced by an equally vigorous monarchism.

"I hope the time will arrive, and very speedily too, when there will be no room for kings and queens, but when we shall be able to govern ourselves, and I think we shall govern ourselves in a better manner than we are being governed at the present time."<sup>73</sup>

At the time, the incident was regarded gravely. In the *Clarion*, A.M. Thompson wrote that,

"The Windsor Garden Party is destined to become a landmark in history. It will mark the active revival in British politics of the Republican sentiment which died out as a force in the seventies."<sup>74</sup>

Others regarded the incident as part of a wider trend of Court interference with the free expression of opinion.

One incidental but illuminating product of the Garden Party incident, was an exchange between two prominent journalists on the broader question of how socialists should regard the monarchy. Representing two different traditions, their respective arguments could still be heard in the 1930's and beyond. Writing in Blatchford's *Clarion*, Alex M. Thompson expressed his unhappiness at the King's recent diplomatic adventures, but did so as an advocate of constitutional monarchy.

"British Socialism has hitherto distinguished itself from its Continental connections by an all but unanimous adherence to the monarchic principle...we have argued that a Professional specially trained for the work (of national representative at public functions) was in many ways preferable to an Amateur."<sup>75</sup>

Acknowledging the popularity of the present king, Thompson praised his shrewdness and kindness, and in terms that recall an earlier rhetoric of radical constitutionalism:

"Our King, we boasted, was an English King, a Royal democrat, a prince of good fellows, a loyal and able First Servant of the State."<sup>76</sup>

The tenor of Thompson's article was that Labour felt its trust in the monarchy to have been betrayed by recent events, and was surprised and disappointed at being treated unfairly. In contrast, *Justice* carried an article by the Marxist Theodore Rothstein which mocked the point made by Hardie; that he, as a representative of the working class, had as much right to attend a royal garden party as any other politician. Rothstein, interestingly, labelled this viewpoint as radical rather than socialist.

"What has a Socialist to do with Monarchy and its mummery except denounce it and denounce those who actively or passively support it."<sup>77</sup>

The Glasgow *Forward* seemed unsure how to handle the whole business. It began by dismissing it as trivial and not worthy of space, but later carried an article which claimed that,

"...a very important constitutional point of law is at issue - embryonic arbitrary despotism. We cannot but think that the Labour Party arrangements have not been strong enough to meet the occasion and take advantage of its opportunities. So far, however, His Majesty has got a lesson, and will not in a hurry interfere with spheres which are not his particular concern."<sup>78</sup>

How the Garden Party incident was ultimately resolved is not clear. Speaking in Swansea in late July, Hardie declared that the matter was closed.

It had been "trivial", the party had made its protest and "there the matter stood".<sup>79</sup> Clearly, some private accommodation had been reached between the party leadership and the Lord Chamberlain's office, with faces saved by keeping exchanges confidential.

The limits of the royal prerogative, and the degree of adherence to them by the monarch, were tested by far more serious events: the crisis over the powers of the House of Lords and the Ulster crisis. The former spanned the end of Edward VII's reign and the beginning of George V's. When Edward called a conference of Liberal and Conservative leaders, Labour's reaction was to protest that the problem should be resolved in the House of Commons and not behind the doors of Buckingham Palace. Furthermore, there were strong suspicions that the King would not be impartial. The language of Labour politicians at this time interchanges the terms "involvement", "intervention" and "interference", suggesting an uncertainty about which one the King's actions amounted to. In itself, this reflects the ill-defined boundaries of the monarch's constitutional rights. Hardie issued a warning about the King's role in convening the conference.

"He [Hardie] hoped that it was not true that the King was intervening in this dispute. So long as the King remained outside party politics he did no harm and could be tolerated. The moment the Throne began to interfere in politics, it was not only the coronet, the peer, that would go into the melting pot, but the Crown would go along with it."<sup>80</sup>

When Edward VII received Asquith, Balfour and Lansdowne at the House of Lords, Snowden was similarly concerned, but his remarks illustrate the paradox in Labour's attitude towards the royal prerogative.

"It was a serious menace to democratic power in this country. He [Snowden] knew the King was extremely popular. A popular king might be a greater danger to democracy than a despotic autocrat. He thought they were justified in assuming that the King was now interfering in this matter in the hope of prevailing upon the House of Lords to pass the Finance Bill without any condition whatever."<sup>81</sup>

In attempting to protect democratically determined policies from obstruction or sabotage by such undemocratic bodies as the House of Lords, Labour appealed to the undemocratic influence of the royal prerogative.

The accession of George V intensified Labour's uncertainty about the potential use of the royal prerogative against the progressive interest. MacDonald, acknowledging that he was dealing with rumour and hearsay, nevertheless gave them credence by repetition. The King, he had heard,

"....was to follow the example of his grandmother and not of his father, and that, though Mr. Asquith might have the right of entry at the front door of

the Palace, Mr. Balfour would have the privilege of using private entrances and back stairs".<sup>82</sup>

The belief that George was politically Conservative was well-founded, and Labour anticipated the possibility of the Crown allying itself with the Conservative Party in refusing to create sufficient peers to pass the Parliament Bill.<sup>83</sup> Hardie foresaw a revival of republicanism if this occurred, whilst Jowett suggested that if the King refused to create the peers, the Government should stop supplies.<sup>84</sup> Every move was watched with suspicion, with even Court appointments scrutinised for evidence of conspiracy against the democratic will of the House of Commons. Thus, of one Court appointment:

"That it has been filled by the Duchess of Devonshire, a sister of Lord Lansdowne and a lady in the centre of the reactionary conspiracy against the House of Commons and popular government, indicates far more than appears to the eye of the beholder."<sup>85</sup>

The same underlying issues were raised by the Ulster crisis in 1914. Labour's fears were based upon "grey" areas of the royal prerogative and the King's reputation as a Conservative and, in this case, as a Unionist. Nor can Labour's fears be dismissed as paranoia. There was serious discussion in Conservative circles of the possibility of the Home Rule Bill being refused Royal Assent. The advocates of this course used the disingenuous argument

that as not all the proposed changes included in the Parliament Act of 1911 had been introduced, there existed a constitutional void, which could be filled only by the sovereign. Bonar Law was the principal advocate of this line. Given such provocation, it is not surprising that MacDonald should deliver so strong a warning.

"...they would have no upsetting of the Parliament Act by Court interference...Republicanism is at a discount in this country....but if by the advice of responsible ministers or irresponsible court hangers-on the King is going to do something against the House of Commons' liberty, then the flames of Republican agitation will be lit at once."<sup>86</sup>

Indeed, George V appears to have considered extraordinary constitutional measures, not perhaps for partisan reasons, but out of a genuine dread of an ensuing civil war in Ireland. According to his biographer:

"The King had not abandoned his desire to see Home Rule put to the test of a general election, even if that required so hazardous a measure as the dismissal of the Government or the withholding of the Royal Assent."<sup>87</sup>

Publicly, the King's remark on opening the constitutional conference requested by Asquith, that the "cry of civil war is on the lips of the most responsible and sober-minded of my people", aggravated suspicions.<sup>88</sup> He seemed unduly

sympathetic to armed rebels who were prepared to resist the democratic will of Parliament. Hardie believed that the remark revealed that the Crown had allied itself with "reactionary peers and rebellious Ulsterites" and would play a part in the conspiracy to prevent Home Rule.<sup>89</sup> The evidence indicates that the King was engaged in no such conspiracy, but was so desperate to find a compromise and thereby avoid civil war that he took initiatives which appeared to contemporary observers to be beyond his constitutional right. The King convened a conference at Buckingham Palace to attempt to find agreement on the question of County Tyrone, and thereby to facilitate the exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule. The Liberal M.P. Charles Trevelyan commented:

"If Asquith didn't supervise it, it is grossly unconstitutional and partisan. If he did, he is responsible for allowing the King to justify the conduct of the disloyalists. The only advantage is that it will lead to outspoken protests by the Labour and Radical sections and a turning of the politics of working men towards republicanism."<sup>90</sup>

The *Daily Herald* did carry one such protest, in the form of a leading article entitled "King George and King Carson", unsigned but in fact written by the young Harold Laski.<sup>91</sup> In the article, Laski contrasted the King's initiative over the Ulster crisis with his unwillingness to act over the suffrage problem and the recent dock strike. Laski's charge against the King was dual. First, that "if he is

to be kingly in one thing, let him be kingly in all", otherwise it would appear that he was moved only by interests to which he himself was a party. This was superseded by Laski's second point, which was that such "kingly" behaviour was unconstitutional.

"We....prefer that the King should stand out of our public affairs, for on no single object for which we really care can he take, or would he be allowed to take, an independent position. He represents not the nation but the classes, and all his activities in connection with Ulster are for the sole purpose of so arranging matters as to secure a triumph for Sir Edward Carson and his aristocratic friends."<sup>92</sup>

Other Labour journals varied only in their degrees of certainty about what the King had actually done. All issued warnings about Labour's response to any unconstitutional acts. The *Labour Leader*, the official organ of the I.L.P., was cautious, qualifying its accusations. Reports of the King's involvement are hedged with conditional clauses and such attitudinal disjuncts as "apparently". However, the King is identified with the interests of the aristocracy, the fashionable classes and the military caste, and thereby in conflict with the working class. As to responsibility for calling the Buckingham Palace conference , it was "not clear whether the King acted on the suggestion of his Ministers or the Ministers on the suggestion of the King".<sup>93</sup> In contrast, the

Glasgow *Forward* offered an uncompromising analysis of the events in an article by Tom Johnston.

"It is time someone began to state plainly the attitude being taken up by the King and the Court in this Ulster business. There is no sense in being mealy-mouthed about it. King George and his Court are throwing the whole weight of their influence on the side of the Londonderry aristocracy."<sup>94</sup>

Johnston accused the Court of being behind the War Minister's readiness to give guarantees to the aristocratic officers at the Curragh, and the King of persuading Asquith to take no action against those responsible for running guns to the Ulster Volunteers. He reminded his readers of the King's role during the crisis over the Parliament Act, in which he took Court and aristocratic advice rather than that of his Ministers. A stark warning was given.

"But if the Court gang contemplate a Royal *coup d'état*, a spring over to Kaiser Wilhelm conditions, the Labour Party should take the bull by the horns at once, and announce their intention of moving the discontinuance of the King's salary when the next Civil List comes round."<sup>95</sup>

The Parliamentary Labour Party sent a resolution to Asquith, to be forwarded to the King, protesting against the King's intervention on two grounds: first because it was "an act of undue interference on the part of the Crown", as it

was "calculated to defeat the purposes of the Parliament Act"; secondly, two of the representatives called to the Buckingham Palace conference were "practically rebels under arms against constituted authority".<sup>96</sup> In explaining the protest, George Barnes argued that the Parliament Act had led them from the frying pan into the fire, as "we have exchanged the veto of five or six hundred hereditary and irresponsible persons for the veto of one such person".<sup>97</sup> Barnes lamented the apathetic response of the average citizen to this extension of kingly power. Up and down the country, I.L.P. branches heard speakers denounce this development, and the kinds of observations made about the King were not dissimilar from Hardie's harsh words, which might stand as evidence of the low esteem in which the King stood with Labour on the eve of the Great War.

"King George is not a statesman. He is not the pleasure-loving scapegrace which his father was before him, but, like his father, he is destitute of even ordinary ability. Born in the ranks of the working class his most likely fate would have been that of a street-corner loafer."<sup>98</sup>

Given such a low and hostile opinion of the King within the Labour movement at this time, it was inconceivable that well before the end of his reign the same man should be enjoying the reputation of being a model constitutional monarch.

The uncertainty and suspicion generated during those instances when the royal prerogative became central to the resolution of constitutional *impasses*, are clear evidence that, for the Labour Party, the political power of the Crown was far from being a dead issue. Although its leading figures sought, in the period leading up to the Great War, to persuade themselves that the Constitution provided the neutral framework within which parliamentary democracy could function, this confidence could be easily punctured. The crises over the House of Lords and Ulster indicated that partisan intervention by the monarch was still quite plausible. The royal prerogative continued to offer the potential for discrimination against progressive and Labour interests, and the issue was to resurface in the circumstances surrounding the formation of the first Labour government, and the dismissal of the second.

#### The monarchy and social class.

Drawing a distinction between the constitutional powers of the monarchy and its effects upon social attitudes, it can be argued that it was the latter which provided many in the Labour Party with the deeper sense of unease. Rather than being identified exclusively with the aristocracy, the royal family, and the monarch in particular, were increasingly projected as being above the class system, at the head of the national "family" rather than at the apex of the aristocracy. At the same time, the royal family was presented within settings of great physical splendour, aimed at attracting popular attention through colour

and pageantry. A most succinct appraisal of this contradiction came from MacDonald, who regarded the social power of the monarchy as far more problematic than its political or constitutional power.

"It [the monarchy] is the head of a social caste to which it is bound by all its interests, and it may, therefore, be assumed that any attempt to weaken the social or economic basis of that caste will be frowned upon by the Crown. The Crown may derive its political support from the people, but its foundations are embedded in the aristocracy."<sup>99</sup>

Royal occasions such as coronations or jubilee celebrations were liable to ignite Labour resentments, as the contrast between the poverty of the ordinary "subjects" and the opulence of royalty and its aristocratic entourage was particularly stark. Whilst the monarchy aspired to symbolise national unity, its public character served to illustrate the degree of social inequality over which it ruled. Lansbury's commentary on the coronation of George V articulated Labour's recognition of this paradox.

"[The coronation] serves to prevent us forgetting that the monarchy is the apex of aristocracy, that whilst the King is the head of the State, he is also the head of the nobility and the chief of the secular hierarchy, that the Crown is the outstanding symbol of a privileged order and an hereditary caste."<sup>100</sup>

If the monarchy itself symbolised and helped to preserve an hierarchical society, then Labour could be condemned for colluding in this process by participating in its ceremonial aspects. The most public argument over this issue took place in 1924, with the first Labour government, when the wearing of court dress by the new Labour ministers provoked hilarity and mockery, but also some perceptive commentary. The editor of the *Daily Herald*, Hamilton Fyfe, saw the matter as crucial to Labour's hopes of changing society. Economic and political change might be achieved, but social change was more difficult. Setting out the theory of the "aristocratic embrace", Fyfe attacked the Labour wearers of court dress for helping the "Old Gang" to retain their enduring social power and prominence. The social hierarchy could survive economic and political transformation.

"It is possible to imagine a Socialist state, with all the means of production and exchange under public control, which, nevertheless, would be socially much the same as the British state is now, in which there would be a hierarchy of place and privilege, from which equality would be banished, as it is among us today."<sup>101</sup>

This extract cogently expresses the most fundamental Labour objection to the monarchy on social grounds: that it offended against notions of equality; and that the snobbery which it encouraged threatened to undermine Labour's values and corrode its will to reconstruct society. Thus while Hardie, and many

others, had so frequently declared that one might abolish the monarchy without making any material difference to the economic and political systems, Fyfe pointed out that the latter might be changed without altering the social inequality symbolised by the monarchy. Superficially, these two propositions contradict one another: in reality, they are complementary. Without the establishment of a political republic, any socialism worth its name was unattainable, whilst economic transformation was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for establishing a society of equals. If anyone had come close to appreciating the mutual necessity of economic and political change, it had been Harney, who believed that the abolition of the profit system was as important as the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.

To illustrate how the separation of the political from the economic generated a misunderstanding of social realities, one can offer the example of J.H. Thomas, who celebrated the "classless" character of the new democracy, evidenced by the King's acceptance of Labour ministers. This acceptance showed "that no question of birth or power is involved in the occupancy of high offices of state".<sup>102</sup> His view is representative of a strain of opinion amongst some, principally working-class, Labour leaders, whose entry into offices of state persuaded them that a social revolution of some kind had occurred. Sharing Clynes' wonderment at "the strange turn of Fortune's wheel", they were inclined to credit the monarch with a dismantling of class barriers.<sup>103</sup>

Another recurrent complaint concerned the debilitating effect the monarchy had upon the political culture. This view argued that the popular

enthusiasm for royalty, the growing participation (as spectators) in pageantry, led to political immaturity. It was a frequent complaint of Hardie that the political intelligence of the working class was retarded by its affection for the monarchy. The emotional and semi-mystical aspects of that attachment restricted working class capacity for rational political understanding. Admitting the deep and widespread attachment of the working class to the monarchy at the turn of the century, Hardie explained it thus:

"It was due to the fact that they did not understand royalty. They did not see that it was inconsistent with the dignity of manhood to stick to hereditary rule, whether of a monarch on the throne or the House of Lords. The object of working class power should be to purify the system of government by eliminating whatever could not be supported on grounds of common sense."<sup>104</sup>

### Conclusion.

Labour commentators at this period agreed that the working class overwhelmingly supported the monarchy. This was frequently acknowledged, often in tones of regret. Although Tom Mann looked forward to the day when the country would "develop mentally" and dispense with monarchy, he admitted that:

"In our own country we have a limited monarchy - a monarch that is respected, and perhaps deservedly so, for various reasons."<sup>105</sup>

This was written towards the end of Victoria's reign. The respect which Mann referred to seems to have developed, by the end of Edward VII's reign, into something which anti-monarchists considered unhealthy and threatening. Hardie believed that:

"The temptation to abandon the policy of reserve towards the Throne as an institution, which has characterised the working-class movement in this country during the last quarter of the century, has been very strong of late."<sup>106</sup>

The popularity of Edward VII was evident, and the Labour press paid tribute to his qualities as a constitutional monarch, though accompanied by a caveat. By fulfilling his constitutional role so effectively, Edward VII had thereby strengthened that institution and made himself popular; and democrats should fear the popular monarch.

"Taking him [Edward] as a man and a constitutional monarch, we have no doubt that the verdict of the critical historian of a democratic age will be the verdict of the democrat of the street: 'As kings go, Edward was not a bad sort.' And this verdict even Socialists will not hesitate to endorse....But whilst his

record has created a standard for his successors..it must be recognised that..  
(there has been an)...increase of influence for the throne."<sup>107</sup>

Inevitably, the popularity of the monarchy amongst Labour's potential voters reduced the propensity of its Labour critics to make public criticisms. The most they offered were declarations of personally-held republican views, as prefaces to a declaration that the issue was of no contemporary significance and a distraction from "real" problems.

Some of the themes which have emerged in this chapter arose during the only debate on the subject of the monarchy to have been held at a Labour Party conference, in 1923. Despite its brevity, the episode is full of irony and suggestiveness. First, there is the blandness of the resolution:

"That the Royal Family is no longer necessary as part of the British Constitution, and the Labour Party is therefore asked to state definitively its view of the matter."<sup>108</sup>

Only three people contributed to the debate: a proposer who made no case for abolishing the monarchy, except to claim that if the Labour Party considered itself to be a socialist party, the motion should be passed unanimously; a seconder who called himself a democrat and subsequently a republican, and who believed the people would follow their lead on this question; and a reply from Lansbury, an old republican and left-winger, who

sought to close down the question with arguments that were becoming almost standard for mainstream Labour politicians when the topic of the monarchy was raised. He personally was a republican, but,

"....why should they fool about with a question which was of no vital importance and which would be settled whenever the economic conditions were settled....Years ago he used to think that the Monarchy and the nobility were the people who made the workers poor, but Hyndman and Morris had taught him that it was the capitalist system which made the workers poor."<sup>109</sup>

There was no vote on the motion and the conference passed on to "more important" questions. To an interested contemporary foreign observer of the Labour Party, this treatment of the subject constituted an example of their failure to understand themselves; a piece of "conservative clownishness".

"For a socialist the question of the monarchy is not decided from the point of view of today's accountancy, still less when it is a false accountancy. It is a question of the complete transformation of society, of its cleansing from all elements of slavery. That work makes a reconciliation with the monarchy both politically and psychologically impossible."<sup>110</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, Trotsky's critique of the ideological frailties of Labour was uncomfortably acute.

However, the path on which the Labour Party was bound did not involve a clean break with the past. On the contrary, its attachment to a constitutional route to power, and in the absence of any proposal to abolish the role currently exercised by the Crown, implied the indefinite retention of a monarchy. There was never a serious plan from any quarter to substitute an alternative for the Crown. If the Crown played by the rules, Labour could happily co-exist with it. A strictly economicistic version of socialism relegated republicanism to a largely irrelevant side-issue, and few in the Labour Party retained a strong sense of the social and psychological implications of retaining an hereditary monarchy. Labour was seeking electoral success, and could not fail to heed the fact that the monarchy's star was on the rise in the early part of the twentieth century, and that the working class was no less attached to it than any other. Whilst individuals might still classify themselves as republicans, the use of the term "republicanism" had simply become a rhetorical device to warn off the Crown from exceeding its constitutional powers, or to give expression to anti-monarchical impulses which did not imply any serious intent to replace the monarchical system.

To generalise about Labour attitudes to the monarchy in the early years of the twentieth century, three positions seem crucial in understanding why republicanism was effectively defunct. The following taxonomy does not imply that individuals necessarily held one of these views exclusively; blends were common. First, there was an element which positively approved of a constitutional monarchy, even given a choice between a king and a president.

This was a view which concentrated almost exclusively on the advantages of the Crown as a constitutional fulcrum, but did not exclude some who were monarchists in a very conventional sense. Secondly, there was a social-democratic rejection of republicanism as a live issue, although individuals espousing this view regarded themselves as republican. This view differentiated between economic and political objectives, prioritised the former and dismissed concern with the latter as a vestige of middle-class radicalism. Finally, there were those in the tradition of anti-monarchism, as described earlier. Its proponents called themselves republican, were vigilant critics of monarchy and royalty and were quick to condemn examples of corruption, extravagance, moral failure or political interference, but without ever demonstrating a programmatic approach to their republicanism.

<sup>1</sup> L.Colley, 1992, *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, London, pp230-231

<sup>2</sup> ibid.

<sup>3</sup> R. McKibbin, 1990, *The Ideologies of Class*, Oxford, p18

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Thompson, op.cit., p9

<sup>5</sup> R. McWilliam, "Radicalism and Popular Culture: the Tichbourne case and the politics of fair play", in Biagini and Reid, 1991, *Currents of Radicalism*, Cambridge, p58

<sup>6</sup> Biagini & Reid, op.cit., p11

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, op.cit., p25

<sup>8</sup> See Antony Taylor, "Anti-monarchism and the Radical Tradition, 1850-1872", in J. Vernon ed., 1996, *Re-reading the Constitution*, Cambridge, pp157-159

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, op.cit., p17

<sup>10</sup> N. Gossman, "Republicanism in Nineteenth-century England", in *International Review of Social History*, VIII, 1962, p50

<sup>11</sup> ibid.

<sup>12</sup> G. Stedman Jones, 1983, *Languages of Class*, Cambridge, p169

<sup>13</sup> See for example, E. Royle, 1980, *Radicals, Secularism and Republicanism*, Manchester

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, op.cit., p156

<sup>15</sup> Cited in M. Finn, 1993, *After Chartism*, Cambridge, p287

<sup>16</sup> F. D'Arcy, "Charles Bradlaugh and the English Republican Movement 1868-1873", in *Historical Journal*, XXV, 1982, pp368-369

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, op.cit., p22

<sup>18</sup> Finn, op.cit., p293

<sup>19</sup> E. Biagini, "Popular Liberals, Gladstonian finance and the debate on taxation 1860-1874", in Biagini & Reid, op.cit., p145

<sup>20</sup> *Labour Leader*, February 2, 1901

<sup>21</sup> J.R. Clynes, 1937, *Memoirs*, Vol.2, London, p240

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- <sup>22</sup> Taylor, op.cit., p175
- <sup>23</sup> Quoted in T. Nairn, 1988, *The Enchanted Glass*, London, p332
- <sup>24</sup> Cited in D. Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition' c.1820-1977", in E Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, 1983, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, pp131-2
- <sup>25</sup> McKibbin, op.cit., p17
- <sup>26</sup> ibid., p18
- <sup>27</sup> Cited in J. Ellis Barker, 1908, *British Socialism*, London, p207
- <sup>28</sup> *Labour Leader*, June 28, 1902
- <sup>29</sup> *Fabian News*, Vol. VII, No.4, June 1897
- <sup>30</sup> Fabian Society Executive Committee Minutes, June 11, 1897
- <sup>31</sup> *Fabian News*, Vol. VII, No.5, July, 1897
- <sup>32</sup> Taylor, op.cit., p156
- <sup>33</sup> *Fabian News*, Vol. VIII, No.10, December 1897
- <sup>34</sup> Cited in N.&J. MacKenzie, 1977, *The First Fabians*, London, p247
- <sup>35</sup> *Saturday Review*, October 20, 1900
- <sup>36</sup> ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> *Saturday Review*, November 10, 1900
- <sup>38</sup> *Saturday Review*, November 17, 1900
- <sup>39</sup> Report of the Conference of the Independent Labour Party, 1893, p12
- <sup>40</sup> Cited in C.G. Bechofer Roberts, 1929, *Philip Snowden*, London, p72
- <sup>41</sup> Cited in C. Cross, 1966, *Philip Snowden*, London, p88
- <sup>42</sup> *Labour Leader*, June 19, 1897
- <sup>43</sup> J. Ramsay MacDonald, 1909, *Socialism and Government*, Vol.2, London, p41
- <sup>44</sup> ibid., p131
- <sup>45</sup> *Labour Leader*, June 23, 1911
- <sup>46</sup> *Socialist Review*, Vol.XIV, 1917, p100
- <sup>47</sup> Sidney & Beatrice Webb, 1920, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain*, London, p108
- <sup>48</sup> Seven Members of the Labour Party, 1923, *The Labour Party's Aim: a criticism and restatement*, London, p85
- <sup>49</sup> J.H. Thomas, 1920, *When Labour Rules*, London, p46
- <sup>50</sup> Nairn, op.cit., p207
- <sup>51</sup> Clynes, op.cit., p240
- <sup>52</sup> *Labour Leader*, February 9, 1901
- <sup>53</sup> Cited in J. Camplin, 1978, *The Rise of the Plutocrats*, London, p109
- <sup>54</sup> *Labour Leader*, December 22, 1900
- <sup>55</sup> *Labour Leader*, February 9, 1901
- <sup>56</sup> See P. Stansky, 1964, *Ambitions and Strategies*, London
- <sup>57</sup> *Labour Leader*, June 1, 1901
- <sup>58</sup> K. Roby, 1975, *The King, the Press and the People*, London, p295
- <sup>59</sup> R. Rhodes James, 1998, *A Spirit Undaunted*, London, pp29-31
- <sup>60</sup> *Justice*, June 27, 1908
- <sup>61</sup> *Clarion*, July 3, 1908
- <sup>62</sup> *Socialist Review*, Vol. 1, 1908, p407
- <sup>63</sup> *Clarion*, June 12, 1908
- <sup>64</sup> *Clarion*, July 17, 1908
- <sup>65</sup> MacDonald, op.cit., p41
- <sup>66</sup> Cited in W. Thompson, 1910, *Victor Grayson*, Sheffield, p56
- <sup>67</sup> e.g. the case of Hugh Dalton, see B. Pimlott, 1985, *Hugh Dalton*, pp420-422
- <sup>68</sup> ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> Minutes of the Parliamentary Labour Party, July 9, 1908
- <sup>70</sup> *Reynolds Newspaper*, July 12, 1908
- <sup>71</sup> *Clarion*, July 3, 1908
- <sup>72</sup> *Reynolds Newspaper*, July 19, 1908

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- <sup>73</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>74</sup> *Clarion*, July 17, 1908
- <sup>75</sup> *Clarion*, July 3, 1908
- <sup>76</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>77</sup> *Justice*, July 11, 1908
- <sup>78</sup> *Forward*, July 25, 1908
- <sup>79</sup> *Reynolds Newspaper*, July 19, 1908
- <sup>80</sup> *The Times*, October 19, 1909
- <sup>81</sup> *The Times*, October 13, 1909
- <sup>82</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>83</sup> For George V's political sympathies see Rose, *op.cit.*, pp118-119
- <sup>84</sup> *Labour Leader*, August 26, 1910
- <sup>85</sup> *Socialist Review*, Vol 5, July 1910
- <sup>86</sup> *The Times*, July 27, 1914
- <sup>87</sup> Rose, *op.cit.*, pp150-1
- <sup>88</sup> Cited in G. Dangerfield, 1966 ed., *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, London, p360
- <sup>89</sup> *Merthyr Pioneer*, July 25, 1914
- <sup>90</sup> Cited in Rose, *op.cit.*, p157
- <sup>91</sup> *Daily Herald*, July 21, 1914
- <sup>92</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>93</sup> *Labour Leader*, July 23, 1914
- <sup>94</sup> *Forward*, August 4, 1914
- <sup>95</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>96</sup> *Labour Leader*, July 23, 1914
- <sup>97</sup> *Forward*, July 25, 1914
- <sup>98</sup> *Labour Leader*, July 23, 1914
- <sup>99</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit.* p42
- <sup>100</sup> *Labour Leader*, June 23, 1911
- <sup>101</sup> *Socialist Review*, Vol.24, No.132, October 1924
- <sup>102</sup> Thomas, *op.cit.*, p46
- <sup>103</sup> Clynes, *Memoirs*, Vol.1, p343
- <sup>104</sup> *Labour Leader*, May 14, 1901
- <sup>105</sup> Tom Mann, 1896, *The Socialists' Program*, Manchester, p7
- <sup>106</sup> *Labour Leader*, June 3, 1910
- <sup>107</sup> *Labour Leader*, May 13, 1910
- <sup>108</sup> Labour Party Conference Report, 1923, p250
- <sup>109</sup> *ibid.* p251
- <sup>110</sup> L. Trotsky, 1970 ed., *Where is Britain Going?*, London, p39

## Chapter Two Labour, the Monarchy and the Great War.

### Introduction.

Mid-1914 saw the Labour Party indulging in bitter and widespread criticism of the perceived partisan and unconstitutional intervention by George V in the politics of Ulster (see Chapter One). Many sober figures, to whom the cause of republicanism had seemed politically extinct, now exhumed its rhetoric. However, the Ulster crisis, and with it the arguments surrounding the role of the King, was overtaken by the outbreak of war. The extraordinary conditions of wartime, the divisions, passions and transformations which it generated, were reflected in complex developments in Labour attitudes to the monarchy. Although a few of these developments were entirely new (these tended to be products of peculiar international conditions), it will be seen that most had pre-war origins, but were given urgency and significance by the experience of a nation at war. Amongst the latter were: the central involvement of the monarch in the appeal to patriotism; the depth and extent of working-class patriotism during the war; the periodically articulated concern about the residual constitutional power of the Crown; the foreign (and more specifically, the German) origins of the family which was supposed to symbolise the nation; the involvement of royalty in charitable and voluntary initiatives for the relief of distress, which were designed to appeal to Labour's values but which tended to be at odds with Labour's conceptions

of state responsibility for social matters; and, finally, the developing popularisation or “democratisation” of the monarchy, which in wartime was characterised by a vastly increased public visibility and geographical mobility of the monarch, and by a series of political gestures designed to cultivate an image of the royal family sharing in the sacrifices and privations of wartime Britain. Deriving impetus from the unpopularity of foreign monarchies and from their overthrow towards the end of the war, as well as from their diplomatic intrigues (perceived to be the major cause of the war), republicanism in Britain experienced a brief but lively revival. Underlying all of the rhetoric and controversy surrounding these topics were two powerful historical currents: the monarchy was evolving, unwittingly or not, into an institution aware of and responsive to its public; and the evident growth of public, including working class, affection for and attachment to the monarchy.

#### Labour, patriotism and the war.

Historically and theoretically, radicalism and socialism had attached great value to “international brotherhood”, which expressed solidarity with the poor and oppressed of other countries. There was, nevertheless, an equally pervasive conviction of the value of certain aspects of Englishness, and particularly of the British constitution. Manifestation of a particular conceptualisation of Englishness has been termed “radical patriotism”: and although the concept must be handled

carefully, it has some relevance to this period. In tracing the origins and trajectory of radical patriotism, Cunningham refers to the 1730's:

“The...sources of English patriotism had jelled into a composite whole in which England, the favoured nation, was the home of liberty and endowed with a constitution to protect it.”<sup>1</sup>

With some interruptions, the language of radical patriotism continued to be used through the Chartist period. Radicals not only described themselves as patriots, but, when denouncing oppression and tyranny, invoked liberties and rights which Englishmen had enjoyed in times past.

The declaration of war in 1914 called into play existing Labour conceptions of international brotherhood, patriotism, national identity and of the British constitution. A separate section will address one aspect of the latter; the powers remaining to the Crown to introduce and give effect to emergency legislation. The specific matter of patriotism is quite crucial to an understanding of Labour's attitudes to the monarchy, at this period and in others. National identity was deeply associated with monarchical sentiment. Particularly in wartime, the King became the outward symbol of national unity. In addition, those (majority) Labour voices which sought to justify Britain's participation in the war, frequently referred to the need to defend the political benefits conferred by the British constitution, in which the Crown occupied a central role.

Some of those in the Labour Party who supported British participation in the war drew upon the rhetoric of radical patriotism. The enemy was characterised as foreign despotism, whereas Britain was the land of the free, with its freedom protected by the Constitution. These tenets were articulated at a meeting of the pro-war Socialist National Defence Committee in 1915, addressed by several prominent Labour figures.

"Mr [John] Hodge was subjected to further interruption when he alluded to our freedom and liberty, but again he forcibly retorted: 'You would have precious little liberty if you had the jackboot of Prussian militarism upon your neck.'"<sup>2</sup>

Another Labour M.P., George Roberts, expressed his gratitude at the British soldiers' "defence of their motherland and of liberty and Democracy in Western Europe", against the "Hohenzollern despotism" and a "militarism infinitely more crushing and fatal to progress than any that Europe has hitherto endured".<sup>3</sup>

Those elements of the I.L.P., probably a minority, which opposed the party leadership's anti-war position, couched that opposition in language drawn from radical patriotism. At a meeting in Birmingham, called in response to the I.L.P. anti-war manifesto, dissident I.L.P. city councillors expressed

indignation with their party's public statements. As one councillor told the gathering:

"The war was one of progress against reaction, and of democracy and freedom against despotism...he did not speak that night in any spirit of jingoism, and he hoped no socialist would raise his voice against the action of England."<sup>4</sup>

Another councillor was prepared to resign from the I.L.P. over its anti-war position, and again it was "England" and Englishness that was celebrated, rather than "Britain". The labels themselves link the contemporary arguments with those of previous eras.

"It was a privilege to be an English citizen, and the English atmosphere was worth keeping. No nation could supply us with the same freedom as England could."<sup>5</sup>

These expressions of patriotism had come from Labour and I.L.P. defenders of British participation in the war, but similar sentiments were to be found on the other side of the divide. Ramsay MacDonald had frequently, in the early part of the war, been described as unpatriotic, even by some fellow-members of the I.L.P.<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, he could still produce a classic expression of radical patriotism, in warning of the threat

of domestic military dictatorship at a period when anti-democratic solutions were being mooted to avert defeat, in 1917.

"I am one of those patriots whose patriotism consists in love for his country...When I like to think of my country at its best I think of it as the great liberal land where exiles came to dwell...The I.L.P. for the last two years and eight months has been standing by the soul of Great Britain....We must not allow Prussian militarism to come into this land under the pretence that it alone can defend the nation."<sup>7</sup>

MacDonald placed constitutional rights and liberties at the core of his conception of the nation's "soul". His case is rather austere, and abjures sentimental evocations of Englishness. The latter were more characteristic of socialist advocates of war participation. Their patriotism was imbued with celebrations of Englishness which might equally have been found in the pages of *John Bull*. Alex Thompson in *The Clarion* offered a version of cultural patriotism which sat alongside more conventional radical patriotic allusions to "the defence of rights and liberties" and "our native laws and liberties".

"Our idea of 'patriotism' is....that the achievements of our Raleighs, Drakes and Nelsons should snuggle closer to our hearts than those of Caesar, Napoleon or Frederick the Great; that the tongue of

Shakespeare and Keats and Sterne and Dickens should sound more homely to our ears than that of Rabelais, Moliere, Kant or Goethe.”<sup>8</sup>

Whilst conceding importance to these military and literary icons of nationhood, Thompson was at pains to distinguish his version of patriotism from what he labelled “Pinchbeck Patriotism”, with its “waving flags, blaring trumpets and beefy men-at-arms practising the goose-step”<sup>9</sup>. His own version, Thompson labelled “true” patriotism. Throughout his article, and in countless other contemporary discussions of patriotism, the term itself is enclosed in quotation marks, indicating the contested and shifting nature of the signifier. To illustrate the extent of that contestation even within the I.L.P., the remarks of those Birmingham I.L.P. councillors and of Ramsay MacDonald may be contrasted with the unambiguous conclusions of the Scottish Division of the I.L.P., as presented at its 1917 Annual Conference.

“Conference expresses the opinion that War, Secret Diplomacy, Patriotism, Militarism, Annexation and Colonial Expansion are in consequence of and inseparable from the Capitalist System of production.”<sup>10</sup>

Patriotism stood condemned by its company. This was an unusually severe view of the matter, even by I.L.P. standards, and raises the

question of whether Scottish socialists were less susceptible to patriotic and monarchical appeals. Certainly, they were unlikely to respond to appeals which drew upon notions of Englishness and the glories of an essentially English historical and constitutional heritage. This particular question reappears in the section on the royal family and its German origin.

Particularly on the anti-war left, the terms "patriot" and "patriotism" were continually worried over, and the former, frequently given ironic status by inverted commas, employed derogatively to describe the jingoistic owners, editors or journalists of the pro-war, right-wing press, or capitalists and their political allies who were making huge profits from wartime production. Amongst those socialists who were anti-war or who were pacifist, some attempted to counterpose an alternative version of patriotism to the "Pinchbeck" type characterised by Thompson. In general, it sought to detach patriotism from simply nationalist feelings, and to extend the scope of its relevance from locality on the one hand to internationalism on the other. Through this device, the depth, breadth and naturalness of patriotism could be acknowledged, without necessarily setting it in opposition to socialist values. At the I.L.P. conference of 1915, Walter Ayles described,

"...a higher patriotism than that which involved the destruction of another country...The sense of patriotism had extended

from the family to the tribe, from the tribe to the nation. Now it should be extended to the whole human race."<sup>11</sup>

The same argument was made even for nationalism. Just as the socialist was "truly" patriotic:

"The Socialist is the true nationalist. Socialism will remove the economic influences which keep the individual in subjection. Socialism will, consequently, promote the healthy growth of the community of individuals, the nation; and the economic root of international conflict being removed, will make possible the realisation of the internationalist's vision."<sup>12</sup>

Try as they might to reconcile socialism with patriotism and even nationalism, or to employ the language of radical patriotism, there was a sense in which the arguments of Labour and socialist politicians cited above were beside the point. Although the intensity of patriotic feelings in the country may have fluctuated during the war, the type of patriotism which prevailed amongst the pro-war working class seems to have been nothing like as sophisticated or nuanced as the versions detailed above. For a more conventional version of patriotism, as expressed by a Labour leader, Ben Tillett's remarks to a meeting of the British Workers' League provide an example.

"I am for my class in a strike – right or wrong. In a war, I am for my country – right or wrong.' When German democracy, he continued, determined to throw in their lot with Kaiserism, he respected their right to love their Fatherland. He claimed the same right as a Briton to love his country."<sup>13</sup>

Evidence points to this, rather than previously described patriotisms, as being the dominant version amongst the working class. At certain chronological and geographical points, this patriotism may have been tempered by class interests and consciousness, but it was powerful and overriding.

"Workers' patriotism was often an adapted version of the values expounded by the dominant classes. It was fluid through time, but for most it remained throughout the war a limiting context for their class consciousness."<sup>14</sup>

The same author concludes that "patriotism was the hegemonic ideology" among the working class, but argues that Labour patriotism was not exclusively of a conventional King and country type.<sup>15</sup> There were local as well as national examples of Labour bodies portraying the war as one against "Prussianism", but one major distinction to draw is between those

who saw only the threat of "Prussianism" from Germany, and those who saw it emanating from domestic as well as foreign enemies. Those who might legitimately be held to have worn the political mantle of radical patriotism were socialists for whom cherished rights and liberties were too valuable to be sacrificed, even to the demands of war. An explicit statement of the distinction to be drawn between a narrow but dominant version of patriotism and a radical alternative was made by the I.L.P. activist and writer, C.H. Norman.

"The intellectual attitude of all governing classes is to insist that patriotism should be limited to the duty to defend the country, when those governing classes choose to embark on a war; but the true importance of patriotism and its universal value, under present conditions, is in upholding the rights and liberties of the people against tyranny."<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, the old radical organ, *Reynolds News*, which was pro-war but with an eye to the interests of its working-class readership, offered something close to Norman's governing class version of patriotism, in which class interests were overridden by the national emergency.

"After the first shaking declaration of war the duty of each citizen and patriot was to face without flinching the difficulties ahead, and to do all in his power to lighten the load of the authorities who have the

responsibility of directing and controlling our national affairs...the bonds.....have been tightened and drawn together in such a way that there is now scarcely a mutter of class hatred or threat of a class struggle, and the whole nation is of one mind."

To be fair to *Reynolds News*, it did, in the fullness of time, cover and comment vigorously upon the social tensions generated by wartime profiteering. However, the type of patriotism invoked in the text cited above appears to have been Waites' "hegemonic ideology", and one recognised as such and condemned by its minority opponents in the Labour movement. The latter employed rhetoric which echoed the language of radical patriotism. Here, for example, is Philip Snowden, writing in 1917, referring initially to Henderson, Hodge and Wardle:

"There appears to be no length to which these Labour leaders will not go in support of Mr Lloyd George, Lord Curzon and Lord Milner in their attacks upon popular liberties and democratic power...It has been an inexplicable thing that during the course of this war the Trade Unionists should have shown such willingness to believe in the patriotism, the honour, the disinterestedness and the democratic sympathy of the very men and the very newspapers who before the war were always fighting Labour."<sup>17</sup>

The treatment given to the topic of patriotism by the Labour and radical press appears to confirm the view of Waites that the conventional image of mass working-class enthusiasm for the war was inaccurate and simplistic.<sup>18</sup> It would also, thereby, confirm the much earlier assertion that it 'was some time before the mass of British workers became thoroughly inflamed by enthusiasm for the war'.<sup>19</sup>

The tenor of discussion in the Labour press about patriotism changed radically from that established at the outbreak of war. In August 1914, the objects of scorn were the crowds demonstrating their patriotic feelings in the street. The *Daily Herald*, describing the crowds which had gathered outside Buckingham Palace after the naval reserve had been called up, quite pointedly identified them as lower middle class in composition. They were roundly mocked, labelled as "patriacs" and "maffickers", and their patriotism represented as the indulgence of clerks and shop assistants. Category labels expressed an intense class-based contempt for the patriots:

a hundred helots of the drapery counter

a hundred serfs of the counting house

double-collared heroes  
a pallid young chin-warrior and a hundred straw hats  
throwing out their diminutive chests  
the little people

Along with their occupations, dress and physique, the characteristic non-standard London accent was mocked (an accent which many of the *Herald's* own London readers must have shared).

Gawd Sive Ahr Gricious King

Ri Ri Ri, they shrieked

The noisy and unseemly demonstration was contrasted with the silence of the poor in the East End of London. For the *Herald*, as for the Labour movement more generally, patriotism and patriots soon ceased to be in themselves the objects of scorn. The guileless "dupes" who were mocked in the extracts quoted above were replaced as objects of scorn by the "false patriots" typified by the jingoistic newspaper proprietors and their editors. The terms "patriot" and "patriotism" came to be employed positively, except when enclosure within quotation marks indicated their ironic status. "Jingoism" and "jingo" became the terms of abuse, and into such categories fell not only the likes of Northcliffe and Bottomley, but

members of xenophobic mobs which indulged in attacks upon innocent German or German-sounding individuals.

Another shift which occurred and which is exemplified in this same *Herald* article, is in the treatment of the monarch. On the eve of war, the King could be, and was, represented as the natural leader of the war-mongers, and mocked for lending support to the pro-war faction whilst remaining immune to the consequences of military action.

"The windows of the palace opened and George, by the Grace of God, a non-combatant, stepped forward to the balcony in company with his wife, and bowed to his intelligent subjects, as a puppet might bow, mechanically."<sup>20</sup>

Within a matter of weeks, the tone and content of this article had become unthinkable in the mainstream Labour press, and dangerous if uttered at public meetings. The impact of the Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A.) upon public statements referring to the monarch will be dealt with later, but even before D.O.R.A. had been passed, remarks hostile to the monarch were made at the speaker's or writer's peril. Thus, three months after the *Herald* article quoted above, prosecution was faced by a Birmingham socialist who addressed a gathering in the following terms:

" You say you are fighting for the land. Their land, not yours...You say....'Your King and country need you'. Damn your King and damn your country. Your King and country are your wife and children, and the best queen you can fight for is your wife....You have no damned country."<sup>21</sup>

The charge brought alleged the use of words in public which were likely to vilify or degrade the King in the esteem of his subjects. The police argued that the remarks amounted to sedition, although the court did not, ultimately, agree. No doubt such prosecutions helped concentrate the minds of Labour newspaper editors and public speakers, but there must also have been self-censorship, which derived in part from a realisation that the war, patriotic sentiment and the King's new role as symbol of the nation at war, had an impact upon Labour supporters. The King could no longer, fairly or safely, be portrayed as the head of a social caste remote from the majority of people.

In summary, wartime conditions thrust patriotism to the forefront of political discourse, and except at the political and geographical margins (i.e. Scotland), it could not be mocked or denied. However, in type and intensity, there were distinct variations of patriotism. Large numbers of Labour activists and supporters subscribed to the "hegemonic" variant, albeit with inflections of class interest at various junctures. The intensity of patriotic feeling of this type appears to have fluctuated throughout the war

among the working class. A vigorous minority in the movement sought to deploy a radical alternative, and sought to accommodate 'natural' patriotic instincts within a wider socialist and internationalist outlook. Those who opposed the "domestic tyranny" threatened by emergency legislation, used the language of radical patriotism, seeking to legitimate their minority case by association with historical rights as well as with the powerful concept of patriotism.

#### Labour and the "German" royal family.

A minor theme of the wartime period was the German origins of the British royal family. The subject is perhaps most readily associated with the 'jingo' press, and the most extended and vigorous campaign for the German ties to be cut certainly came from the political right.<sup>22</sup> It was a topic regarded as distasteful by certain mainstream Labour voices.

"So far as there is any personal animosity in the country against the reigning house, it is entirely the work of the Jingo Press, with its screams of 'Once a Hun, always a Hun', and its befouling of anything remotely German."<sup>23</sup>

Despite this assertion, it was not the province exclusively of the political right. There is evidence that the vulnerability of the royal family on this score was consciously exploited by some in the Labour movement, and

that in addition, hostility based upon the “alien” character of British royalty was an inherited feature of domestic radicalism.

“Xenophobia has an established pedigree within the English radical tradition, and stigmatising monarchs by association with ‘alienness’ was a long-standing populist tactic of all the major post-Napoleonic War movements of political protest.”<sup>24</sup>

To this native English radical tradition, one must add the influence of anti-monarchical traditions in both Scotland and Ireland, which impinged upon the particular manifestations of hostility to “alien” royalty during the Great War.

For sustained hostility to the royal family on the grounds of its German origin, the Glasgow *Forward* was in a class of its own. This rhetoric was a continuation of pre-war habits. Commenting on an imminent visit by the King to Scotland in June 1914, it mocked calls for a display of loyalty.

“Loyalty to what: to whom? To a stupendously rich family of the name of Wettin or Guelph, who draw from our pockets half a million sterling per annum...”<sup>25</sup>

Certainly the use of the name “Guelph” drew on a long anti-monarchical tradition in England as well as Scotland.<sup>26</sup> However, another article, which referred to George V as “the Wee, Wee German Lairdie” drew upon a specifically Scottish tradition.<sup>27</sup> This is a clear reference to the Jacobite ballad on George I.

“Wha the deil hae we gotten for a King,  
But a wee, wee German lairdie.”<sup>28</sup>

The same newspaper pursued this line doggedly in the early months of the war. It combined an attack on the large allowances made by the British state to members of the royal family, which were compared to the derisory amounts given to war widows, with an emphasis on the German connections of the royal recipients. For example, Princess Christian “of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg” received six thousand pounds per annum.

“Schleswig-Holstein, please note – a fine old English name – and her eldest son fighting in the German army against us, and shooting down the soldiers who pay his ma the six thousand...the Duchess of Albany..ekes out her sewing with six thousand pounds of a pension from the British taxpayer. The Duke of Albany is in command of German troops.”<sup>29</sup>

It is arguable to what extent republican socialists who adopted this line felt genuine indignation about the German connections, or whether the latter was an opportunist move to attempt to regenerate a republicanism which had been dormant for over forty years. In the case of *Forward*, and the Scottish republicanism which it articulated, the anti-Germanism appears to have been more than a temporary political tactic, but to have comprised part of a radical anti-monarchical tradition. This tradition, besides the anti-Germanism alluded to, generated other stock features which recurred in *Forward's* handling of British royalty before and during the Great War. Prominent amongst these were ironic comparisons between the wealth of royalty and the poverty of groups of their subjects, and personal lampoons of the monarch.<sup>30</sup> The very same lines of attack had been pursued in the nineteenth century by radical journals.<sup>31</sup>

In wartime Britain, the pointed references to the German origins of the royal family had more potential to inflict damage, given the family links to the Kaiser, but the case described below suggests that the Government did not regard such attacks as a particularly serious threat to the royal family's standing. In 1915, one reference was cited by Lloyd George as part of the case for suppressing *Forward*.<sup>32</sup> In defending the newspaper, its editor claimed that the offending article was concerned mainly with the Kaiser's alleged insanity, but that claim is hard to justify. In truth, the article focuses upon the German origins of the royal family,

and with that family's inadequacies. The tenor is apparent in an offending section.

"John Bull has always had to import his August Monarchs. He has been ruled by Normans, by Angevin Plantagenets, by Welsh Tudors, by Scottish Stuarts, by a Dutchman, and, alas, by the meanest and most sub-mediocre of German dynasties, the Brunswick Guelphs and Coburg Wettins...Anyhow, the day will come, early or late, when the British people will get rid of their extraneous Manchus, and let us hope, in much the same humane fashion as Republican China recently disposed of its superfluous Manchus. We could well afford to pay our Germanic Manchus almost any price, however fabulous, to take themselves off..."<sup>33</sup>

It must be added that the article from which this passage was taken had appeared six months before suppression was ordered. Indeed, Lloyd George's parliamentary critics over the suppression observed that *Forward* had been "allowed to attack the King, but it was not allowed to report a speech made by the Minister of Munitions".<sup>34</sup>

Whilst the attack on the monarchy may have been a side-issue in the suppression of *Forward*, the anti-monarchism of the newspaper was, as has been noted, consistent and drew upon a long historical tradition. However, the political importance of republicanism was not agreed upon, even within the newspaper. Differences of

emphasis were articulated during the immediate pre-war period, and followed the publication of H.G. Wells' open letter to the *Daily Herald* in which he called for that newspaper to display a more rebellious character, including republicanism.

"Does the DAILY HERALD rebel against the Crown, or does it mean that remarkable institution to go on to the Millenium?...Or does the DAILY HERALD think the Crown is a negligible factor in our present affairs? And spare it for its weakness?"<sup>35</sup>

Responding to Wells's letter, *Forward* carried an article which explored the nature of contemporary republicanism, and set out the principles which informed the newspaper's attacks on the monarchy and royalty. Acknowledging that the political danger from royalty was "negligible", the social effects nevertheless constituted a "malifcence [which] can hardly be exaggerated".<sup>36</sup>

"It is the express incarnation of social inequality and political privilege. The people interested in royalty may be roughly divided into two great classes – they are either knaves or fools – persons moved by self-interest or superstition, or, it may be, by a cunning compound of both."<sup>37</sup>

Thus, republicanism was not incidental to the socialist programme, but had to be at its heart, for "the Crown is at the very core of the entire accursed social and economic system against which we are in revolt".<sup>38</sup> Two months after this unambiguous statement of the need for socialism to incorporate republicanism, an editorial bearing the style of Tom Johnston made a familiar qualification, and one already indicated in Chapter One of this work. It suggested again the permanent dilemma: the socialist recognised the salience of republican ideas to his own project, but simultaneously recognised the political disadvantages of incorporating those ideas into the socialist programme.

If the Scottish part of the Labour movement had its own peculiar interest in the German origins of the royal family, then certain Irish nationalists indubitably deployed this topic in an attempt to inflict damage on the symbol and head of the British state. The relationship of this phenomenon to the Labour movement may have been tangential, but as will become clear, there was involvement with and by Labour organizations. In the House of Commons, attention was drawn to the case of two royal dukes, entitled to sit in the House of Lords, who were reported to be commanding German troops. The two M.P.'s who harried the Government on this matter were Irish Nationalists, Arthur Lynch and Swift MacNeill. Labour M.P.'s remained silent. However, two points can be made. First , Arthur Lynch was, within two years of his parliamentary protests on this subject, a Labour candidate, and had in the meantime

joined the I.L.P. and taken his republican campaign to Labour and socialist forums, including the Albert Hall meeting to celebrate the Russian revolution. Secondly, there is some evidence that the controversy surrounding the Duke of Cumberland and of Albany had provoked a response in parts of the Labour movement. Those parts were, the evidence suggests, on the margins. Reports of public meetings have socialists alleging pro-German sentiments among the royal family, as well as making verbal attacks on the two dukes. The local police stated that a speaker in Birmingham's Bull Ring had said that,

"The Government are paying two German Princes six thousand pounds a year and they are helping to kill your working sons."<sup>39</sup>

The I.L.P. candidate for Aberdare was reported to have attacked the King, accusing him of pro-German sympathies.<sup>40</sup> In Birmingham, a local socialist was alleged to have said that 'the present King of England has not a drop of British blood in him. He is a German.'<sup>41</sup> The police were unable to produce any witnesses to these words, but the socialist was given three months hard labour under D.O.R.A. The Surrey constabulary in May 1914 drew attention to a local socialist who was "against Royalty generally, including the late King Edward VII and H.R.H. the Duchess of Albany who resides nearby...".<sup>42</sup> This socialist, Henry Mills of Oxshott, later produced a pamphlet which was printed by the National Labour

Press. In this, anti-German sentiment supplemented the dominant theme, which was a denunciation of hereditary rule. Mills seems to have played a populist anti-German card to advance the cause of republicanism and to increase hostility to the locally resident Duchess of Albany.

"Her German son is fighting against us in this bloody and most awful war. He has publicly insulted England and Englishmen, his mother's sympathies are naturally on his side, and she ought to have been sent out to him directly the war started, and her pay from the British taxpayer stopped instanter [sic]."<sup>43</sup>

Xenophobia was given full rein, as Mills demanded that all Germans "high and low" be sent out of the country, and their pay stopped. Whilst men such as Mills, and others cited earlier, may be and were dismissed by the police and Home Office as local eccentrics or hotheads, other more prominent figures made contributions which suggest that suspicions about pro-German attitudes within the royal family, if not necessarily anti-German xenophobia, had widespread currency in Labour and socialist circles. The radical Liberal M.P., Sir William Byles, who had been a Labour candidate in 1900, addressed the City of London Branch of the I.L.P. in July 1916, and was reported by police as saying:

"Here are two grandsons of Queen Victoria, both rulers of their great civilised Christian nations, which have got into deadly conflict and are trying to destroy one another. Is there such a great difference between these two grandsons? In our Court they speak English with a German accent, and in the German Court, no doubt, they speak German with an English accent. Does it really matter which grandson is your Monarch?"<sup>44</sup>

Harry Snell, later a Labour M.P. and subsequently a peer, was convinced that the Kaiser would not ultimately be punished, as his "relatives will see that nothing happens to him, which is one more argument in favour of an immediate revival of republicanism".<sup>45</sup> However, in a later piece, Snell's argument seems to reflect the point made about the 1870's revival of republicanism.

"As in...previous campaigns, the emphasis placed by reformers upon the Germanic origins of the House of Hanover allowed them to connect strongly with broader currents within English popular culture."<sup>46</sup>

In commenting on the decision of the royal family to adopt the name of Windsor, Snell suggested that fewer Germans were now likely to marry into the pseudo-British family, and that "this turning down of the crowd of royal cuckoo Germans who lay their eggs in others' nests is enough to

make poor Queen Victoria turn in her grave".<sup>47</sup> Snell, harking back to the radical tradition of referring to the Germanic origins of British royalty, was astute in his prediction that the people would now be deceived into imagining that royalty was their own. If never entirely forgotten, the German theme was not a feature of inter-war anti-monarchical politics.

Finally, it must not be thought that the anti-German propaganda emanating from Labour and socialist sources was representative of the wider movement. Journals from the *Herald* to *Justice* distanced themselves from cruder anti-German passions, and invoked the royal family only in opposing the indiscriminate internment of "aliens". Thus the *Herald* attacked the jingo newspapers' charge of "Once a German, always a German" by logically extending it to "ladies who have married into the royal family", some of whom were "known for their good works and highly respected".<sup>48</sup>

Likewise, *Justice* denounced the attempt to imprison even naturalised Germans. Alluding to the case of Prince Louis of Battenberg, it asked why the same should not disqualify a man from being king.<sup>49</sup> Only on the fringes of the labour and socialist movements did the anti-monarchical tendency to allude to British royalty's German origins descend into purely anti-German xenophobia.

### Labour and royal philanthropy.

Although this topic is situated within a chapter devoted to the Great War, it can, of course, be traced and extended outside this period. However, the war intensified levels of activity and response, and the period illustrates in microcosm the issues generated by royal philanthropic activity. The latter includes the promotion of charitable bodies and campaigns, the direct donation of money to charitable causes, and the conscious setting of a moral example to the nation. In all of these fields, there was a substantial history of royal involvement, in some cases from the Victorian period, and in others from much earlier times.<sup>50</sup> There is clear evidence that the impulse for, and intensity of, such activity came, in the early twentieth century, from a perceived threat from the rising Labour movement. The King's secretary expressed the concerns felt about the monarchy's role in these uncertain times, and outlined the directions which the monarchy might take.

"We must endeavour to induce the thinking working classes, Socialists and others, to regard the Crown, not as a mere figure-head and as an institution which, as they put it, 'don't count', but as a living power for good, with receptive faculties welcoming information affecting the interests and social well-being of all classes, and ready, not only to sympathise with those questions, but anxious to further their solution."<sup>51</sup>

The topic touches upon two distinct but related matters: Labour's attitude to the monarchy; and Labour's attitude to charity and philanthropy. Both were complex, and war-time experience induced changes to previously-held attitudes. It will be argued here that the Great War saw the monarchy entrench its position, in part through an increasing "social" role, and that Labour was obliged to acknowledge the popularity of the monarchy's philanthropic activity amongst its own supporters.

Two projects which sought to alleviate social distress will be examined here: the Prince of Wales's Fund, also known as the National Relief Fund; and the Queen's Work for Women Fund. The two projects involved differing degrees of genuine royal involvement, as the Prince of Wales played only a symbolic role in the former, whilst Queen Mary was in direct and regular contact with those operating and administering the latter. However, they both impinged upon the lives of the working class, and provoked a range of responses within the Labour movement.

The Prince of Wales's Fund was in existence until 1921, having been established on August 6, 1914, following an appeal from the Prince. The King gave five thousand pounds and the Prince three thousand. It was established as the first signs of war-related unemployment and distress were appearing, and the response from Labour was two-fold. First, Labour recognised a clear need for schemes of relief, which were likely to be administered by local citizens' committees as well as national ones. Secondly, Labour sought to ensure that it was

adequately represented at all levels. Following the Prince's appeal, the Labour movement's Joint Board, consisting of representatives from the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C., the General Federation of Trades Unions and the Labour Party, adopted a resolution that "the unions be recommended to urge upon their working members to subscribe liberally to the Prince of Wales' Fund.<sup>52</sup> The assertion that "the Prince received a good deal of favourable publicity from the project"<sup>53</sup> is certainly borne out by the immediate response in Labour's own daily newspaper. An open letter to the Prince paid tribute to his "truly gracious act" which 'set an example to the youth of the nation'.<sup>54</sup> It was the Prince's appeal for social solidarity which particularly struck a chord, drawing on Labour's concern for the worst off and upon a tradition of mutual assistance amongst the working class. By making an appeal for all sections of society to contribute to the Fund, the Prince defused (if not eliminated) the accusation that this was a case of the affluent offering dole to the poor. The Prince had, in the eyes of the *Daily Citizen*, aligned himself with the ambitions and values of the Labour movement.

" 'At such a moment we all stand by one another,' you say. May it be so, sir, and what emergency has taught us may we not forget when the emergency has passed. The sacrifices and sufferings that this struggle must bring in its train will not have been endured in vain if they teach us a livelier sympathy, a deeper community, a quicker sense of our obligations

to one another. Your public life has begun by an inculcation of those great truths.<sup>55</sup>

The small-scale and humble origins of so many of the contributions were what particularly impressed, "the poorest as well as the richest" offering what they could afford. A further point in its favour, and an additional credit to the Prince of Wales, was the latter's request at the outset that the Fund be used, as far as possible, to give people employment rather than doles. When it became apparent that the reality was to the contrary, the Prince's words were recalled, and he was explicitly excluded from criticism about the Fund's misuse.<sup>56</sup> Both the Prince of Wales and Queen Mary were at pains to emphasise that work and not dole was the desired outcome. This position was calculated to appeal to Labour's preferences, and led to a distinction being drawn between the Prince and the Cabinet on this issue.

"The Prince of Wales very sensibly asked that the Fund should be used as far as possible to give people employment rather than doles....The Cabinet Committee, in spite of the Prince of Wales, apparently prefers doles to any other method of meeting the emergency.."

The tone adopted by the *Daily Citizen* was far from typical. Whilst the Fund could be used to demonstrate national solidarity, it could also be invoked to demonstrate the disloyalty of the rich. A Labour journal which supported British participation in the war ridiculed the amount raised for the Fund, accepting the necessity and urgency of charitable relief, but condemning the "paltry doles" which large companies were offering.<sup>58</sup> Implicit in their argument was an approval of the Fund's establishment, and of the royal appeal, but with two reservations: if corporate contributions did not increase, the state should oblige companies to pay; that it was the state's duty to maintain dependants of serving soldiers.

The status of the relief fund was much argued over. Was it charity pure and simple, or was it in some way different from such previous examples as the King's Fund? The Webbs welcomed the impetus which the Prince of Wales's Fund gave to a new approach to the relief of distress.

"This new sense of the unity of the war's social consequences both at home and abroad was, they believed, a profound advance. Unemployment or distress was no longer shameful and relief need not be ignominious in wartime, since, at least until the armistice, the welfare of every citizen was the welfare of all."<sup>59</sup>

This was a change of attitude from Fabians, who held strict views on the responsibilities of the state. However, public funds were deemed essential, to supplement the otherwise inadequate amounts provided by donation.<sup>60</sup> In this instance, the alternative of maintenance under the despised Poor Law made the Fund more acceptable.

A slightly different position was adopted by the I.L.P. The National Administration Council (N.A.C.) of that organization declared that the relief of distress was a government pledge, and the schemes for giving relief and for creating employment should be under the control of Labour representatives. Clearly conscious of the unacceptable nature of charitable doles, the I.L.P. asserted that "the relief is not charity but a public right".<sup>61</sup> The Fund may not have been dependent exclusively on charitable contributions, but in part it was. Deeply held objections to the charitable relief of poverty and to the middle-class character of voluntary organizations emerged during the war.

"To begin with, the problem of relieving distress should have been a charge on the nation and should not have been handed over to a voluntary fund. Secondly, the Local Representative Committees were practically delivered over to the tender mercies of the 'social worker', so that an atmosphere of 'pauperization' resulted."<sup>62</sup>

The latter point echoes the I.L.P.'s complaint that relief was too often being channelled through "organisations dominated by Charity Organisation Society (C.O.S.) ideas".<sup>63</sup> The files of the War Emergency Workers' National Committee (W.N.C.) are full of complaints from local Labour organizations about the Fund, but their complaints are about the allocation of money to the wrong people and about the lack of public accountability. Often, the failure of the Fund's administrators, national and local, to meet the objectives set out by the Prince of Wales is emphasised. Sidney Webb made this point in a draft memorandum drawn up for the W.N.C.

"...no idea was given by the Prince of Wales, in making his National Appeal, that the fund would be devoted primarily or chiefly to soldiers' and sailors' families or that the need of the civilian population in distress would be in any way postponed or subordinated."<sup>64</sup>

This point was one repeated often, with state responsibility for relief payments to dependants of dead, injured or serving military personnel.<sup>65</sup>

The response of the Labour movement to the National Relief Fund was fragmented. Principled opposition to the use of charity rather than of state provision for the relief of distress was cut across by three considerations: the declared intention to use the Fund to establish locally determined schemes of work, and not for doles; the potential for Labour

organisations to become crucial determinants of how the Fund was operated; and the sheer urgency of the need to provide relief. Once the Fund was in existence, Labour objections were: that the Fund was badly administered; that Labour was not adequately represented on the bodies which allocated money; that the Fund was being "raided" for the wrong purposes; that doles and not employment schemes were the outcome; and that the responsibilities of the state were being evaded. For none of these failings was the Prince of Wales held to blame. On the contrary, he emerged as the advocate of an acceptable approach to the relief of distress. In addition, he was the instigator of a Fund which drew on such a breadth of financial support that it could appear as a genuine expression of social solidarity, touching on traditions of working class mutual assistance.

One subsidiary of the National Relief Fund was the "Queen's Work for Women Fund", launched on August 20, 1914. The genesis of this fund illustrates the rapid re-orientation of royal philanthropy in the face of an increasingly vocal Labour movement. There was an astute re-positioning of royalty; from being the patron of essentially middle-class voluntary organisations, to a wider identification with the interests and needs of the working class, as the latter themselves saw these. This involved personal contact with leading figures in the women's Labour movement, to the apparent advantage of the royal family.

At the outbreak of the war, Queen Mary's involvement with philanthropic response came through her Needlework Guild. This was a classic example of a traditional charity, in which genteel ladies worked voluntarily, knitting socks and making shirts for soldiers. Within days, Buckingham Palace had received protests from the Labour movement about the impact of the Queen's voluntary needleworkers on women's employment. Objection to this form of philanthropy was vigorously typified by a resolution sent from the London membership of the British Socialist Party (B.S.P.) to the Workers' National Committee, protesting against,

"....the methods adopted by Queen Mary's Charity Fund, which amounted to nothing short of philanthropic blacklegging and must generally increase the number of unemployed...[and]....the presence in such numbers of members of the Charity Organisation Society, directly antagonistic to the well-being of the workers, on the Local Citizen Committees dealing with want and unemployment."<sup>66</sup>

The reaction was speedy, and revealed the same sensitivity to Labour's desire for work and not dole as had been shown by the Prince of Wales. By mid-August, the Queen and her advisers, including "industrial experts and representatives of working class women" were developing a scheme for promoting women's employment.<sup>67</sup> Now, the aim was to "supplement and not supplant paid labour".<sup>68</sup> The composition of the committee

established to administer the Fund was as innovative as its aims. There was an unprecedentedly heavy representation of Labour interests, for amongst the original thirteen members were Mary Macarthur, Margaret Bondfield, Susan Lawrence and Marion Phillips. Mary Macarthur was invited to meet the Queen on several occasions, and took away a favourable impression of the Queen's commitment.

"Here is someone who can help and who means to help!" Mary Macarthur excitedly shouted at Gertrude Tuckwell on her return from Buckingham Palace...Soon jocular members of the Labour Movement were referring to 'the strange case of Mary M. and Mary R.'"<sup>69</sup>

The orientation of the Fund's work certainly made a good initial impression, with the Labour press giving favourable attention to the Queen's message to the nation. This message contained the monarchy's redirected philanthropic emphasis, proclaiming that "prevention of distress is better than its relief and that employment is better than charity".<sup>70</sup> These main points of the message, reported in the *Willesden Call*, were exactly in accord with the demands made in an earlier editorial in that Labour newspaper.<sup>71</sup>

As was the case with the Prince of Wales's Fund, the objections to the Queen's Fund resulted more from its operation than from its conception. The workrooms established under its auspices offered a

maximum rate of pay of ten shillings a week. The *Herald* led a vigorous campaign against the wage level, and in so doing demonstrated that not everybody in the Labour movement was convinced by the new direction in royal philanthropy. The latter was bracketed with other examples of Labour incorporation and received caustic comment.

"These are great days we are living in. Trade Unionists and Socialists are now sitting round tables side by side with Royalties, millionaires, and other comfortably-placed people, all gathered to *help the poor, organise the poor*. We are told that class distinctions are being broken down, and that men and women of all classes are eager to prove by action that we are all one family. It is surely time we practised what we preach.."<sup>72</sup>

This note of dissent should qualify, but not invalidate, the impression which emerges from the experience of royal philanthropy during the Great War. By an astutely amended policy, the royal family were associated with projects which were distinct from the traditional C.O.S. organizations and ethos. They were consciously aligned with Labour's preferences for employment rather than relief, and the breadth of appeal and involvement made them appear genuinely popular and all-inclusive. With an appeal to, and direct assistance to, the working class, and with the deliberate involvement of Labour organizations and personnel, the monarchy and

the royal family were able to project themselves as being closer to the lives of their working class subjects and in sympathy with the broader aims of their political movement.

Two other minor gestures by the King deserve some comment. In both cases, they represent the monarch attempting to set a moral example to the nation. As far as the Labour movement was concerned, the gestures were not absolutely to the advantage of the monarchy, but may have contributed to the imperceptibly improving personal image of the King. The King's "pledge" to abstain from alcohol during the war was received positively by the temperance element which formed part of the socialist and Labour movements. It was not publicly known that the pledge was made reluctantly, only at the instigation of Lloyd George, and probably not kept.<sup>73</sup> The "drink question" was one which profoundly divided the Labour movement, as was illustrated in responses to the shipbuilding employers' call for the total prohibition of the sale of alcoholic drink as an emergency war measure. The allegation of excessive drinking amongst shipbuilding workers was rejected by the Boilermakers' and Steel Shipbuilders' Society and by the general secretary of the Federation of Trades Unions. However, other prominent Labour figures, including Robert Williams and Harry Gosling, accepted that there was a problem, and agreed that the most drastic action was required.<sup>74</sup> Sections of the Labour press praised the King for his good example, whilst admitting that his example was not being followed.

"Months ago, King George led the way in a great campaign against alcohol; very few followed his example. This failure did not in any way detract from his actions."<sup>75</sup>

Even a year later, the King was praised in a long article by Lansbury, who contrasted the liquor ban at Buckingham Palace with the failure of the House of Commons to close its own bars and with the irresponsible conduct of the liquor producers.<sup>76</sup> For temperance socialists such as Lansbury, the King was on the side of the angels, although "the [liquor] trade proved too strong, even for the King".<sup>77</sup> However, outside the temperance faction, prohibitionism was hardly the most popular of causes in the Labour movement. Arguments against it included: the defence of personal liberty, including the liberty to drink alcohol; the perceived need of some industrial workers to consume large quantities of liquid; the undeniable popularity of drink amongst the working class; that the suppression of one vice would only lead to the expansion of others, in particular prostitution; that the move to prohibit alcohol was aimed at increasing the worker's efficiency and was a capitalist attack upon the worker's social life to that end.<sup>78</sup> As far as the King's initiative was concerned, the minority temperance element in the Labour movement gave personal credit to the monarch, whilst there appeared little personal hostility towards the King from the opponents of prohibition. On balance,

the King may have done his reputation no harm amongst a vociferous element in the Labour movement.

A further gesture, intended to present the King as an example to the nation, came in the so-called "Economy Campaign". Responses to this propaganda tactic varied in the Labour movement, but one called for the King to shame the "plutocrats and monopolists" by instituting his own economies.<sup>79</sup> The King's returning of one hundred thousand pounds to the state, to be used as the Government saw fit, was received positively in the Labour press. This gesture was classed with the King's abstinence pledge, and praised as being in contrast to the behaviour of the "governing classes".<sup>80</sup> When, later in the war, a Royal Proclamation on the food crisis was issued, appealing specifically for economy and frugality with grain, it was received equally enthusiastically, and the pro-war *Justice* regarded it as "more than enough to remove any feeling that may have been growing up against the monarchical principle".<sup>81</sup> There were isolated voices raised against "people of wealth and position" teaching others to be economical.<sup>82</sup>

Overall, the effect of the King's moral example was to encourage more positive Labour perceptions of the monarch. After being associated with the ruling class in the House of Lords and Ulster crises, the King's wartime initiatives helped not only to project an image of personal decency, but to counterbalance the pre-war pattern of monarchical identification with the governing class. In contrast to the

monarchy's association with reactionary peers or Ulster rebels, wartime Labour opinion often portrayed the King and the royal family in opposition to the socially and financially powerful. Thus, the philanthropic initiatives with which royalty were connected suffered from a lack of financial support from the wealthy, and the Prince of Wales's original intentions for his Fund were frustrated by the Cabinet. In both the economy and anti-alcohol campaigns, the King's example was contrasted with the selfishness or indifference of the ruling class. When compared with pre-war Labour opinion, the King and the monarchy had come in from the cold.

### The King's Visits.

The practice of organizing royal visits to centres of industrial production did not begin with the Great War. In the immediate pre-war period, there had been a number of visits to mining and industrial areas, undertaken on the advice of Esher. However, the frequency of such visits greatly increased, and there was the innovation of deliberately sending the King to places of current industrial unrest. Lloyd George attached much value to these visits, particularly "the spontaneous resolve of the King to go about among them [industrial workers], to shake them by the hand, talk with them and make a direct appeal to their patriotism and citizenship".<sup>83</sup> Although Lloyd George does not refer to it, the origin of the visits policy lay with the Cabinet. Far from ensuring that the King avoid centres of unrest, the Cabinet sent him to such locations, made arrangements for him to

meet local union leaders, and lifted restrictions on publicising the King's movements around the country, in order to maximise the propaganda value of the visits.<sup>84</sup> At the time of the Engineers' strike in 1917, royal visits formed part of the state's response, with careful timing both of the visits and of any punitive actions against the strikers. Thomson records F.E. Smith's report to a Ministry of Munitions conference, called to respond to the strike.

".....that as the Cabinet had sent the King and Queen to the strike areas, it would be wrong to prejudice the success of their visit by arresting the strikers until they have left the north. The conference was to reassemble... when the King would have left the dangerous area." <sup>85</sup>

The motivation behind such visits was not simply the reduction of tension in key areas of industrial production. As one period of industrial difficulty coincided with a sudden upsurge of republicanism, the interests of the monarchy were also served by the King's high profile visits. The latter may also have been useful to ministers in convincing the King's advisors of the advantages to be had from the visits. Addison's chronicle hints at such.

"Wigram and I went over the Lancashire and Northern Tour and I urged him, in view of the present temper of people generally (which,

although thoroughly friendly to our own monarchy, was becoming prejudiced against monarchies in general) to fall in with L.G.'s suggestion that the King should make a point of visiting shipyards.”<sup>86</sup>

The success and value of these visits from the Government's point of view was unqualified, providing “great satisfaction...[and] demonstrations of loyalty on the part of the workers”.<sup>87</sup> One calculated aspect of the wartime visits was their newly informal character. The change was made to symbolise the monarchy's preparedness to forego extravagance and pomp in the national emergency, and it helped to democratise the monarchy's image. This change was noted at the time, although its motivation was not.<sup>88</sup> Despite the more informal approach, there was criticism from some socialists about the unnecessary expense of the visits. Robert Smillie told Leicester I.L.P. that the King's recent visit to Glasgow had involved,

“...the labour of many men, and a large amount of money was spent on this visit, and yet they were told to economise. He would have preferred the King to have visited in a different manner, and to have seen the slums of Scotland....”<sup>89</sup>

Coming from a pro-war position, but commenting in a similar vein, *Justice* drew attention to the cost of the King's ‘tourist tickets’, and

detailed the work-time lost at two shipyards visited by the King.<sup>90</sup> Again, the costs were contrasted with the official calls for economy and the avoidance of unnecessary work. The "real object" of the visits "was to bring the working people into closer touch with royalty".<sup>91</sup>

That the Government genuinely attached value to royal visits, particularly to trouble spots, was demonstrated by the continuation of the practice into the difficult post-war period. During late 1918 and early 1919, when at least an element of the British ruling class feared revolutionary uprising, its agents repeatedly declared their belief in the loyalty to the Throne of the working class, and in the importance of royal visits in sustaining that loyalty. Thomson's *Fortnightly Reports* on revolutionary organizations frequently make this point, and the converse:

"[the Liverpool correspondent] thinks that this indifference [to the King] is due to the feeling in Lancashire that the people have been slighted because His Majesty is so seldom in the county as compared with his visits to Scotland and foreign parts."<sup>92</sup>

Another correspondent remarked that "whenever His Majesty can find time to visit industrial centres, the effect is felt at once".<sup>93</sup> The Prince of Wales was sent to the particularly worrying area of South Wales, and his visit was deemed "a great personal triumph".<sup>94</sup>

Although the testimony to the effectiveness of the visits in generating loyalty to the monarchy comes exclusively from agents of the state, there is no counter-evidence to challenge their impressions. The increased frequency and informality of the King's visits to industrial areas set a new pattern of contact between the monarchy and the working class, which strengthened the feelings of affection for the King in particular, and thereby restricted the potential of any future anti-monarchical politics. In this matter, Ziegler's assertions seem no exaggeration.

"The war cemented the relationship [between the monarchy and the proletariat]. The rapport which had developed between the King and the factory workers enabled him to make direct appeals for harder work in a way which could have been perilous for a politician."<sup>95</sup>

The Great War caused the King to be seen, and to be seen in a new light. If the results cannot be quantified, they cannot be denied.

#### The Crown, the Constitution and Civil Liberties.

This section focuses less upon the monarchy and royalty during the Great War than on the role of the Crown; and upon constitutional questions involving the royal prerogative and, in particular, Orders in Council. The extraordinary conditions brought about by war resulted in extraordinary legal developments, some of which were highly

objectionable to sections of the Labour movement. Whilst the King was not personally implicated (unlike 1931 for example), certain aspects of the Crown's residual powers attracted Labour attention. Many prominent and ordinary Labour people were involved in the struggle to defend civil liberties during the war. As an illustration of this fact, the composition of the National Council for Civil Liberties (N.C.C.L.) in 1917 may be considered: its president was W.C. Anderson; its retiring president was Robert Smillie; its treasurer was Philip Snowden; its committee included Lansbury, Robert Williams and Beatrice Webb; of its 545 affiliated bodies, 95 were ILP branches, 98 were trades councils and labour parties and 150 were trade union branches. Whilst the general question of Labour and civil liberties during the war extends beyond the scope of the present study, the specific matter of the use of the Crown's powers in the curtailment of those liberties is certainly relevant. It raises, inevitably, Labour's attitude towards the British Constitution and its inherent flexibilities. For those libertarians who denounced the "Prussianisation" of British society, was it a case of unconstitutional change, or evidence of a flawed constitution? Their rhetoric of liberty and tyranny draws upon a tradition of radical libertarianism.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, the use of the royal prerogative, and more precisely the recourse to the powers of the Privy Council, had been raised during the 1870's by radical Liberal M.P.'s.<sup>97</sup>

The source of current discontent lay in a series of Defence of the Realm Acts, the first of which was passed on August 8, 1914, and

which gave the Government power to make regulations for public safety and the defence of the Realm. Further Acts followed at the end of August 1914 and in March 1915.<sup>98</sup> The first Act was passed without discussion or dissent from the Labour Party, an event explained later as a regrettable oversight.

"The legislation, being at the time urgent, was passed through the House of Commons with great haste and insufficient consideration. Part of the phraseology was wide and vague. In large measure the Acts were a kind of skeleton, and the real power has been taken under Orders in Council, Regulations, and legal interpretations." <sup>99</sup>

Snowden, one of the libertarians, argued further that it was not simply a case of oversight or misunderstanding, but that the attack on liberty and democracy was made with the support of the majority of Labour members of Parliament.<sup>100</sup> For the minority who came to oppose D.O.R.A. and its social and political consequences, there could be no argument that the Acts themselves were other than legally achieved. It was the resort to Orders in Council which was challenged, along with the constitutionality of the regulations which were issued.

Two separate powers were involved in the emergency regulations to which libertarians objected: the royal prerogative and

Orders in Council. The respective natures of these sources of regulation have been summarised:

"While the Crown has some emergency powers under the prerogative, particularly in time of war, those powers are generally too uncertain for the executive to rely on them. In practice, the executive will prefer administration by a set of regulations to the use of wide, but vague, prerogative powers... Shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914, the United Kingdom was in effect placed under military law by the Defence of the Realm Act 1914....The Defence of the Realm Acts 1914-15 empowered the Crown to make regulations by order in council for securing the public safety or for the defence of the realm." <sup>101</sup>

The implications of the use of the prerogative and the Orders in Council were perfectly well understood. Labour was under no illusion that the two essential principles of the British Constitution, control of the executive by Parliament and the rule of law, had been "impaired" during the previous three years, and that the constitution itself had been changed. <sup>102</sup>

The Defence of the Realm Acts had "great constitutional importance" as they "recognised the power of the King in Council – that is, the Cabinet – to issue regulations". <sup>103</sup> Legislating by Regulation and by

Order in Council was the last stage of a wartime "constitutional evolution", which meant a loss of popular control over the Executive. These Orders were not marginal, but central, to the loss of popular control, because "the great mass of the regulations touching every aspect of our political liberty have been introduced by Orders in Council and not by Act of Parliament".<sup>104</sup>

The text summarised and quoted above was produced during the War, although it was published only in 1919. Coming in an official Labour Party publication, the critique of constitutional changes is surprisingly trenchant, and the conclusions concerning the Constitution unusually radical.

"Whether on the conclusion of the War, the British Constitution will be restored in its original form is doubtful. One thing at least is certain: the security of an unwritten constitution, which jurists had always stated to be the more unassailable because its principles were assumed and not expressly affirmed, has been found, in a time of crisis, to be nought. In the reconstruction or restoration of our constitution after this crisis we shall perforce have to take cognisance of this fact."<sup>105</sup>

However, the fact that these opinions were offered in an official party publication should not disguise the fact that public opposition to the use of Orders in Council, to other extraordinary methods of legislating, and to

their effects, came from a minority of Labour voices in Parliament. The previously mentioned list of Labour bodies affiliated to the N.C.C.L. suggests that opposition was more widely spread, if still very much in the minority, amongst Labour and socialist organisations in the country.

The role of the Crown's reserve powers, particularly that wielded by the King in Council, was but one of many matters relating to the erosion of civil liberties discussed at Labour forums and in Labour publications. Nevertheless, it was raised regularly. As was indicated earlier, Labour's Parliamentary Report for 1915 included reference to the power being exercised through Orders in Council; measures which, with others, had "infringed the constitutional rights and liberties of British subjects".<sup>106</sup> Successive I.L.P. conferences saw the topic raised. In 1916, C.H. Norman alleged, in reference to regulations providing for a secret session of Parliament, that:

"For the first time in modern history, the Privy Council and the King had proclaimed what the procedure of the House of Commons should be before consulting with the House. In [Norman's] view this constituted one of the gravest attacks ever made on the liberties of Parliament."<sup>107</sup>

The 1917 I.L.P. conference heard a resolution calling for an enquiry into how effective public control of the Executive might be achieved, accusing

the Government of "suspending for the duration of the war the British Constitution".<sup>108</sup> The secretary of the N.C.C.L. told an I.L.P. meeting that "laws are now made by Orders in Council and not by Parliament".<sup>109</sup> Most critics made clear that the powers invested in the "King in Council" had been appropriated by the War Cabinet, but whilst this implied no criticism of the monarch, it was the Crown's residual constitutional powers which had provided the possibility for quasi-martial law.

If blame was not attached directly to the Crown, still less to the monarch himself, for the erosion of liberty and parliamentary control, it is worth considering the one aspect of the political context in which Labour objections to rule by the "King in Council" were made. Some right-wing elements were advocating the King's assumption of real political power. Thus, at a meeting of the Imperial Defence Union, Horatio Bottomley offered a remedy for the disastrous military position in July 1917.

"You have a King. What is the good of a king if he does not rule? The time has come when the King, I do not care whether he be King George V or anybody else....let [him] say to his ministers, it is obvious that public opinion is against you, get out of the way. I have power to rule Council. I will select men for it who have no suspicion of personal ambition and I will add to it men of undoubted Patriotism."<sup>110</sup>

Such words, however wild and from whatever source, may have fuelled anxieties about the undemocratic inclinations of the Government, if not about the King's respect for the role of a constitutional monarch. Similarly, Bruce Glasier's pamphlet *Militarism* alluded to the power available to the King if he chose to use it. Glasier quoted from a book published in 1903, which discussed the form of government required in war-time. If politicians failed to adopt an authoritarian approach, "then the King, backed by the armed forces will seize control".<sup>111</sup> Periodic calls for failing politicians to be replaced by military personalities, particularly during the most disastrous phases of the war, must have made the fears raised in Glasier's pamphlet more credible. It was in the light of all the misgivings exemplified above that Labour reflected upon the British Constitution.

How did libertarian Labour deal with the constitutional implications of the departures from parliamentary control of the executive and from the rule of law? Had the Constitution been suspended, or were the dangerous developments made possible by its very vagueness? Much of the language used about the Constitution by libertarians in the Labour movement drew heavily upon radical constitutionalist rhetoric. Thus Norman wrote of "upholding the rights and liberties of the people against tyranny".<sup>112</sup> Langdon Davies spoke of "the redemption of the liberties of the people".<sup>113</sup> Bruce Glasier romanticised about "this sea-girt Land of Freedom of ours", and offered the English radical's conventional list of constitutional freedoms: "the birthright of British citizenship

embodied in the Magna Charta, Habeas Corpus and the Bill of Rights".<sup>114</sup> A socialist journal alluded to "our old land of liberty".<sup>115</sup> A resolution at the 1916 I.L.P. Conference referred to the "menace to all the cherished rights and liberties of the people".<sup>116</sup> A contemporary N.C.C.L. pamphlet claimed that "the British constitution is the peculiar contribution of this country to the civilization of the world".<sup>117</sup> This uncritical portrayal of the Constitution by Labour libertarians was not the only available contemporary view of it. Some perspective is offered by the conclusion reached in a non-Labour journal.

"The British Constitution is so loose and its forms so variable that with all the will in the world we may find great difficulty in restoring the liberties we are in the process of surrendering."<sup>118</sup>

Whilst this was not an opinion which found much expression amongst Labour's libertarians, the wartime experience elicited responses which suggested that the opinion was shared by a growing number in the Labour movement. Although nothing concrete resulted, there were calls for reports and studies of how the Constitution might be reformed.<sup>119</sup>

Despite such calls, the enduring legacy of radical belief and confidence in the Constitution appears to have inhibited Labour criticism of it. The looseness and vagueness of such aspects of the Constitution as the royal prerogative and Orders in Council were not in themselves held

responsible for the destruction of liberty. Instead, alternative explanations were offered. The most popular was that the Constitution had been suspended for the duration of the war.<sup>120</sup> Responsibility for this suspension lay with an authoritarian Executive and a supine House of Commons. Under this interpretation, political persecution occurred because constitutional rights had been abrogated, not because certain elements of the Constitution permitted it.

"Parliament, the constitutional bulwark of democracy, was itself the first to haul down the constitutional flag and surrender unconditionally to the King's ministers."<sup>121</sup>

The principal question posed asked **why** the attack on liberty had occurred, rather than **how**. Ramsay MacDonald wrote extensively about the war and civil liberty without touching upon the role of the Crown's residual powers in the matter. In one suggestive account, MacDonald substituted the concept of "the State" for the Constitution, when discussing the wartime attack on democratic values and practices.<sup>122</sup> However, his analysis carries implicit reference to the Constitution; state authority and the Constitution were unavoidably related, despite MacDonald's silence on the latter. His attribution of blame is noteworthy.

"Before the war, the British Socialist had no memory or experience of the State as anything but the political organisation of a tolerably free people, working democratic institutions....If they failed, the fault was not in them but in the people who worked or ought to have worked them...we have not only become familiar with militarism in power, but we have been brought hard up against the crude idea, contributed mainly by Trade Union officials, that in order to prove their allegiance to democratic government, minorities must allow themselves to be suppressed."<sup>123</sup>

MacDonald's remedy was for socialists to rid themselves of the idea of the servile political and military state. Elsewhere, MacDonald had quoted approvingly the opinion of Lord Halsbury on D.O.R.A., as being "about the most unconstitutional thing that has ever happened in this country".<sup>124</sup> He did not address the question of how the Constitution had allowed unconstitutional measures to come about. Others placed the blame upon "enemies of the Constitution", who were hostile to the growing democracy and thus to the Constitution which had protected it.<sup>125</sup> For these critics, there was a real danger of militarism continuing into the post-war era.<sup>126</sup>

The various calls for consideration of constitutional reform were to little effect. In spite of the 1919 *Labour Year Book*'s telling analysis of the ways in which the "peculiar" British Constitution had facilitated the suppression of civil and industrial liberties, the issue was not

addressed in Labour's 1918 election manifesto. Individual pieces of legislation were indicted, but neither the Constitution nor the powers of the Crown were nominated for reform.

"The Labour Party stands for the destruction of all war-time measures in restraint of civil or industrial liberty, the repeal of the Defence of the Realm Act, the abolition of Conscription, and the release of all political prisoners."<sup>127</sup>

Whilst the broad question of civil liberties during war-time was widely discussed in Labour circles, it remained a minority interest. The majority had no objection to the temporary surrender of some freedoms in the face of a national emergency. The minority libertarian element were united in condemning militarism and "Prussianisation", but were divided on the constitutional ramifications. Suspicion of, and hostility to, the use of such extraordinary devices as the royal prerogative and Orders in Council conflicted with the radical's predisposition to cling to the British Constitution. Labour libertarians who felt strongly about the dangers inherent in the Crown's residual powers were too few, and the urgency of the matter too temporary, for reform of the Constitution to become a long-term concern for Labour. The powers of the Crown remained a subject of intermittent attention, but only for so long as a crisis, such as over Ulster in 1914, or the events of 1931, lasted. For the most part, Labour's

approval of the Constitution closed off discussion of the Crown, and the war-time experience of the Constitution's anti-liberal potentialities receded into memory.

#### War-time Republicanism.

Chapter One dealt with the controversy surrounding the King's involvement in the crisis over Ulster. It will be recalled that Labour's anger with the monarch generated talk of a revival of republicanism. This was less a measured response to evidence of the Crown's continued capacity to affect political change than a spontaneous expression of outrage. It was a rhetorical flourish rather than a declaration of political intent. During the latter part of the war, the rhetoric of republicanism returned to political discourse, but it was largely a response to a particular set of contemporary conditions. It subsided rapidly when those conditions passed. The extent of support for republicanism during the peak of agitation in 1917, is difficult to gauge. Contemporary assessments of its extent conflicted and lacked objectivity. The King and some of his more influential informants on the subject developed an exaggerated notion of the strength and breadth of republicanism.<sup>128</sup> However, it was certainly not to be compared with the widespread and intense phenomenon of the 1870's, despite the claim to the contrary in Prochaska's recent study.<sup>129</sup> Unlike the 1870's, the republican agitation of 1917 occurred in a period

which possessed growing and increasingly confident Labour and socialist organizations. It therefore enables analysis of the relationship between the latter and the republican cause, and thereby of some of the continuities and tensions between socialism and radicalism. These tensions had a significant bearing on Labour attitudes to the monarchy and to republican ideas.

Before the war, republicanism retained a foothold in socialist politics, but it was a small and dormant tendency. It required the impetus of war-time developments to produce, albeit briefly, a recrudescence. Those developments were, in particular, the first Russian revolution, and the attempt to save and to impose monarchies in other parts of Europe. The first was of much greater significance than the second. At the Albert Hall demonstration in April 1917, to celebrate the Russian revolution, the previously mentioned Irish Nationalist M.P., Arthur Lynch, received great applause for his republican appeal. He was not yet speaking from within the Labour movement but within a year had joined the I.L.P. At this stage, his agenda for republicanism lay outside the Labour and socialist movement.

"The Russian Revolutionists put their Government in the dock and found it guilty. I hope this meeting will not dissolve away before we see a concrete result in the establishment of a great Republican Party."<sup>130</sup>

Longstanding republicans drew inspiration from the Russian example, without drawing inaccurate parallels between Russian autocracy and British constitutional monarchy. Thus Harry Snell, after arguing that republicanism should be revived, asked:

“The Russian people have led the way; will the English people have the courage to follow?”<sup>131</sup>

Another socialist posited a Britain “fallen from that high pinnacle of freedom and government so long the admiration of less fortunate nations”, but predicted that “the democracy of Britain may find its power and voice and demand startling things of its rulers”.<sup>132</sup> The Russian experience was behind the new mood in Britain.

“The Russian revolution has definitely raised the issue of monarchism and republicanism as one of the vital problems to be settled by the war. The writing is on the wall.”<sup>133</sup>

Hyndman agreed that the Russian revolution had “produced a very great effect in this country”, and that the impending establishment of a republic there elicited the question ‘“why not a British Republic?”’<sup>134</sup> As the pattern of change which had begun in Russia moved across Europe, some British socialists convinced themselves that Britain would follow

suit, albeit with local variation. A manifesto issued jointly by the executives of the I.L.P., B.S.P. and S.L.P. proclaimed:

"The great movement of working class insurrection which first burst forth in the Russian Revolution is now sweeping westward across the mid-European states, the monarchies and military despotisms in Austria and Germany have been overthrown... That this movement will in a greater or lesser degree manifest itself in Great Britain it is impossible to doubt." <sup>135</sup>

Projections of a republican future for Britain were understandable in a climate of euphoria at the fall of autocratic monarchies, and where the war-time suppression of liberties in Britain had reduced the distinctions, for some on the left, between Russia under the Czar, Germany under the Kaiser, and a "Prussianised" Britain.

Other developments on the Continent, less prominent than in Russia, produced a republican response of a different order. Rather than focusing only or mainly upon the possible replication of revolutionary and republican change in Britain, the intention was to offer support to continental republicanism. This, essentially, was the position assumed by the Fabian Society, and by H.G. Wells. Wells's interventions on republicanism were important in themselves, as they attracted national attention, but they also have value for the responses they elicited in

Labour and socialist circles. His letter to *The Times* seems to have been more commented upon than read, for many shared Nicolson's misapprehension that Wells had called for the British to rid themselves of their monarchy.<sup>136</sup> In truth, Wells had been at pains to distinguish between continental monarchies and the "peculiar one" in Britain, which was in essence a "crowned Republic".<sup>137</sup> Wells sought to establish an organisation in Britain "for the encouragement of a Republican movement in Central Europe".<sup>138</sup> This organisation might initially consist of "loosely affiliated 'Republican Societies', centreing in our chief towns, which could enrol members, organise meetings of sympathy with our fellow-Republicans abroad..."<sup>139</sup> At the end of December 1917, a "Society for the Study of Republican Institutions" was formed, with plans for local study groups, and with Arthur Lynch as president and Wells as one of the vice-presidents.<sup>140</sup> The academic nature of these groups, their preoccupation with continental politics, and their apparently modest size, rendered them quite unlike the republican clubs of the 1870's. Wells insisted that "such activities need not conflict in any way with one's free loyalty to the occupant of the Throne of this 'crowned Republic' ".<sup>141</sup> He elaborated elsewhere his ideas for the future of the British monarchy, indicating that the "crowned Republic" was not quite yet a reality.

"It is the fashion of apologists of monarchy in the British Empire to speak of the British system as a crowned republic. That is an

attractive phrase to people of republican sentiments. It is quite conceivable that the British Empire may be able to make that phrase a reality..."<sup>142</sup>

Citing the kings of Italy and Norway as types of "life president", living simply and remaining accessible, Wells argued that "along that line the British monarchy must go if it is not to go altogether".<sup>143</sup> One change he regarded as essential was the severing of the British monarchy from the German dynastic system, by abandoning the restrictions on British princes marrying British, French and American subjects.

The Fabian Society had already, by the time of the publication of Wells's letter, begun to consider republicanism, and a public declaration came in the form of a manifesto drafted by Bernard Shaw.<sup>144</sup> Although it too was motivated by opposition to developments in Europe, particularly in Greece and Bulgaria, the proposals were distinct from those of Wells. Shaw advocated the formation of "a definitely international republican party", devoted in domestic politics 'to the reform of the constitution with the object of making the British Empire a Federal Republic".<sup>145</sup>

What of the extent of republicanism within the Labour movement in 1917 and 1918? Those who ventured an opinion were often firmly on one side or other of the republicanism/monarchism divide, and their judgement about numbers tended to coincide with their preference.

Thus a correspondent informed *Justice* that he had been astonished how frequently he had overheard conversations which "turned upon the danger of Continental monarchies and the uselessness of the monarchy here at home".<sup>146</sup> Hyndman was sure that "there is no enthusiasm for Monarchy as Monarchy in the United Kingdom today".<sup>147</sup> The veteran republican, Arthur Lynch, declared himself "amazed to find how widespread and deep is this current of republicanism which is now manifesting itself in England".<sup>148</sup> Even some with no enthusiasm for republicanism at that stage were prepared to concede its contemporary popularity.

"Mr Wells is probably right when he says that a great volume of republican feeling exists in this country."<sup>149</sup>

*The Clarion* was more circumspect, believing more in 'the possibility of a great volume'.<sup>150</sup> *The New Statesman* offered a refined analysis, suggesting,

"...there is no kind of movement afoot for the disestablishing of our crowned republic in favour of any more republican republic. But there is unquestionably a strong and widespread feeling that British progressives ought to organise in order to give moral support to all Continental movements against Continental autocracies..."<sup>151</sup>

Thomson's reports to the Cabinet in late 1918 suggested a continuing strength of anti-monarchical sentiment, describing a "very widespread feeling among the working classes that Thrones have become anachronisms", and that "this feeling does not seem to be confined to the declared revolutionaries".<sup>152</sup> Naturally enough, the right-wing press were keen to downplay the size of the republican agitation, and Blatchford, who was unimpressed by the case for a republic, did not believe 'that there exists, at present, any active desire amongst the people for a Republic'.<sup>153</sup>

Within the Labour movement itself, some evidence about the breadth of republicanism lies in the concerns of those who regarded it as a distraction. Their observations suggest a notable upsurge. The *Daily Herald* confessed itself anxious that "the working class of this country should not be led off on a side issue".<sup>154</sup> A local I.L.P. chairman lamented "indications of an attempt to sidetrack our movement on to Republican lines".<sup>155</sup> The 1917 T.U.C. heard unusually strong statements in criticism of monarchy. In the context of a debate concerning secret diplomacy and the conspiracy to defeat the revolution in Russia, a delegate from the Railway Clerks Association called for all monarchies to be swept away, and Robert Williams too refused to make an exception of the British one.

"It is time that we put an end to this damnable witches' caldron. Kings have gone already, and we are told that the Kaiser must

go. Then I say, praise God when there will be a notice 'To Let' outside Buckingham Palace." <sup>156</sup>

Another delegate called for the establishment of a co-operative republic. Meanwhile, further evidence of the contemporary increase of republicanism was to be found in local resolutions to Labour bodies. There was an attempt to amend the Constitution of the Scottish I.L.P., so that its object would be the establishment of the "Socialist Republic", although the word 'republic' was changed to 'commonwealth'.<sup>157</sup> At the I.L.P. Annual Conference in 1918, several local parties demanded the abolition of the monarchy, a situation repeated in 1919. Whilst the proportions of the republican upsurge remain difficult to gauge, it is beyond dispute that an upsurge there was. The association of the British monarchy with continental autocracies was, however, questionable, even to confirmed republicans. Additionally, the personal integrity of the King and his positively regarded war-time conduct made republicanism seem to many in the Labour movement to be as unprofitable a political move in 1917 or 1918 as it had been pre-war. To an overwhelming majority of Britons, whether working or middle class, the King was and had been the leader of a nation in a difficult and, at times, desperate struggle, and as possible military defeat turned into ultimate triumph, prospects of success for a republican movement receded fast.

Finally, what insights does the war-time republican agitation offer into the vexed relationship between republicanism and socialism? It was, in general, a complex matter, which divided socialists and generated strong feelings on both sides. It was not a new issue, as Chapter One recounted, but stretched back into the nineteenth century, when some socialists adopted republicanism as an integral part of their political platform. Others did not, as Bernard Shaw reminded his Fabian audience during the 1917 republican upsurge.

"He explained at some length why in old days Socialists regarded Republicans as antagonists, and insisted that the enemy was capitalism, and not monarchy in spite of its civil list and perpetual pensions."<sup>158</sup>

The continuing legacy of this old split between the economicistic concerns of socialists and the political concerns of radicalism was a major factor in restricting the influence of republican ideas within the Labour movement. Even at a moment as promising for republicans as 1917, with all the advantageous domestic and international conditions, their movement was dogged by the scepticism, if not the hostility, of a large section of Labour opinion. This attitude is exemplified by the editor of the Huddersfield socialist journal, in response to Wells's letter to *The Times*. Republicanism was characterised as antiquated and irrelevant, and condemned by its

association with radicalism, from which socialism had sought to establish a distinct identity. Snell, who was a regular contributor to the newspaper, came in for censure for his republicanism.

"People who are Radical rather than revolutionary respond very readily on any of the political issues around which many notable, and sometimes bloody, battles have been fought in by-gone times. Even our own Mr. Snell reveals that weakness, and he has more than once confessed a yearning for an old-fashioned scrap with the institution of monarchy. If it could be shown that monarchy must be destroyed before capitalism can be dealt with, these ardent Radicals would rightly have the ear of the Socialist movement; but that idea cannot be seriously argued in Britain." <sup>159</sup>

Few socialists argued for the virtues of a constitutional monarchy over a republic. There was near-unanimous opinion that the "if Socialism is established it is inevitable that republicanism will be the form of government". <sup>160</sup> This point was put trenchantly by Hyndman.

"Social-democrats are and always must be Republicans. But they, of necessity, regard political forms as mere instruments, and therefore of far inferior importance to the vigorous assertion of social demands." <sup>161</sup>

For Hyndman and many others like him, the examples of republics in France and the United States were evidence that not only was, in terms of inequality and exploitation, a republic not superior to a constitutional monarchy, but that "a capitalist Republic...may even, in some respects be worse than such a Constitutional Monarchy".<sup>162</sup> Blatchford agreed that "in practice we do not find Republicanism an improvement upon limited monarchy".<sup>163</sup> In several of the arguments cited above the conviction was expressed that agitation for social and economic democracy could not be conducted simultaneously with demands for a republic, because "the public mind will not face more than one big issue at once".<sup>164</sup>

As for those socialists in favour of the establishment of a republic during 1917 and 1918, they were motivated by a variety of interests. For some, the path of the Russian revolution, including the abolition of the monarchy, was the one to follow. Others drew attention to a 'trade union' of kings, and its malign influence on the course of European politics. George V was, if not quite in the class of autocratic monarchs, a *de facto* member of the union, and would share the fate of his colleagues. If this stimulus to republicanism was short-lived, there remained a small but enduring republican element in the Labour movement which derived its inspiration from the radicalism of the late nineteenth century . Its appreciation of the social, cultural and psychological effects of monarchy contradicted the argument put by some

in the Labour movement that a change of Head of State from king to president would alter little. Although his exposition of this belief was written just before the outbreak of the war, Morrison Davidson, once an official of the Republican Club movement, put the view of the old anti-monarchists who found the upsurge of 1917 and 1918 a welcome revival of interest in the cause.

"The political danger from Royalty, it is true, is now almost negligible; but socially its maleficence can hardly be exaggerated. It affords a convenient screen behind which there is hardly a job, aristocratic or plutocratic, too gross to be hatched. It is the express incarnation of social inequality and political privilege."<sup>165</sup>

When all the sound and fury of the wartime republicanism had died away, it was this belief in the absolute irreconcilability of monarchy and socialism, and of the centrality of republicanism to the socialist project , which maintained for republicanism a tiny but permanent place in Labour politics.

### Conclusion.

Considering the alarms expressed within royal circles in 1917 about the position of the monarchy, and the felt need to anglicise the royal family, the British monarchy emerged from the war with much to its

advantage over its pre-war standing.<sup>166</sup> As far as patriotic Labour and the working class were concerned, the King had shown himself to be an industrious and committed leader of the nation at war, despite his German connections. The calculated deployment of the monarchy in industrial areas, on informal visits, reduced the old perception of remoteness and aristocratic caste-leadership. The King became a more genuinely national symbol. The charity associations and moral lead of the royal family were in areas likely to appeal to Labour, and this too was a calculated policy. With his "personal" initiatives, the King's own reputation for decency began to grow in Labour circles, a gradual process of which the long-term results were evident during the Silver Jubilee celebrations in 1935. Unease at the role played by the Crown's powers in assisting the development of militarism did not outlive the wartime emergency. Finally, the noisy and brief revival of republican rhetoric was more alarming than dangerous to the monarchy, and it too receded as the post-war international settlement took shape. The republican upsurge within the Labour movement was hampered by the socialist-radical split, and the powerful economicistic strain in Labour. All in all, the King had not had a bad war, and whatever temporary unpopularity monarchy had experienced, particularly during 1917 and 1918, this did not reflect on George V personally. Principled objection to monarchy remained a minor element of Labour politics, and growing affection for the monarch himself made republican ideas even less attractive to a predominantly uninterested Labour movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism 1750-1914" in *History Workshop Journal*, XII, 1981, p10

<sup>2</sup> ,*Reynolds News*, July 25, 1915

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, September 24, 1914

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> See for example the complaint made to the Birmingham Chief Constable by a socialist after an ILP meeting addressed by MacDonald. The complainant was "disgusted by the disloyal and unpatriotic nature" of MacDonald's speech. PRO HO 45/10741/263275

<sup>7</sup> J.R. MacDonald, 1917, *Patriots and Politics*, Manchester,

<sup>8</sup> *The Clarion*, October 2, 1914

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Report of the 1917 ILP Scottish Divisional Conference

<sup>11</sup> ILP Conference Report, 1915

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- <sup>12</sup> *Huddersfield Worker*, December 12, 1914
- <sup>13</sup> *Reynolds News*, July 25, 1915
- <sup>14</sup> B. Waites, 1987, *A Class Society at War*, Leamington Spa, p181
- <sup>15</sup> ibid. p190
- <sup>16</sup> C.H. Norman, 1915, *Nationalism and Patriotism*, Manchester
- <sup>17</sup> Philip Snowden, 1917, *Labour in Chains*, Manchester, p14
- <sup>18</sup> Waites, op.cit., p186.
- <sup>19</sup> C.E. Playne, 1931, *Society at War*, London, p87
- <sup>20</sup> *Daily Herald*, August 4, 1914
- <sup>21</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 17, 1914
- <sup>22</sup> See for example *John Bull*, November 14, 1914
- <sup>23</sup> *The Herald*, April 28, 1917
- <sup>24</sup> Antony Taylor, "Republicanism reappraised: anti-monarchism and the English radical tradition, 1850-1872", in James Vernon (ed.), 1996, *Re-reading the constitution*, Cambridge, p167
- <sup>25</sup> *Forward*, June 6, 1914
- <sup>26</sup> See Taylor, op.cit., p167
- <sup>27</sup> *Forward*, May 9, 1914
- <sup>28</sup> Cited in Michael McDonough, 1929, *The English King*, London, p63
- <sup>29</sup> *Forward*, December 5, 1914
- <sup>30</sup> For examples of the latter, see *Forward*, April 18, May 2 & May 16, 1914
- <sup>31</sup> See Taylor, op.cit., pp168-170
- <sup>32</sup> For this incident, see T. Brotherton, "The Suppression of the "Forward" in Scottish Labour History Society Journal, No.1, 1969, pp5-23
- <sup>33</sup> *Forward*, July 3, 1915
- <sup>34</sup> H.C. Deb. 5s, 1417, January 10, 1916
- <sup>35</sup> *Daily Herald*, April 15, 1914
- <sup>36</sup> *Forward*, May 9, 1914
- <sup>37</sup> ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> PRO HO 45/10743/263275 (Police report of a meeting in Birmingham, June 3, 1917)
- <sup>40</sup> PRO HO 45/10744/263275 (Police report of a speech by T.E. Nicholas, September 29, 1918)
- <sup>41</sup> PRO HO 45/10741/263275 (Police report of a speech by William Halliday, September 13, 1914)
- <sup>42</sup> PRO HO 45/10741 (Report by Surrey Constabulary, May 28, 1914)
- <sup>43</sup> Henry Mills, 1915, *National Elective Commonwealth and Federated States of the World*, Manchester
- <sup>44</sup> PRO HO 45/10742/263275 (Report by Metropolitan Police, July 22, 1916)
- <sup>45</sup> *The Worker*, April 28, 1917
- <sup>46</sup> Taylor, op.cit. p167
- <sup>47</sup> *The Worker*, July 21, 1917
- <sup>48</sup> *The Herald*, July 15, 1916
- <sup>49</sup> *Justice*, November 19, 1914
- <sup>50</sup> For a general history of royal philanthropy, see Frank Prochaska, 1995, *Royal Bounty*, Yale.
- <sup>51</sup> Cited in H.Nicolson, 1952, *King George V*, London, p308 (Nicolson offers no date for this quotation from the Royal Archives but includes it in his chapter covering the Great War.)
- <sup>52</sup> Labour Party Conference Report, 1916, p29
- <sup>53</sup> Prochaska, op.cit., p180
- <sup>54</sup> *Daily Citizen*, August 10, 1914
- <sup>55</sup> ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> See, for example, *New Statesman*, Vol.IV, No.83, November 7, 1914
- <sup>57</sup> ibid.

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- <sup>58</sup> *Leeds & District Weekly Citizen*, September 11, 1914
- <sup>59</sup> J.M. Winter, 1974, *Socialism and the Challenge of War*, London, p195
- <sup>60</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol.3, No.77, September 26, 1914
- <sup>61</sup> *Willesden Call*, October 30, 1914
- <sup>62</sup> *Labour Year Book*, 1916
- <sup>63</sup> *Willesden Call*, October 30, 1914
- <sup>64</sup> WNC 25/3/3-1
- <sup>65</sup> *Reynolds's Newspaper*, November 8, 1914
- <sup>66</sup> LP/REL/14/41
- <sup>67</sup> James Pope-Hennessy, 1959, *Queen Mary*, London, p492
- <sup>68</sup> ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> ibid. pp493-4
- <sup>70</sup> *Willesden Call*, October 2, 1914
- <sup>71</sup> *Willesden Call*, August 28, 1914
- <sup>72</sup> *The Herald*, October 24, 1914
- <sup>73</sup> See Rose, op.cit., p178
- <sup>74</sup> *Reynolds News*, April 4, 1915
- <sup>75</sup> *The Herald*, October 16, 1915
- <sup>76</sup> *The Herald*, October 28, 1916
- <sup>77</sup> ibid.
- <sup>78</sup> For last two points, see for example *The Worker*, April 3, 1915. For a range of Labour & Socialist opinion on the drink question, see *The Worker*, April 10, 1915
- <sup>79</sup> *The Herald*, October 16, 1915
- <sup>80</sup> *The Herald*, October 28, 1916
- <sup>81</sup> *Justice*, May 10, 1917
- <sup>82</sup> PRO HO 45/10742/263275 (Police notes of a speech by M. Pallister, March 4, 1917)
- <sup>83</sup> David Lloyd George, 1934 ed. *War Memoirs*, London, Vol 1., p190
- <sup>84</sup> PRO War Cabinet (136/14) Cab 23/2 (May 11, 1917)
- <sup>85</sup> Basil Thomson, 1937, *The Scene Changes*, New York, p368
- <sup>86</sup> Christopher Addison, 1934, *Four And A Half Years*, London, p364
- <sup>87</sup> PRO CAB 24/53 GT4761 (District Report on Yorkshire and East Midlands, w.e. June 5, 1918)
- <sup>88</sup> See R.H. Brazier & E. Sandford, 1921, *Birmingham and the Great War*, Birmingham, p117
- <sup>89</sup> *Leicester Pioneer*, October 5, 1917
- <sup>90</sup> *Justice*, July 19, 1917
- <sup>91</sup> ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> PRO CAB 24, 71/6425 (Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organizations in the U.K., December 2, 1918)
- <sup>93</sup> PRO CAB 24, 70/6328 (Fortnightly Report, November 13, 1918)
- <sup>94</sup> PRO CAB 24, 84/7742 (Fortnightly Report, July 17, 1919)
- <sup>95</sup> Philip Ziegler, 1978, *Crown and People*, London, p30
- <sup>96</sup> See James Vernon, "Narrating the Constitution", in Vernon, op.cit., pp204-229
- <sup>97</sup> See R. Williams, 1997, *The Contentious Crown*, Aldershot, pp132-133
- <sup>98</sup> For details see Samuel J. Hurwitz, 1949, *State Intervention in Great Britain*, London, pp151-4
- <sup>99</sup> Parliamentary Report for 1915, in Labour Party Conference Report, 1916, p58
- <sup>100</sup> Snowden, *Labour in Chains*, p12
- <sup>101</sup> M. Supperstone, 1981, *Brownlie's Law of Public Order and National Security*, London, pp223-224
- <sup>102</sup> *Labour Year Book*, 1919, p148
- <sup>103</sup> *Labour Year Book*, 1919, p150
- <sup>104</sup> ibid. p153
- <sup>105</sup> ibid.
- <sup>106</sup> Labour Party Conference Report, 1916, p58

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- <sup>107</sup> ILP Conference Report, 1916, p58
- <sup>108</sup> ILP Conference Report, 1917, p79
- <sup>109</sup> PRO HO 45/10743/263275 (Police Report of ILP meeting, January 13, 1918)
- <sup>110</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>111</sup> Quoted in J. Bruce Glasier, 1915, *Militarism*, Manchester, p29
- <sup>112</sup> C.H. Norman, 1915, *Nationalism and Patriotism*, Manchester,
- <sup>113</sup> PRO HO 45/10743/263275 (Police Report of ILP meeting, January 13, 1918)
- <sup>114</sup> Bruce Glasier, op.cit., p2
- <sup>115</sup> *The Socialist Review*, Vol.12 No.75, November-December 1915, p724
- <sup>116</sup> ILP Conference Report, 1916
- <sup>117</sup> 'North Briton', 1917, *British Freedom 1914-1917*, London, p11
- <sup>118</sup> *The Nation*, Vol.XIX, No.26, September 23, 1916, p776
- <sup>119</sup> For example: ILP Annual Conference 1916; *Labour Year Book*, 1919, p153;
- <sup>120</sup> See, for example, ILP Annual Conference Report, 1917, p79
- <sup>121</sup> *The Socialist Review*, Vol.13 No.79, November-December 1916, p304
- <sup>122</sup> J.R. MacDonald, n.d., *Socialism after the War*, Manchester, pp10-11
- <sup>123</sup> *ibid.* p10
- <sup>124</sup> J.R. MacDonald, n.d., *War and the Workers*, London, p3
- <sup>125</sup> See for example: "North Briton", op.cit., p79; Snowden, op.cit., p16
- <sup>126</sup> Bruce Glasier, *Militarism*, p3,
- <sup>127</sup> *Labour's Call to the People*, 1918
- <sup>128</sup> See F. Prochaska, "George V and Republicanism, 1917-1919", in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.10, No.1, 1999
- <sup>129</sup> Prochaska, "George V and Republicanism, 1917-1919", p27
- <sup>130</sup> *Bradford Socialist Vanguard*, May, 1917
- <sup>131</sup> *The Worker*, April 14, 1917
- <sup>132</sup> *Leicester Pioneer*, April 13, 1917
- <sup>133</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>134</sup> *Justice*, April 5, 1917
- <sup>135</sup> *The International Crisis: A Call to Labour*, 1918, ILP NAC Minutes & Related Records
- <sup>136</sup> Harold Nicolson, 1952, *King George V*, London, p307
- <sup>137</sup> *The Times*, April 21, 1917
- <sup>138</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>139</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>140</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 29, 1917
- <sup>141</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>142</sup> H.G. Wells, 1918, *In the Fourth Year*, London, p91
- <sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, p92
- <sup>144</sup> Fabian Society, *Manifesto on Republicanism*, in Middleton Papers, Ruskin College, Oxford.
- <sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, p3
- <sup>146</sup> *Justice*, May 3, 1917
- <sup>147</sup> *Justice*, April 5, 1917
- <sup>148</sup> Hansard, 5<sup>th</sup> series, Vol. XCVL, 1783, July 30, 1917
- <sup>149</sup> *The Worker*, April 28, 1917
- <sup>150</sup> *The Clarion*, April 27, 1917
- <sup>151</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol.IX, No.212, April 28, 1917, p83
- <sup>152</sup> PRO CAB 24 70/6328 (Fortnightly Report, November 13, 1918)
- <sup>153</sup> *The Clarion*, June 29, 1917
- <sup>154</sup> *The Herald*, May 12, 1917
- <sup>155</sup> *Labour Leader*, June 28, 1917
- <sup>156</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Trades Union Congress*, 1917, p309
- <sup>157</sup> *Report of the ILP Scottish Divisional Conference*, 1917
- <sup>158</sup> *Fabian News*, Vol.XXVIII, No.5, April 1917, p18
- <sup>159</sup> *The Worker*, April 28, 1917

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<sup>160</sup> *The Herald*, May 12, 1917

<sup>161</sup> *Justice*, April 5, 1917

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *The Clarion*, June 29, 1917

<sup>164</sup> *The Worker*, April 28, 1917

<sup>165</sup> *Forward*, May 9, 1914

<sup>166</sup> Rose, *King George V*, p174

### Chapter Three: the Royal Prerogative – 1931 and after.

From late 1931 until 1934, the question of the political influence of the Crown resurfaced, in response to the demise of the second Labour government. Discussion of the matter was conducted in private and in public, and at one point attracted the attention of the national press and thereby a wider audience. Like much which occurred in the overheated atmosphere on the left in the early 1930s, that discussion appears untypical of Labour's attitudes before and after. Although the King's role in the formation of the National Government was criticised on the right as well as on the left of the Labour Party, the tone and content of those criticisms were widely different in the two cases. This chapter traces the genesis of the debate concerning the royal prerogative, and the attention it received on the party's left. Although the catalyst for debate lay in 1931, discussion of the prerogative tended to look forward rather than back. How would a future Labour government be affected by, and how should it react to, attempts to obstruct it which might involve the powers of the Crown?

Having observed that the renewed debate about the actual and potential role of the Crown in politics derived from the events of August 1931, it must be stated at the outset that such a debate was not necessarily an immediate or spontaneous reaction to those events. In the months which followed, responsibility for the fall of the Labour government and the formation of MacDonald's "National" administration was placed upon the Prime Minister

himself and upon international bankers. After the disastrous election results of 1931, J.S. Middleton wrote to every defeated Labour M.P. Most replied, and of those correspondents who identified guilty men in the events of 1931, none mentioned the influence of the Crown, all mentioned MacDonald and some Snowden.<sup>1</sup> That some people had been quick to identify a malign influence at Buckingham Palace is indicated by Hannen Swaffer's vigorous denial.

"Some silly people have attributed to him [the King] some kind of part in the Cabinet differences. Stuff and nonsense! His Majesty, as always, acted with perfect constitutional propriety."<sup>2</sup>

Who such "silly people" were, Swaffer does not specify. However, they would not seem to have included Laski, who was to develop the most extensive and radical critique of the powers of the Crown. In his early reflections on the constitutional implications of August 1931, and the subsequent election campaign, Laski fails to mention the role of the Crown in what he characterises as "deliberate sabotage" of the Constitution. Although already developing the hypothesis of how Labour might be thwarted in its attempts to introduce radical policies, Laski's attention was focused at this stage upon "a small knot of financiers", and also upon the role of *The Times*.<sup>3</sup>

There were some early public indications, however, of disquiet about the King's role. Leonard Woolf accepted that the King's action in asking

MacDonald to form a National government might have been technically constitutional , but there were grave implications.

"It is said that the King personally induced Mr MacDonald to do this. If so he was doing something which may prove highly dangerous to the Crown...For one can see how the precedent might be developed so that the Crown could be used to break down the democratic system of party government and to introduce, under the guise so inevitable in Great Britain, a system not materially different from that of a dictatorship."<sup>4</sup>

Published and official Labour responses to the events of August 1931 made no reference to the Crown's role. The Labour Joint Manifesto of August 27th, produced by the T.U.C. General Council, the party N.E.C. and the Consultative Committee of the P.L.P., explained the crisis as a "bankers' ramp". Sidney Webb offered two slightly different accounts, only one of them for publication. Although the unpublished version acknowledged the importance of the King's appeal to MacDonald to act as a patriot, and also that kings had a "hankering" for national governments, Webb maintained that events proceeded to a plan concocted by MacDonald. The published version was careful to assert that the King "never went outside his constitutional position".<sup>5</sup>

It is evident from two sources that discussion of the role of the Crown must have been more widespread in the party than the contemporary published evidence suggests. First, the retrospective accounts by participants

in the crisis, published years or decades later, reveal the unease felt at the King's intervention. Herbert Morrison criticised the King's failure to consult senior Labour privy councillors such as Henderson or Clynes, in order to discover Labour's views. Morrison would not label the King's action unconstitutional, but did call it unwise.

"...I think his (the King's) judgement was at fault. He was himself...overfavourable to a very speculative course of action."<sup>6</sup>

Whilst avoiding the term "unconstitutional", Morrison pointedly remarked that "the natural constitutional course would have been to ask Baldwin to form a government with Liberal support".<sup>7</sup> He hints at the concern behind Labour's silence, and states the reason for it, recalling that the King's name had been invoked during the election campaign.

"None of us wished to speak up too pointedly on that matter in view of the general desire to keep the Crown out of politics, and pretty dangerous politics at that."<sup>8</sup>

What emerges from Morrison's account is a Labour Party aware both of the central role of the Crown in determining the course of events, and of the highly unusual character of that course. Public display of their unhappiness was restrained by two factors. Given the unclear constitutional limits of the royal

prerogative, the Party might have found difficulty in substantiating any charge that they had been unfairly treated. Moreover, to have become embroiled in a controversy involving the much-respected George V would have entailed great political risk.

The other source of evidence that there was indeed great concern on the question, is private records of groups and individuals. Dalton did not share Cripps's belief that MacDonald was "outmanoeuvred by the King, the Tories and the bankers", but did not dismiss accounts of the efforts made, over an extended period, within the Court, to bring about a national government.<sup>9</sup>

"Let them [courtiers] beware of being publicly caught in *flagrante delicto* of interference in our domestic politics."<sup>10</sup>

In the policy discussion groups which met in the aftermath of Labour's election defeat, the use and potential of the royal prerogative was discussed frequently. It was by no means only those on the party's left wing who raised the issue. Minutes of the 1932 annual general meeting of the Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda (S.S.I.P.) record Ernest Bevin sharing the apprehensions which were generated by 1931.

"The road to political power lay through the political machine, but we must watch what use was made of the royal prerogative."<sup>11</sup>

At a Friday Group meeting in May 1932, at which there was a broad mixture of right and left-wing Labour participants, discussion centred on the political conditions which might confront a future Labour government. Whilst Cole feared a financial rather than a constitutional crisis, William Mellor foresaw Labour's opponents asking the King to refuse to summon Parliament in the event of a Labour election victory. Laski was requested to produce a memorandum to consider, amongst other matters, "the extent to which it is possible to use the Prerogative today"<sup>12</sup>

The importance of the royal prerogative to any future Labour government lay in the discretion which it allowed the Crown to refuse a request to dissolve Parliament, to facilitate the formation of a "non-party" administration; but also, and this became the salient issue, to overcome obstruction from the House of Lords or to abolish the Upper House altogether. Whilst the Labour Party might be a victim of the prerogative through the first two instances, it might ultimately be dependent on the Crown's powers to defeat the Lords.

Abolition of the House of Lords was unequivocally agreed to be essential to the success of a future Labour government. At the Friday Group meeting referred to earlier, leading figures from right and left, including Addison, Attlee, Dalton, Lansbury, Cole and Laski, agreed on the earliest possible abolition of the Lords. The only matter of debate was whether or not abolition should be included in the party's election programme, as this carried the risk of provoking Conservative moves to reform the Lords in order to make it a more difficult body to attack. The majority view was that it should be an election issue

precisely because this would leave the King with no doubt as to the Party's mandate on the question. The Haldane Society of Labour Lawyers made this point central in the advice it offered to the New Fabian Research Bureau (N.F.R.B.) on legislation necessary for a socialist government to deal with the probable crisis conditions in which it would assume office.

"It will meet, naturally, with the opposition of that body (the House of Lords) itself; and it must not overlook the possibility of reluctance or even hostility on the part of the Monarch himself."<sup>13</sup>

The highly unusual course of events which led to the formation of a National Government, and the crushing nature of Labour's defeat in the subsequent election, challenged and, for some, shattered, confidence in the workings of the Constitution. The decimation of Labour's parliamentary body thrust to the fore left-wing figures who embraced and advocated a radical response to the perceived constitutional challenges. These left-wing parliamentarians, along with similar minded intellectuals, were attracted by what has been termed "constitutional dictatorship".<sup>14</sup> This tendency towards 'Jacobinism' was the result of some dire projections of anti-democratic and unconstitutional behaviour by Labour's opponents. The residual powers of the Crown figured amongst the concerns, principally with regard to confronting or abolishing the House of Lords. It was strikingly ironic that those who classed themselves as socialists and democrats showed so much interest in the pre-

democratic vestiges of monarchical power, albeit as an instrument to achieve power; a case of ends justifying means. Much private and public discussion of this matter took place within groups such as the S.S.I.P., which was adopting an increasingly left-wing tone, and then, from 1932, the Socialist League. An S.S.I.P. memorandum on the Constitution, written by Cole and G.R. Mitchison in 1932, raised, rather than answered, a number of issues concerning the powers of the Crown.<sup>15</sup>

"Use of royal prerogative by socialist minority – how far should it be the Socialist policy to restrict the present powers of the Crown, or to make use of them? Should the question of republicanism be raised at an early stage? – if so, what constitutional changes would this involve, and what should be the powers of a Socialist President if such an office were created?"<sup>16</sup>

What should be the nature of the guarantees to be demanded from the Crown before Labour took office, concerning the abolition of the Lords and the introduction of emergency powers? Cole drew up in September 1932 a draft manifesto for a future Labour government, which he presented to the S.S.I.P. He included a frank warning:

"Our attempts to put this policy into force will be met with obstruction and sabotage by the capitalist classes, with the veto of the House of Lords,

possibly with attempts by the Monarchy to oppose the advance of socialism...If the Monarchy opposes, the Monarchy will have to go."<sup>17</sup>

However, S.S.I.P. discussion in succeeding months focused upon the Crown only insofar as its powers would be required for abolition of the Lords.

Evidence that constitutional issues were of concern to the party leadership can be seen in the establishment of an N.E.C. policy sub-committee in early 1932, to examine, amongst other things, the machinery of government. This body, the Constitutional Sub-committee, received memoranda on questions such as the House of Lords and emergency powers, written by Laski, Durbin, Ivor Jennings and others. The membership of the sub-committee contained senior party figures: amongst these were Clynes, Dalton, Attlee, Laski, Cripps, with Citrine and Walkden representing the TUC. Although few of its reports and minutes remain, there is evidence that the sub-committee remained in being into the late 1930's, with its brief including such matters as attendance by Labour representatives at ceremonial functions and the award and receipt of honours. The broad constitutional concerns of the sub-committee coincided with those of the S.S.I.P. and the N.F.R.B., although the tone and emphasis were very different.

"For Dalton, Morrison and Bevin, the party's moderates, talk of 'emergency powers' and of abolishing the House of Lords smelled of the 'temporary dictatorship of the proletariat'"<sup>18</sup>

This assertion has to be qualified in the light of the apparent consensus, mentioned earlier, of the Friday Group meeting, which included Dalton and Bevin, that the House of Lords should be abolished. Differences were about the tactics involved in bringing about abolition. Nevertheless, a widening gulf between left and right in the party over the type and degree of constitutional problems confronting a future Labour government is impossible to deny. From 1932 onwards, Dalton, Citrine and Bevin expressed their anger and disagreement with articles and speeches from prominent figures in the Socialist League which foresaw the necessity of extraordinary constitutional measures.<sup>19</sup> Within the Socialist League, the events of 1931 had reinvigorated republican tendencies, with the preliminary agenda for its first annual conference including a resolution from the Westminster branch, which "declares its faith in a Socialist Republic and repudiates the principle of a Monarchy in whatever form".<sup>20</sup>

Whilst the focus upon constitutional issues within the Labour left was provided by more than one individual, Laski was by far the most energetic and prolific expositor. His views received an airing through his membership of committees and research bodies, through his speeches to Socialist League gatherings, and through articles and books which reworked themes. Nobody on the left in the early 1930s could have been unaware of Laski's ideas about the British constitution and its pitfalls for a socialist government. Unlike some others, Laski's interest in the Crown and the monarchy long preceded the

events of 1931. As mentioned in Chapter One, his first article in a national newspaper had been an attack in the *Daily Herald* on the conference convened by King George on the Irish Home Rule crisis, in which he examined critically the constitutional powers of the Crown.<sup>21</sup> In a 1929 article complimentary to the King, who was ill at the time, Laski remarked on the peculiar difficulty faced in situations "in which the validity of the constitution itself has been in debate in an atmosphere rendered more perplexing by the fact that nobody is perfectly clear as to what the constitution is".<sup>22</sup>

In 1932, there began a flow of books and articles in which Laski, his subject given relevance and urgency by the events of 1931, developed a critique of the Constitution and a set of dire-sounding hypotheses of Labour's prospects under it. In a pamphlet published in February 1932 entitled *The Crisis and the Constitution*, Laski indicated that the lesson to be drawn from 1931 was that the Crown was an "efficient" not less than a "dignified" part of the Constitution. He criticised MacDonald for undermining the principles of collective Cabinet responsibility and of party government. As far as the King was concerned, Laski's charge was that the choice of MacDonald to lead a national administration was undemocratic, having been selected not as the leader of a party but as the King's "favourite"; an individual who might be able to command a majority in Parliament, but who lacked the legitimacy of being a party leader. Without a party behind him, MacDonald's significance was purely personal and,

"....it can only have become more than that by the significance which the King chose to attach to him at a period of crisis."<sup>23</sup>

Later in the year, Laski began to extrapolate from 1931, and to consider the implications of those events for the future. Far-reaching economic changes required large-scale constitutional changes, and the royal prerogative was an indispensable instrument to achieve such changes. Abolition of the Lords would require the creation of sufficient peers, and Laski raised the possibility that the King might refuse to give a guarantee that the prerogative could be used. Additionally, Labour's opponents might advise the King to dissolve a newly-elected Parliament with a Labour majority, in the hope of a different result emerging from conditions of national crisis. Laski recognised the paradoxical character of this prospect. A Labour government which was permitted to rule constitutionally could not succeed unless it operated the instruments of the Constitution with the same determination to innovate as had been shown by others in 1931. Laski had no illusions about the class character of the monarchy, but argued that its constitutional role had to be confronted pragmatically. At the S.S.I.P.'s Digwell Park Conference in July 1932, Laski argued that,

"Labour must recognise the absolute neutrality of the Crown and when it is returned to power it must accept office only on the condition of it being given

absolute power and freedom to pursue its policy. This entailed the power to abolish the House of Lords".<sup>24</sup>

The assumed constitutional neutrality of the Crown was, however, embedded within a monarchical system about which Laski had no illusions.

"Every instrument which will come under its [Labour's] hand, from the Monarchy downwards, is steeped in traditions alien from its purposes because it was devised to secure quite different ends."<sup>25</sup>

Of these instruments, the monarchy was the most delicate problem facing a socialist government, because of its influence, prestige and popularity. The social contacts which the monarchy had were with anti-Labour elements, and its special relationship with the armed services made the Crown's attitude of great importance. Any abandonment of neutrality would operate to the detriment of Labour. Laski did not, however, see republicanism as a necessary or desirable alternative.

"That would be a grave misdirection of effort, even though a Monarchy and a Socialist democracy are not, in the long run, easily compatible. For there is practically no republican sentiment in Great Britain; on the contrary, loyalty to the Crown is wide and profound...to make it the spearhead of political attack when it has not seriously challenged criticism would be a strategy of

unexampled foolishness. It would wholly mistake means for ends and it would concentrate upon Socialist policy a profound hostility in fact unconcerned with real economic substance."<sup>26</sup>

This familiar argument, put in their time by, amongst others, Hardie, Tom Mann and Snowden, was that Labour should interest itself in economic transformation, and that any attempt to end the political and social power of the monarchy would be a distraction and an electoral hindrance.<sup>27</sup> However, Laski did not propose to leave the monarchy unreformed. The prerogative should be narrowed: the Crown's right of veto on legislation must go; the King's right to exercise personal discretion in the choice of Prime Minister should be ended; the theoretical right of the monarchy to dismiss a ministry in times of crisis should be ended. Apart from defining and limiting the royal prerogative, Laski called for the "democratisation" of the monarchy. Social functions which involved associating with the snobbery and social hierarchy of the Court should be minimised, as:

"...it is obvious that men who begin by living in the ways of a Court end also by thinking those ways good. Everyone knows that there were Labour Ministers, and not least their wives, who believed that a new epoch had dawned in human history because they were summoned to dine at Buckingham Palace."<sup>28</sup>

The fact that Laski gave only secondary importance to the social and cultural contribution which republicanism might offer to socialists, did not mean he underestimated the significance of the monarchy in perpetuating social inequality. In longer and more theoretical works, he revealed an acute understanding of its pernicious effects. The King implies a Court: the Court involves an aristocracy.

"..the whole impact of the Crown and the social system it necessitates is to preserve that temper of inequality it is the purpose of the Labour Party to deny. It gives birth to a set of values which are both irrational and dangerous...My point is the simple one that the psychology induced by an inequalitarian society fortifies privilege by making it seem natural.."<sup>29</sup>

In broad terms, the monarchy makes for continuity with the past, and its interest is in preserving the status quo. As that status quo is capitalist democracy, which a socialist government would seek to transform, a Labour demand for the prerogative to be used to achieve its objectives would put the Crown's neutrality severely to the test. In Laski's opinion, the Crown had been neutral only because the situation allowed it to be so. After writing his 1932 pamphlets, Laski was asked by the King's private secretary to discuss the views he had expressed. He summarised his interview with Wigram:

"Charming as he was, I left him a convinced republican. He made me feel (I) that the King's power, though intangible, is immense (II) that he is the vital pivot, and almost necessarily so, in a constitutional crisis....that he regards his formal powers as contingently active for emergency purposes. In other words, in a big fight, the Crown would almost certainly be on the Tory side, and if it assumed a constitutional form, the monarchy would be precipitated with its immense social prestige into politics."<sup>30</sup>

Others took up the same general theme as Laski, if not with the same frequency or persistence. G.D.H. Cole used the *New Clarion* to reiterate the need of any future Labour government to secure a guarantee from the King that he would create sufficient peers to overcome the Lords opposition and then to abolish the upper chamber.<sup>31</sup> His general view of the British Constitution mirrored that of Laski, but his hypothetical scenarios were, if anything, even blacker. Cole did not rule out the possibility of a defeated capitalist government refusing to leave office, with the King dissolving Parliament. Cole admitted to having the example of contemporary Germany in mind. Further, Cole took into account suggestions by some Tories that reform of the House of Lords should be made in order to prevent its abolition by constitutional means.

"Any such reform of the House of Lords would be a deliberate and unambiguous challenge to revolution; and it could be met only by unconstitutional means."<sup>32</sup>

Whereas Laski held out the possibility of, as well as the need for, reform to the machinery of government to enable a socialist administration to implement its changes, Cole was more sceptical.

"I have a strong suspicion that many members of the ruling classes...are believers in the parliamentary system only as long as it serves as the guardian of their class interests, and will have no further use for it if it shows signs of turning into an instrument of Socialism."<sup>33</sup>

In making this assertion, Cole was not simply expressing a generalised scepticism about the capitalist's commitment to democratic values. There was hard evidence that some Tories were prepared to use whatever irregular constitutional courses were open to them to obstruct a socialist government. At the 1932 Conservative Conference there was a move, led by the late Deputy Speaker of the Commons, to revive the use of the royal veto, and talk about reform of the House of Lords has already been mentioned. Laski cited the call for a revival of the royal veto when responding to Citrine's criticism that agitation about the royal prerogative was nothing but a grave electoral handicap.<sup>34</sup> On the right of the party it was felt that Laski, Cole and like-minded

individuals were over-reacting to rumour and to the wild talk of a few reactionary Tories. In May 1933, Laski approached Dalton with rumours that members of the Government were discussing whether an election might be postponed beyond 1936, and until the Government advised the King that it was safe to return to party politics. Dalton discounted this and Laski's other concerns about constitutional irregularities because,

"...in his scare story of the King refusing to play constitutional ball with a Labour Government, he leaves out one of the most important considerations: namely the danger to the Crown, if it is thought to be making unconstitutional innovations, of stirring up the sleeping forces of Republicanism or even of revolt."<sup>35</sup>

Even more than Laski, it was Cripps whose pronouncements on the influence of the monarchy and the prospects for a Labour government drew both national headlines and scorn from his colleagues on the right of the party. Cripps's remarks on the monarchy in his "Buckingham Palace speech" became notorious, generating much heat in the Labour as well as in the bourgeois press, and causing Henderson to rush back from Geneva. In fact his views, as expressed before and after the speech, were not deeply radical. In his Socialist League lecture delivered in January 1933, "Can Socialism come by Constitutional Methods", Cripps followed Laski and Cole in rehearsing various possible scenarios following the election of a socialist government. The

demand to employ the prerogative to overcome the Lords' rejection of an Emergency Powers Bill might be refused by the King. The Labour government could resign, or it could stay in power, unconstitutionally ignoring the Lords. Cripps dismissed the latter option. He went only slightly further in his discussion of "Democracy and Dictatorship".

"It is true that by the conventions of our unwritten constitution the Crown can only act in accordance with the advice of its ministers, but this convention has never had to stand the test of an attempt to abolish the capitalist basis of society."<sup>36</sup>

Cripps was in no doubt that any refusal by the Crown to create sufficient peers to permit passage of emergency legislation would be unconstitutional, but then immediately qualified his statement in two ways. He acknowledged that the Crown had the constitutional right to exercise some discretion.

"The Crown must in case of doubt exercise its own judgement as to whether or not the Government has received a clear mandate at the polls for the passage of the particular Bill in question."<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, he was prepared to give the Crown the benefit of the doubt for the meantime. It was not necessary to contemplate the unlikely prospect of an unconstitutional refusal to create peers. In a privately circulated memorandum

on "the Constitution and the Machinery of Government", Cripps denounced as unnecessary and stupid any tendency to suppose that a particular monarch would jeopardise his position by departing from normal constitutional practice on the election of a socialist majority. The memorandum argued that "the existence of individuals with the position and influence vested in a King...is inconsistent with a logical socialist outlook", but Cripps concluded that influence and prestige were inevitable in any head of state and that,

"...it is very questionable whether vesting such powers in an elected President....has not more practical disadvantages than its existence in a person who owes his position to heredity and nothing else."<sup>38</sup>

There seems to be a considerable disparity between the careful and qualified statements cited above, and contemporary accounts of Cripps's private observations, some of which provoked Dalton into referring to Cripps's state of "adolescent Marxist miasma".<sup>39</sup> The speech which aroused most controversy was delivered to the University Labour Federation at Nottingham, on 6th January 1934. The offending remarks were:

"When the Labour Party comes into power they must act rapidly and it will be necessary to deal with the House of Lords and the influence of the City of London. There is no doubt that we shall have to overcome opposition from Buckingham Palace and other places as well."<sup>40</sup>

Predictable expressions of outrage filled the Conservative press, and the Labour leadership rapidly sought to limit the political damage. It is worth considering the explanations offered at the time and later for Cripps's remarks, the variety of responses within his own party, as well as Cripps's own gloss on his speech.

One of Cripps's biographers identified reasons for his belief that opposition might be met from the Palace.<sup>41</sup> As a young man, Cripps had witnessed the crisis over the Parliament Bill in 1911, in which his father, then a Tory M.P., had been involved. Also, Cripps was under the influence of Lansbury, who believed he [Lansbury] had been excluded from office in 1924 through royal influence. Ultimately, Cooke believed, it was the result of political inexperience. Herbert Morrison felt that Cripps had been saying what his audience, drawn from the Socialist League, wanted to hear.<sup>42</sup> Attlee portrayed it as an indiscretion which had been seized upon and distorted.<sup>43</sup>

Within the Labour Party, Cripps received support and criticism. The *Socialist Review* felt his remarks should not be objectionable to any socialist. He was being perfectly reasonable in assuming the impartiality of the King, "but left it to be clearly understood that even the most rigorous of constitutionalists could not assume a similar impartiality from the Crown's advisers".<sup>44</sup> The Labour peer, Lord Marley, gave Cripps some guarded support, interpreting the speech in the sense in which Cripps subsequently claimed it was intended.

"By 'Buckingham Palace', I think Sir Stafford meant the social organism round which a certain section of society centres. I consider that the possibility of Fascism is a very serious danger. I would be the last to suggest that it would be organised from Buckingham Palace, but it might have support from similar portions of the social system."<sup>45</sup>

However, the weight of Labour's publicly expressed reaction was negative. The general attitude was that to speculate publicly on such a sensitive issue was unjustified, irresponsible and damaging to the party's interests. Clynes typified this reaction.

"To anticipate future conflict with the Throne is, in my view, the worst way for any party to win an election, and the Labour Party must not be the first to bring Buckingham Palace within the range of party political conflict. A reference to Buckingham Palace will, of course, be taken as an allusion to the Throne itself. I prefer to assume that our own loyalty will secure from the Throne continued respect for the decisions of the electors when Labour is in power."<sup>46</sup>

Morrison recalled that "responsible" members of the party immediately issued statements dissociating themselves and the party from Cripps's remarks.<sup>47</sup> The speech was largely ignored by the *Daily Herald*, but was scathingly attacked in

the Birmingham Labour newspaper both for its political ineptitude and its mistaken assumptions. Cripps's speech was a "free gift" to Labour's opponents. Moreover, there was no justification for suggesting that Buckingham Palace would attempt to interfere with the work of a socialist government.

"We believe that King George is far too sensible and democratic to encourage or instigate any Court intrigue against the people's will...We have little time for kings, but we have a great deal of respect for our present monarch who...is honestly trying to do the right thing by the people of this nation, irrespective of their party or creed."<sup>48</sup>

For those holding these views, the events of 1931 had not destroyed confidence in the constitutional propriety of the Crown or in its political impartiality. To raise doubts over either issue was implicitly to impugn the integrity of the King. Laski, Cripps and their Socialist League comrades might theorise and hypothesise about the workings of the Constitution, driven by the events of 1931, by frustration at Labour's impotence, and by an awareness of the fragility of democratic institutions under attack from Fascism in contemporary Europe. Others in the party saw no reason to doubt that the Constitution, and in particular the present monarch, would treat Labour as fairly in the future as it had done in the past.

What of Cripps's own account of his behaviour? It was noted earlier that Cripps had been circumspect in his observations on the workings of the Constitution in his pre-Nottingham articles. There is evidence to support Morrison's conviction that Cripps was speaking to please his immediate audience. Cripps, under fire, immediately qualified his Nottingham speech by insisting that his "Buckingham Palace" reference had been to Court advisers rather than the King.

"The term (Buckingham Palace) is a well-known expression used to describe Court circles and the officials and other people who surround the King at Buckingham Palace...I cannot understand why anybody would have thought that I was referring to the Crown. One always assumes the complete impartiality of the Crown in this country. That is the great basic assumption of our Constitution."<sup>49</sup>

Cripps' private correspondence in the aftermath of the speech is consistent with his public claim of a distinction between monarchy and Court. In reply to a correspondent who strongly supported the monarchy, Cripps wrote that:

"I entirely agree with you as regards the advisability of having a Constitutional Monarchy, as I think it is probably the best system. I do think we shall have great opposition, as I stated, from Court circles and from Capitalists who are attracted round Buckingham Palace."<sup>50</sup>

When attacked by a republican socialist for having "climbed down" on his Buckingham Palace speech, Cripps presented a rather different argument. Instead of claiming the status quo as the "best system", he argued the case for its practicality and for responding to necessity.

"My own view is that, looking at it from a practical point of view, Republicanism is not a matter of vital importance at the present time. The first job that we have got to do is to get a change of the economic system and I believe it will easiest (sic) to start this under a Constitutional Monarchy. As a matter of practical politics I believe it to be a mistake at present time to confuse Socialism with Republicanism."<sup>51</sup>

In the following days, Cripps made more qualifications, each one absolving him further from the accusation of republicanism. First he dealt with the frequently voiced concern about the use of the prerogative to abolish the House of Lords.

"If the Lords stand in the way, there will be constitutional methods for getting rid of them. The Crown is essentially democratic, because the Crown is bound to act upon the advice of the Ministers...and therefore there will be no difficulty whatsoever from the Crown."<sup>52</sup>

Next, Cripps declared, to a Glasgow audience, his preference for retaining the monarchy.

"I am in favour of a Constitutional Monarchy. In my opinion, you have got to have some figurehead for the state. Russia has Stalin (A voice: "A better man than you.") I believe the alternative to a Constitutional Monarchy is a political President and I vastly prefer a Constitutional Monarchy."<sup>53</sup>

He was careful to leave open the long-term constitutional arrangements appropriate to a socialist society, falling back upon the familiar argument that discussion of the monarchical system was an unnecessary distraction.

"The policy of the Labour Party is not Republican, because we do not believe that it is going to help anybody to raise the issue of Republicanism at the same time as Socialism, which we regard as infinitely more important."<sup>54</sup>

For Cripps too, as for a long and distinguished tradition of Labour politicians, the two were quite separable, and the latter by no means conditional upon the former.

We can compare these statements with Cripps's address, in July 1935, to the Nottingham branch of the Socialist League, and reflect on Morrison's observation that Cripps had been tailoring his ideas to suit his listeners, but

had then been caught out when those ideas had reached a far wider audience than anticipated. Cripps declared that,

"...in 1931 Lombard Street determined that it was time to finish the life of the Labour Government. It was finished not by the traditional method of a hostile vote in the Commons, but what he dared to mention in Nottingham (in January 1934)- and caused a considerable uproar in the Press - the Buckingham Palace influence."<sup>55</sup>

Although it was the King, not the Court, who had requested MacDonald to form a government, and who had persuaded the Prime Minister not to resign, one could argue that Cripps's speech merely reinforced his earlier comments about the malign influence of the Court. However, given the circumstances of August 1931, it would have been stretching a point to have claimed a clear distinction between Crown and Court and then to have blamed only the latter for what had occurred.

The account thus far has demonstrated an increasing divide in the early 1930's between the party's left, as it found an organised voice through the Socialist League, and the right. On constitutional questions, this divide was not, however, clear cut or unchanging. In late 1931 few voices, even on the party's right, were heard against proposals to abolish the House of Lords. This was hardly a new or revolutionary policy. It had been a feature of Labour's post-war manifesto, *Labour and the New Social Order*, published in 1918, and

would appear in 1937 in the unrevolutionary setting of Attlee's pamphlet, *Labour's Aims*. However, the issue, as part of the general discussion of how a future Labour government would fare under the Constitution, became one focus of the struggle by the party's right wing to reassert itself and re-establish a climate of "moderation" in the party. The party conferences of the mid-1930s testify to this struggle. The 1933 conference saw Cripps demanding the immediate abolition of the Lords, to be achieved constitutionally, which required the clearest of electoral mandates on the issue. Attlee was equally anxious that the mandate should be clear enough to leave the Crown in no doubt about its duty to meet Labour's demands.

"If you go to the Crown without a mandate to deal with the House of Lords, you will be sent back, and that is where the danger of Fascism comes in."<sup>56</sup>

It was an Emergency Powers Bill, a feature of the left's programme for rapid and complete moves to socialism, which many in the centre or right of the Party, such as Lees-Smith, regarded as most problematic. He foresaw its rejection by the House of Lords, and the likely response of the King to a consequent demand by Labour for the creation of 500 or 600 new peers. The King could argue that it was not a crisis, and therefore the 1911 Parliament Act could take its course, allowing a two-year delay to the Bill. If then, as Cripps argued, Labour should call an election on the question,

"It would be an election on not 'Labour versus the Banks' or 'Labour versus Capital', but an election on 'Labour versus the King'. This would throw the movement back to controversies which were fought fifty years previously and would sidetrack Labour from economic proposals."<sup>57</sup>

Cripps's amendment was not taken further, but at the following conference, left and right achieved a compromise on the question of abolition of the Lords. Whilst the Socialist League wanted the commitment to include immediate abolition in the party programme *For Socialism and Peace*, the N.E.C. felt that would delay social and economic progress. The compromise involved dropping the point about immediate abolition and including in an appendix to the N.E.C. report a less dramatic commitment:

"A Labour government meeting with sabotage from the House of Lords would take immediate steps to overcome it; and it will, in any event, take steps during its term of office to pass legislation abolishing the House of Lords as a legislative chamber."<sup>58</sup>

One can see that at the same time that the left, in speeches and articles, were speculating about constitutional crises involving the Crown and the House of Lords, official party policy on these questions was really no more radical than it had been in 1918.

### Conclusion.

After 1931, both the manner of the fall of the Labour Government and the electoral disaster which followed caused deep and widespread resentment across the Labour Party. Initially and mainly, this resentment focused upon MacDonald, but some also was directed at the King. Beatrice Webb's diary provides a hint of the kinds of private conversations which took place, and were still taking place a year after the events which provoked them. Recording a visit by Arthur Henderson, she notes that,

"....the talk was always reverting to stories about JRM's perfidy and Snowden's shameful malignancy and the King's unconstitutional action in asking MacDonald to form a Cabinet when he was no longer leader of any political party. All the same, Henderson did not welcome my observation that the Labour Party should make their displeasure felt at Buckingham Palace."<sup>59</sup>

Historians who have examined the constitutional questions raised by the formation of the National Government and the subsequent general election conclude that Labour critics of the King's actions had every justification for their views. A recent account, produced by an historian sympathetic to constitutional monarchy, drew the following conclusion:

"The king's role in the formation of the National Government was much greater than is generally thought. He was not merely the facilitator of the new government as he had been in 1916, but the instigator of it."<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, the subsequent general election had been called in dubious circumstances, as "the king granted a dissolution under conditions which broke both the letter and the spirit of the agreement on which the government had been formed..Only the king could defend the agreement. He did not do so."<sup>61</sup>

At the party conference in October 1931, Webb had noticed a change in attitude amongst the parliamentary leadership. They would not in the future act as caretakers of the existing social order. Instead they would,

"...lay down, on the first day of office, a positive policy of immediate legislation and executive control of the nation's income and investment of savings - with no damned nonsense about House of Lords obstruction or Court objection."<sup>62</sup>

If Webb was correct about this new spirit, it failed to translate into a radical departure from the entrenched belief that the Constitution provided the necessary mechanisms to transform the social order, just as it offered the mechanisms to preserve it. Only on the party's left were serious questions asked about the neutrality of its instruments, and even here the way forward

remained unclear. There was no decisive resolution of the paradox of Labour and the royal prerogative: without it, Labour could not hope to achieve its aims constitutionally against the obstruction of the Lords; but while it remained, its undefined power could permit Labour's opponents to obstruct or even overthrow a socialist government. In an international environment in which democratic systems were being undermined and destroyed, a preoccupation with even hypothetical threats to the parliamentary system was perhaps understandable.

There was reluctance on the Labour right to countenance public discussion of the role of the Crown, and ultimately an unwillingness on the Party's left to condemn outright the formally undemocratic elements of the Constitution. The swift retraction by Cripps, and Laski's rather tame proposal to trim the powers of the royal prerogative, despite the fundamental misgivings he had about Crown and monarchy, were indicative of a powerful truth; the inescapable reality of a genuinely popular monarchy. There was no political mileage to be had from attacking the monarchy or advocating a republic. Such sentiments may have drawn applause at a Socialist League meeting, but outside they remained anathema. Labour's respect for George V, wholehearted from some, grudging from others, was combined with the clear awareness that deep unpopularity awaited those who denigrated not just the King himself, but the institution with which he was inextricably linked in the mind of the nation. It had been the dubious constitutional events of 1931, and thus the political Jacobinism of the Labour left in the early 1930's, which had

drawn the Crown and monarchy back into political debate. As later chapters will reveal, 1931 was not forgotten, but the royal prerogative all but disappeared as an issue for the Labour Party, as Laski's proposal of a reduction in its scope gradually came about.

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<sup>1</sup> Middleton Papers MID 28

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Herald*, August 26, 1931

<sup>3</sup> *Labour Magazine*, Vol X, No.6, October, 1931

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Woolf, "1931: A Constitutional Crisis", in *Political Quarterly*, October-December 1931, p408

<sup>5</sup> Cited in R. Bassett, 1958, *1931: Political Crisis*, London, p366

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Morrison, 1967 ed., *Government and Parliament*, London, p93

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Morrison, 1960, *An Autobiography*, London, p128

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Diary of Hugh Dalton, September 5, 1931, Dalton Papers

<sup>10</sup> Diary of Hugh Dalton, September 16, 1931

<sup>11</sup> ZIP Bulletin, June 1932, in Cole Papers B3/5/E

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of Friday Group, May 13, 1932, in Cole Papers B3/5/E

<sup>13</sup> Haldane Club Memorandum, in Cole Papers B3/5/E

<sup>14</sup> B. Pimlott, 1985, *Hugh Dalton*, London, p206

<sup>15</sup> SSIP Memoranda on Socialist Policy, August 10, 1932, in Cole Papers

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> SSIP Records in Cole Papers J2/63

<sup>18</sup> Isaac Kramnick & Barry Sheerman, 1993, *Harold Laski*, London, p308

<sup>19</sup> See Pimlott, op.cit., pp228-229

<sup>20</sup> Noel-Baker Papers, NBKR 2/14

<sup>21</sup> *Daily Herald*, July 21, 1914

<sup>22</sup> *Labour Magazine*, Vol. VII, No.9, January 1929, p408

<sup>23</sup> Harold Laski, 1932, *The Crisis and the Constitution*, London, p35

<sup>24</sup> SSIP Records in Cole Papers J2/3 172

<sup>25</sup> Harold Laski, "Labour and the Constitution", in *New Statesman*, Vol. IV, No. 81, September 10, 1932, p278

<sup>26</sup> Harold Laski, 1933, *The Labour Party and the Constitution*, London, p25

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter One

<sup>28</sup> Laski, *The Labour Party and the Constitution*, p27

<sup>29</sup> Harold Laski, 1933, *Democracy in Crisis*, London, pp117-8

<sup>30</sup> Mark Howe (ed.), 1953, *The Holmes-Laski Letters*, London, pp1418-9

<sup>31</sup> *New Clarion*, April 22, 1933

<sup>32</sup> *New Clarion*, May 20, 1933

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- <sup>33</sup> ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> *New Clarion*, September 23, 1933
- <sup>35</sup> Hugh Dalton, 1957, *The Fateful Years*, London, p42
- <sup>36</sup> Sir Stafford Cripps, 1933, *Democracy and Dictatorship*, London, p468
- <sup>37</sup> ibid. p472
- <sup>38</sup> Cripps Papers 691/535
- <sup>39</sup> Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, p41
- <sup>40</sup> Cited in E. Estorick, 1949, *Stafford Cripps*, London, p124
- <sup>41</sup> C. Cooke, 1957, *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps*, London, pp160-1
- <sup>42</sup> Morrison, *An Autobiography*, p159
- <sup>43</sup> Cooke, op.cit., p164
- <sup>44</sup> *Socialist Review*, Vol.V, No.11, February 1934, p66
- <sup>45</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, January 8, 1934
- <sup>46</sup> ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Morrison, *An Autobiography*, p159
- <sup>48</sup> *Town Crier*, January 12, 1934
- <sup>49</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, January 8, 1934
- <sup>50</sup> Letter to H.D. Martin, January 10, 1934, in Cripps Papers 1140
- <sup>51</sup> Letter to Rev. H.D. Purchase, January 11, 1934, in Cripps Papers 1140
- <sup>52</sup> *The Times*, January 9, 1934
- <sup>53</sup> *The Times*, January 15, 1934
- <sup>54</sup> *The Times*, January 22, 1934
- <sup>55</sup> *The Times*, July 8, 1934
- <sup>56</sup> Labour Party Conference Report, 1933, p162
- <sup>57</sup> ibid., p165
- <sup>58</sup> Labour Party Conference Report, 1934, p148
- <sup>59</sup> Diary of Beatrice Webb, August 4, 1932, Passfield Papers
- <sup>60</sup> V. Bogdanor, 1995, *The Monarchy and the Constitution*, Oxford, p107
- <sup>61</sup> ibid. p111
- <sup>62</sup> Diary of Beatrice Webb, October 10, 1931, Passfield Papers

**'The Labour Party and the Monarchy'**

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## Chapter Four - Two celebrations and a funeral.

### Introduction.

This chapter examines three events which occurred within two years: the Silver Jubilee of George V's reign; the death of George V; and the Coronation of George VI. Besides their proximity in time, the reason for juxtaposing the first and last of these events is the similarity of dilemma which they posed for the Labour Party. Both were national celebrations of the monarchical system, and required the party at all levels to declare its position on the celebrations. At the national level, the leadership was under pressure from some of its local parties not to participate, and had to respond. At the local level, Labour-controlled councils were faced with decisions about whether and how to participate in those celebrations. The diversity of responses within the party, and the depth of the problem which royal celebrations posed, were generated by divergent attitudes to monarchy, nation, class and patriotism.

### The Silver Jubilee - May 1935.

Differences of opinion within the Labour Party over the question of the monarchy were never as clear or exposed as at the time of George V's Silver Jubilee. In order to explain this fact, attention must be paid to a peculiar set of contemporary political circumstances. Previous chapters of this study have referred to the diversity of opinion in the party, from enthusiasm for the monarchy, through many shades of qualified acceptance and scepticism, to

outright republicanism. Impinging strongly upon already existing beliefs were several contingent factors. First, there was the King's popularity in the country. George V's reign was widely regarded as a model of constitutional kingship. The most controversial moments of that reign, the Ulster rebellion of 1914 and the formation of the National Government in 1931, were not completely forgotten on the left, but in general the King's reputation stood high. His domestic life raised none of the ethical concerns generated by his father's private life. The personal qualities of the King, as well as the length of his reign, helped generate respect and loyalty amongst those in the Labour Party already well-disposed towards the monarchy. Next, one must consider the political context. There was a general election imminent, with an obvious advantage to the National Government of a country unified by a mood of celebration. Moreover, the Labour Party was in opposition to a government which had appropriated the label 'National', and which might expect to benefit from an upsurge in popular patriotic feeling. Domestically, political debate was much focused upon unemployment and poverty, so expenditure on celebrations was a particularly sensitive issue. The international context was one in which democracy was under attack from dictatorship. More attention than usual was paid to the political and constitutional factors underpinning stable, democratic government.

Controversy over the Jubilee began early in 1935, once the Government had decided that there would be nationwide celebration of the anniversary. By February, the Labour Party's National Executive Committee had already received enquiries from local parties about participation in the forthcoming celebrations. The party N.E.C. decided to take the same approach

as the National Council of Labour had already done, which was to recommend that Labour organisations throughout the country should reflect "the general sentiments of their membership" in celebrating, but called for simple ceremonies, for public money to be spent on schemes of permanent value, and for no worker to lose income through a public holiday.<sup>1</sup> The party N.E.C. called for "prominence to be given to the more peaceful characteristics of the Jubilee, and the wise expenditure of such funds as are available for the celebrations".<sup>2</sup> Middleton sent a letter to local parties in March setting out these points and observing that "our people can assist in making the day memorable".<sup>3</sup> By the middle of March, the N.E.C. were receiving protests "day by day" about the official party attitude towards the Jubilee, and North Hammersmith D.L.P. had circularised all local parties urging protests to be made to the N.E.C. Although there is no evidence of the exact number of protests made to the N.E.C., it is clear that they were neither isolated nor spasmodic examples. Set against these protests were the preparations for local celebrations being made throughout the country by Labour-controlled councils. Whilst protests by local parties were numerous, no big-city Labour councils refused to sanction expenditure on the Jubilee or to organise its celebration. However, where there was internal, public division, it served to expose ideological faults on the issue of monarchy and to demonstrate the problematical nature of Labour's electoral dependence on the support of a working class which appeared overwhelmingly attached to popular monarchy. Particular local cases illustrate both of these phenomena, and merit examination.

The actions of the Labour mayor and Labour-controlled council in Bermondsey attracted much contemporary attention. This was a working-class district of south London, and the Labour mayor was a cleaner who worked on the railways; no hint of middle class radicalism in this case. Part of the interest lies in the radical differences of opinion both within the Bermondsey Labour group on the council and between the Bermondsey council and neighbouring Labour-controlled councils in Lambeth, Camberwell and Deptford. The origin of the controversy lay in the refusal of the Mayor of Bermondsey, G.R. Weightman, to attend a reception at which the King would meet the mayors of south London boroughs. Weightman argued that the costs of his attending the reception would be better spent on alleviating poverty, and specifically would deprive a group of local children from poor families of a seaside holiday. In this decision, he was supported by the Bermondsey Council, which refused to take part in the Jubilee celebrations, and in March 1935 voted not to allocate any funds for them. The response from local "loyalists" included the burning of Weightman's effigy and the daubing of his house with obscenities. Support for mayor and council came from, amongst others, the N.U.W.M., with public meetings addressed by Hannington and J.R Campbell. Within the local Labour Party, a division opened up when five Labour councillors introduced a motion to censure the mayor for his "grave dereliction of his civic duties and responsibilities....thereby precipitating an unprecedented position and causing discontent among the local ratepayers".<sup>4</sup> The councillors dissociated themselves from the local party's position, and claimed to be in harmony with the national party and its leadership. One of the five rebels claimed:

"We do not consider it to be a political matter. Our action was an effort to remove the slur cast upon the ancient and royal borough of Bermondsey."<sup>5</sup>

Following this public split, a two-hour private meeting of the Labour group on the council resulted in the five rebels dropping their opposition to the council's position. At the subsequent council meeting held to reconsider the decision not to participate, the Labour group voted unanimously to confirm the boycott. The council leader claimed that the party was united, but if a fragile local unity had been achieved, it was not one which extended beyond the borough. The Labour-controlled Deptford council participated fully in the celebrations, and its leader claimed that its position reflected popular opinion.

"I think that the Council adequately carried out the desires of the people of the Borough...We should have liked to have done more, but realising the limitations of our borough we thought it best to limit our expenditure accordingly."<sup>6</sup>

A former Southwark M.P. told that local party that he found little to applaud in Weightman's attitude, and wondered if it was worth it. The Labour Mayor of Camberwell attempted to dissuade Weightman from his position, and blamed the Bermondsey party for dictating to the mayor; something which would never occur in Camberwell. Of the Labour mayors invited to the royal reception, Bermondsey's was the only absentee. However, the local Labour magazine

claimed that events at the May Day demonstration in Hyde Park on 5th May indicated widespread support and sympathy for the stand taken.

"Bermondsey's banners and mottoes were greeted with loud and continuous cheering as our ranks passed through the Park gates. This was a recognition by the huge crowd of the stalwart action of the Mayor and Council in relation to the Jubilee celebrations."<sup>7</sup>

Whilst the Labour leader of Deptford Council argued that his council's attitude had reflected popular opinion, there is little evidence that Bermondsey Council had done likewise. Hannen Swaffer recorded in the *Daily Herald* after a visit to Bermondsey during the Jubilee that:

"In the narrowest courts, there were scores and scores of small Union Jacks outside slum dwellings."<sup>8</sup>

The biographer of Dr. Alfred Salter, the local Labour M.P. and a lifelong republican, confirmed this picture.

"There was probably no borough in London which had a greater display of flags for the jubilee. Only one dissentient gesture was to be seen - across the windows of a top floor in Alscot Road stretched a banner 'God Save the People'; but like its neighbours, the rest of the building was covered with Union Jacks and loyal mottoes."<sup>9</sup>

Given that the council's attitude was not likely to find approval amongst a "loyal" working class electorate, local Tories saw an opportunity to damage Labour. Under the guise of the "Bermondsey Constitutional Club", they attempted to organise a "loyal address" to the King, as the council had refused to send an official one. This in itself is less surprising than the response of the West Bermondsey Labour Party. Indignant at the party political use being made of the unofficial loyal address, the party sent a letter of protest to the King, which closed thus:

"We are sure that Your Majesty will deprecate this dishonourable and unconstitutional attempt to use Your Majesty's position for purely party ends. We therefore feel it our duty to acquaint Your Majesty with the bogus and dishonest character of the address."<sup>10</sup>

The party was clearly concerned at the electoral damage which could be inflicted on it, but there was a touching naivete about the implied message that no loyal address at all was better than a bogus one. The letter also illustrates the limited nature of the local party's original objections to the Jubilee. Implicit in the letter is a residual belief that the monarchy would uphold the principle of fair play, and could be appealed to by the victim of injustice. That the local party had made a rod for its own back by its attitude to the Jubilee was denied in its journal.

"Whatever attitude the Labour Party locally might have taken towards the Jubilee, the people who run the Constitutional Club and the Conservative Association would have tried to make capital out of the event just the same."<sup>11</sup>

The party took comfort from the expressions of support which Weightman received from over one hundred organizations nationwide, including trades unions, trades councils and "scores" of borough and divisional Labour parties in London and the provinces.<sup>12</sup>

If the objection of the Bermondsey mayor, council and party was directed at wasteful expenditure on the Jubilee, the local M.P. articulated a far more radical critique. At the time of the Jubilee, Dr Alfred Salter was a most unusual specimen: an overtly republican Labour M.P. He had been republican from the time he joined the S.D.F. in 1890. The row over the Jubilee gave Salter the opportunity not only to give his support to the Mayor and the council, but to restate his republicanism.<sup>13</sup> Salter identified the press and radio as significant instruments employed to strengthen popular monarchy, and, by extension, the political status quo. Despite his conviction of the incompatibility of monarchy and socialism, and despite his clear appreciation of the monarchy's function in helping to preserve the status quo, Salter arrived at a familiar conclusion.

"...republicanism is not a political issue at present and is not likely to become so for a very long time. Socialists have to get on with the job of changing the basis of the social and economic system of which the monarchy is the apex...When we have done that we shall have abolished classes and we

shall be able to turn our attention to other matters of less importance, the question of monarchy amongst them."<sup>14</sup>

Labour-controlled councils which refused outright to participate in the Jubilee celebrations were few in number. Much more typical were Labour councils which did participate, no doubt with varying degrees of enthusiasm, and subject to criticism from within the party and from affiliated organisations. Fulham Council had agreed to spend a relatively modest five hundred pounds on the Jubilee, but this was sufficient to produce a "Fulham Jubilee Protest Committee", composed of individuals who described themselves as "ardent socialists".<sup>15</sup> The leader of the Labour group on the council was instrumental in allowing the Protest Committee's petition to be presented to the council, and their protest to be considered by a sub-committee, although he personally did not identify with the petition. The council did not change its policy. In Sheffield, opposition to the Labour council's Jubilee plans came from a more potent source, the Trades and Labour Council. A Transport Workers' delegate successfully moved that "no public money be expended on the Jubilee celebrations and that no Labour councillors should take part officially in any celebrations".<sup>16</sup> The majority Labour Group on Sheffield Council responded to the demand in a manner repeated elsewhere in similar circumstances. The council intended, as part of the celebrations, to give its own workers a paid holiday on 6th May; the children of poor families would receive a free meal, and the council would be pressing for an extra payment for those in receipt of unemployment insurance and Poor Law relief. It was on these grounds that the Sheffield Labour group on the city council defended their decision to spend

public money on the Jubilee celebrations. If the Trades and Labour Council (T.L.C.) resolution were acted upon, the poorest and most deprived would lose out. One delegate on the T.L.C. responded that they had no objection to more money being given to the unemployed. They "were against the imperialistic and capitalistic propaganda being carried on. They should not have anything to do with the Jubilee celebrations".<sup>17</sup> Opposing the T.L.C. resolution, another delegate argued that it ran counter to the policy of the national trade unions. Indeed, the advice regarding the Jubilee celebrations from the T.U.C. General Council to affiliated unions was simply to try to ensure that workers did not lose wages if firms closed down on 6th May.<sup>18</sup>

In Derby, another Labour-controlled council debated the question of Jubilee celebrations, and manifested a broad range of opinion and an awareness of the political constraints within which their policy was determined. Some Labour councillors felt that if money was to be spent at all, it should be directed towards alleviating poverty, or should result in some permanent memorial which might have public benefit.

"It was a fundamental part of Labour Party policy that there should be wise spending of public money. To spend two thousand pounds on spectacular celebration was an affront to the poor."<sup>19</sup>

Another councillor would have preferred to discuss whether they should celebrate at all, on the grounds that the King's reign had seen the bloodiest war in history, and that, moreover, companies would close down on Jubilee day, and workers lose a day's pay. One councillor thought the council had

done their best with the means they had to meet the wishes of the community. He felt that the "council would be condemned if it stood aloof and had no celebrations".<sup>20</sup>

By opposing expenditure on the celebrations, Labour councillors were open to the charge of meanness and the label of "killjoys". In Nelson, Lancashire, the Labour council refused to implement a proposal to issue Jubilee medals for schoolchildren, the response to which included opponents painting the Town Hall red, white and blue. More common were clashes between Labour councillors and their local Trades Councils. Such was the case in London, Sheffield, Derby and Burnley, where the local Trades Councils passed resolutions condemning Labour councils' participation in the Jubilee. It should be borne in mind that Communist Party delegates to Trades Councils were likely to initiate or at least to encourage such protests. The *Daily Worker* provided maximum publicity for these cases, aiming both to publicise Communist rejection of Jubilee and monarchy, and to embarrass the Labour Party.

What of the Labour-controlled councils who were busy organising the local celebrations? It is difficult to generalise about degrees of enthusiasm for the event, as public expression of feelings varied between uncritical adulation of the monarch and the monarchy, and a grudging recognition that anything other than participation in the Jubilee would bring the party only unpopularity. Examples of the former are legion. At a Jubilee reception in Cardiff for the Prince of Wales, attended by Labour mayors from all over Wales, the Lady Mayoress of Merthyr (Keir Hardie's old seat) boasted that "our Jubilee display

equals that of any Welsh town of its size".<sup>21</sup> The Labour Deputy Mayor of Coventry made a speech worthy of the most royalist of Conservatives:

"..the Throne today stood secure without the fear of any political earthquake. That was largely due to the virtues of the Constitution and the character of the people and to the virtues and wisdom of the last three occupants of the Throne."<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to such genuine and uninhibited support for the Jubilee, one can juxtapose the reluctant but "realistic" attitude of other Labour councillors. In response to criticism from their local Trades Council, Labour councillors in Derby argued that "the workers want a Jubilee celebration".<sup>23</sup> In Birmingham, where Labour was in opposition on the Council, there was a critical acceptance of the Jubilee celebrations, with most objection made to the wording of the city's Loyal Address. Whilst demanding greater simplicity and sincerity, Labour councillors were anxious to appear no less loyal than their Conservative opponents. Councillor Jim Simmons introduced an note reminiscent of Cripps into his contribution.

"The original Address had had to be submitted to those who surrounded Buckingham Palace and whom those in the Labour Party knew very well and had cause to know for certain advice they gave in 1931."<sup>24</sup>

Despite this resentment, Simmons was not against the Jubilee celebrations as such, recognising that opposition would be an unpopular position to adopt.

"In keeping with the general feeling up and down the country, some message should be sent to him who was head of our nation, whether a King or a President did not matter; the question of loyalty versus republicanism did not arise."<sup>25</sup>

The local Labour newspaper made much of the enthusiasm for the Jubilee amongst the working class, and also invoked the issue of dictatorship.

"Whether we like it or not, the people themselves have manifested in a wonderful manner the loyalty and affection to the present occupants of the Throne, and we cannot afford to ignore or belittle that fact...What we have to realise is that hundreds of thousands of those whom we hope and expect to vote Labour at the next General Election were among those cheering crowds last Monday.."<sup>26</sup>

Long-term political education and a better understanding of mass psychology would be required before Labour could expect such deep-rooted attachment to the monarchy to decline.

Testimony of the enthusiastic participation of the working class in solidly Labour areas of London mirrored the accounts from Birmingham. The *Daily Herald* political correspondent, Ernest Hunter, had witnessed a "riot of colour and jollification" as great in Labour areas as elsewhere.

"I went with one East-end Labour candidate into a district which is nearly 100 per cent Labour. On Monday it was 100 per cent loyalist. Mr Lansbury told me it was the same in Poplar - everywhere the working classes were *en fete*...It may be that the East End had simply seized the opportunity to make merry, but I should think that the demonstration had a deeper significance. In one good Labour street was a banner 'Poor - but loyal'." <sup>27</sup>

Hunter feared that "unscrupulous politicians" might exploit this mood in a post-Jubilee general election. There is some anecdotal evidence that London was particularly enthusiastic in its display of loyalty. On his return to Glasgow after the Jubilee, Maxton remarked on the contrast between the restrained celebrations there and the excesses of London. He felt that "the people of London had been lifted off their feet by a capitalist ramp". <sup>28</sup>

Having identified some of the divisions at local level and between the N.E.C. and local parties, what of the public attitudes of the parliamentary party and the national leadership? The Government proposed to make a grant of fifty thousand pounds towards the cost of the celebrations. When the proposal came before the House of Commons, it was opposed by the I.L.P., with Maxton reminding the Labour Party that at the recent annual conference of the Scottish Labour Party, a resolution calling for the abolition of the monarchy had been passed unanimously. No Labour members supported Maxton and Buchanan in a vote, with Lansbury and other Labour M.P.s supporting the Government's grant. As usual, the Labour Party in Scotland appeared less well-disposed towards the monarchy than in England. It was Middleton's fate

to address the Scottish Annual Conference immediately after the Jubilee celebrations, and he received a hostile reception from his audience. Having introduced the topic of the Jubilee into his address on the theme of democracy and dictatorship, it was in the context of the latter that he defended constitutional monarchy, in the face of dissent from the floor. Middleton put the best gloss upon displays of popular affection for the monarchy, suggesting that it was really an celebration of Britain's democratic system.

"It is the nearest approach to a carnival we have ever had. There is something distinctly different in the feeling and temper of our people with these celebrations than ever, probably, there has been before. Quietly, men and women are making comparisons between our own nation and the nations who are suffering abroad, and we feel in our hearts like thanking God for a constitutional monarchy...We must realise that indeed we are fortunate living under a constitutional monarch."<sup>29</sup>

There is evidence that Middleton's principal argument was one which had indeed tempered hostility to the Jubilee celebrations amongst Scottish Labour. MacNeill Weir referred to the contemporary spectacle of the "failure of republics, the terrorism of dictatorships", which might lead a Socialist on occasion to say "Long live the King".<sup>30</sup> Another factor in the monarchy's favour was the widespread belief in the party at this time that the Prince of Wales had progressive views. Whilst the King had been fair to Labour, the Prince seemed sympathetic to its own concerns about unemployment and poverty. Thus Tom Johnston cited the Prince's donation of money to the miners' relief fund as

"one of several occasions" on which he had "gone out of his way to show that the man is bigger than his surroundings".<sup>31</sup> Even the lifelong republican Emrys Hughes was prepared to make concessions towards a progressively inclined monarchy.

"No Socialist..can have anything but approval for the way the Prince of Wales appeals to the nation to clear away the slums. If the energies of Royalty are employed in stirring the social conscience on housing and unemployment then the popularity of the monarchy is unlikely to be diminished in an age which is clamouring for a greater measure of social justice."<sup>32</sup>

This eagerness to see the monarch as a potential ally to Labour was not unprecedented. It formed part of a longstanding predisposition to see good in the monarchy, as exemplified in Williams's citation of *Clarion's* hopes in 1901 concerning the "advanced views" of Edward VII.<sup>33</sup> Lansbury provided a clear expression of Labour's accommodation with the monarchy, achieved in part through a capacity for dissociating the monarchy from those manifestations of social inequality which Labour deplored. Lansbury's personal discomfort with the trappings of royalty was deep and genuinely felt. He had avoided state banquets and balls (with the King's permission) because he was "not very happy at such gatherings".<sup>34</sup> But on this occasion, Lansbury demonstrated his sentimental attachment to the sovereign, at the expense of any critical appreciation of the institution of monarchy.

"There is nothing of a party or political character about these Jubilee celebrations...Those who, like myself, are theoretically republican, join heartily and completely with the most ardent Tories in these congratulations."<sup>35</sup>

Lansbury considered the King to be tolerant, sensible, well-informed and kindly.

"Rightly or wrongly, I like to believe that King George is just one of us, who, because of birth, has been called to a position of great responsibility and has done his best to make us all feel that he is the friend of all. He cannot give us industrial peace or social justice. He cannot help the fact that on this Jubilee Day millions are out of work, and some destitute and without friends."<sup>36</sup>

In seconding a Commons motion to send a loyal Address to the King, Lansbury, on behalf of the Labour Party, made several illuminating points. He admitted that years ago he would have felt differently about the matter, but he had learned that the British Constitution worked. Moreover, he felt that the monarchy had not just witnessed but had assisted in a gradual erosion of the class system.

"...the manner in which the Royal Family during these troubled years have mixed and taken part in everything concerning our lives, have done something to break down the feeling which prevailed when I was young that the Monarchy would preserve for ever the domination of class. We are getting away from that..."<sup>37</sup>

When prominent Labour politicians did voice reservations about the Jubilee, it was directed against Conservative exploitation of the event for their political advantage. Arthur Greenwood denounced the intention of the Government to "trail off in a blaze of glory on the backs of the Royal Family".<sup>38</sup> However, Greenwood's prescribed response was for Labour to show the electorate that they were as patriotic as the Tories. Ponsonby adopted the same approach, regretting that "the Government, obviously for its own glorification, had...arranged such an orgy of spectacular display".<sup>39</sup> Emrys Hughes identified the "exploitation of the patriotic sentiment and emotion for sinister purposes" as the reason why socialists were "suspicious of the campaign of mass hypnotism that works up hysteria at a Jubilee celebration".<sup>40</sup> For one commentator the novelty of a jubilee celebration at twenty-five years was in itself grounds for suspicion. His conclusion was that the Government would shortly go to the country, and "would seek to go as in a special and peculiar way the King's Government".<sup>41</sup>

One curious aspect of Labour's anger at the Tory exploitation of the mood of celebration was a rumour about the King's own awareness of this unfair behaviour. In an editorial which contained suggestive echoes of the nineteenth century radical belief in the monarch as defender of the Constitution and of "fair play", a local Labour journal reported royal intervention in the controversy over the date of the next general election.

"The Tories had decided to hold the election in July, in the expectation that they could capitalize to their own advantage the patriotic enthusiasm generated by the Jubilee celebrations. By identifying the Monarchy with a 'National Government' and a 'National Party' they hoped to sweep on to their side the crowds that had hung out flags and cheered the King on May 6th. But the King himself put his foot on that dirty trick and objected to being exploited by the Tory party. At Westminster it is openly stated that a July election was vetoed by King George's direct intervention."<sup>42</sup>

This sentiment recalls the nineteenth-century republican, William Benbow, proclaiming during the Queen Caroline affair that the Queen would bring down "corrupt conspirators".<sup>43</sup>

If Arthur Greenwood wanted Labour to match the Tories in their patriotism, the *Daily Herald* certainly matched the popular Tory press in its coverage of the Jubilee. Detailed analysis of that coverage will be found below. The *Herald* dealt with the events as popular pageant, with the political aspects rarely and briefly intruding. Reports concentrated on associated trivia, such as local preparations for Jubilee Day, decorations and flag-waving and news of petty concessions made to workers by their employers. From April, it carried a regular column called "Jubilee News", comprising such items as these. Only on Jubilee Day did the newspaper reflect on the significance of the celebrations, and then only in the blandest form. An editorial remarked on the social improvements which had occurred during the reign, and contrasted the "sturdiness" of the British constitution in preserving freedom with what was happening in Europe. It concluded:

"King and people join today in a common celebration of the free constitution in which both play their part. That is its true significance." <sup>44</sup>

It was objection to the Government's attempt to exploit the Jubilee which formed the burden of Stafford Cripps's public statements on this occasion. The speeches of Cripps which drew headline attention were made in the period following the Jubilee celebrations. First came an address to the annual conference of the Socialist League in June, 1935. He complained that the occasion had been used to stir up nationalist feeling, and that this, along with the start of a re-armament programme, would be exploited to delude the working class into supporting the Government. It was a later speech, at Caxton Hall in September, which attracted most attention from the Tory press. In truth, his allegations were no different from those made by other leading figures in the party.

"The new phenomenon in our national life of a 25-year Jubilee has been sedulously surrounded by the politicians with a well cultivated ballyhoo from which they hope, and indeed boast, that they will derive electoral benefit...It is understandable and reasonable that the people should express their loyalty to their nation through the medium of a titular sovereign on appropriate occasions. Apart from that aspect of the question, there is every reason in the tragic and depressed circumstances of the workers today why they should accept an opportunity for the relief and escape of a national jollification."<sup>45</sup>

The difference between Cripps and the other Labour politicians who made the same point was in emphasis and terminology. Cripps made few of the conventional respectful observations about the King and his reign, and seemed to suggest that, rather than simply seeking to profit from a national celebration, the Government had created the event for its own benefit. The terms "ballyhoo" and "jollification" carried a critical tone, notwithstanding Cripps's claim to accept the celebrations. He wrote an article entitled "Don't be Duped by Jubileeism or Militarism", in which he generalised about the use made of the "patriotic" card.<sup>46</sup>

"It is a sorry thing that an occasion reputed to be for a national celebration should be used for party advantage. But then, as we know, the Capitalists have always used the call of loyalty to crown, country or flag as if these emblems of national sovereignty of the people were their exclusive property."<sup>47</sup>

When the Socialist League met for its annual conference in June 1935, the Jubilee figured prominently in the debates. At a private session, resolutions were passed regretting the attitude of the party's N.E.C. towards the celebrations, and congratulating those Labour councils which had refused to participate in them. Clearly, the Jubilee had served to regenerate interest on the Labour left in the question of monarchy, as the conference then widened the discussion. Whilst rejecting a proposal to work for the establishment of a Socialist Republic as speedily as possible, the conference "affirmed the view that an hereditary monarchy and the social distinctions inseparable from it were ultimately incompatible with the Socialist conception of society."<sup>48</sup> This

was a minority view in the Labour Party, but one which maintained a foothold in the party over the decades, and which always retained the potential to intensify and expand, given the right sort of catalyst.

### Text Analysis.

#### Daily Herald

Before turning to textual analysis, a brief profile of the *Daily Herald* in the 1930's helps to establish a context. This is supplemented by the data provided in the appendix to the thesis. At this period, the *Daily Herald* was the product of a commercial agreement between the T.U.C. and Odhams press, made in 1929. The T.U.C. held just under half of the share issue, and had four members on the newspaper's board, including Bevin as vice-chairman. Odhams also had four board members, with J.S. Elias as chairman. Whilst the entire commercial management of the newspaper was left to Odhams, the deeds of the trust stipulated that the political policy of the newspaper should be that of the Labour Party, and the industrial policy that of the T.U.C. However, these stipulations were not the only factors which determined the character of the *Herald*. It was to be a mass-circulation newspaper, aimed primarily at a working-class readership. Its circulation figures quadrupled in the first months after the T.U.C.-Odhams agreement, to a figure in excess of one million, still some way behind the *Daily Mail* (1,845,000), the *Daily Express* (1,693,000) and the *News Chronicle* (1,400,000). Throughout the 1930's, it was involved in a circulation war of unprecedented ferocity with its popular rivals, and by 1937 had increased its circulation to two millions, still behind the *Express*, but having overtaken the *Mail* and the *Chronicle*. The character of the

newspaper altered to meet Elias's commercial imperatives. Francis Williams was one of three editors dismissed by Elias between 1930 and 1940, and he described the shift in character.

"To increase [circulation] the paper must, [Elias] decided, be made brighter, less political, less serious, more entertaining —altogether more likely to catch the eye of the roving stray buyer at the railway bookstalls...He did not try to turn it from Labour politics. He had undertaken that it should remain a Labour paper and he held faithfully to his word: all he wished was that its politics could be made less noticeable."<sup>49</sup>

As far as the *Herald*'s interest in royalty was concerned, a former editor (1922-1926), Henry Hamilton Fyfe, offered a brutal, bitter, but well-founded observation.

"Like the other dailies during the interval between the wars, the *Herald* had to play down to the low level of intelligence which its controllers assumed to be general among the masses...The new controllers agreed that 'strengthening the throne' was good for business and a popular line to take with women. The result of this was an attitude....which had no precedent in its history."<sup>50</sup>

In an earlier book, contemporary with events under analysis in Chapters Four and Five of this work, Fyfe identified a prime motivation behind the interest of the popular press in royalty.

"Events in which royalty is concerned are very closely bound up with advertising; when newspapers publish Coronation or Royal Funeral numbers, these are chiefly filled with advertisements...More readers, more and more – that is the aim of the popular papers...That is why the *Daily Herald* 'plays up' royalty."<sup>51</sup>

It is a particularly relevant observation, in view of the *Herald's* perpetual and relatively unsuccessful struggle to attract advertising, the consequence of having the lowest income readership of any national newspaper.

"In 1936, the *Daily Herald* obtained less than half the gross advertising revenue per copy of the smaller circulation *Daily Mail* ....Despite its increased advertising, the *Daily Herald* was still trading at a loss when it became the western world's largest circulation newspaper in 1933."<sup>52</sup>

As mentioned above, the political policy of the *Daily Herald* was, according to the terms agreed between Odhams and the T.U.C., to be that of the Labour Party. Appropriately, therefore, the first extended commentary on the Jubilee celebrations was by the party's leader, Lansbury, on April 30th. His article, entitled "Make this a Jubilee to Remember", begins by attempting to establish the reasons for participating in celebrations, without, at this stage, acknowledging any internal dissention from this position. It is initially to the personal qualities of the King that Lansbury directs attention. The universal

appeal of the "good man" transcends political division. The relevant section of the text is heavy with positive, evaluative adjectives:

- kindly toleration
- good common sense
- one of the best-informed
- kindly manner
- sympathetic
- considerate

By emphasising the personal appeal of the King, and thereby detaching the monarch from the monarchy, Lansbury directs attention towards the unobjectionably familiar and human, and away from the more problematic institutional questions. It should not be forgotten that the roles of the Crown and monarchy had been the subject of criticism from within the party, post-1931.

Secondly, and perhaps with this latter point in mind, Lansbury articulates an ideology of consensus on the question of the Jubilee. There were, of course, as mentioned elsewhere, dissident voices within his own party. The notion of "ideology of consensus" has been summarised by Fowler:

"Consensus assumes that, for a given grouping of people, it is a matter of fact that the interests of the whole population are undivided, held in common; and that the whole population acknowledges this 'fact' by subscribing to a certain set of beliefs.."<sup>53</sup>

One of the linguistic processes commonly employed in representing a consensus is that of "dichotomizing". Consensus decrees that there will be someone outside that consensus. Participants are labelled and located in one of two categories: "us" (the consensus) or "them" (the outsiders). Lansbury's categorisation is revealing:

<u>US</u>	<u>THEM</u>
with thousands of others	mean-spirited partisans
myself and many thousands of others	
we the masses	
the nation	
our people	

He dismisses the outsiders with a negative evaluative adjective, conceding to their position no legitimacy or validity. The consensus is represented first as numerically overwhelming. Furthermore, the category labels selected indicate various types of inclusiveness. The nouns "masses" and "people" are accompanied by highly-significant pronouns, through which Lansbury claims to speak for the working class. He does so without once employing the label "working class". Class is an inherently divisive concept, and not an appropriate one to deploy when representing consensus. The "nation" embraces all classes.

Before turning to the contents of the *Herald's* reports of the Jubilee celebrations, attention must be drawn to authorship. Much of the reporting was the work of one journalist, and it is three of his lengthy reports which provide the objects of our study. The journalist concerned was Hannen Swaffer, and there are two aspects of Swaffer which require mention. First, he was perhaps the most famous popular journalist of his time. His name, and indeed his face, were well-known nationally by the 1920's and 1930's, and in the late 1990's my own parents not only recall the man, but also having read articles by him. It is reasonable to assume that such fame would both lend authority to his reporting and increase the attraction to read his articles. Secondly, Swaffer declared himself a socialist, and was described by Francis Williams as "a congenital socialist and rebel".<sup>54</sup> Through several decades Swaffer gave his support at public meetings to Labour candidates.<sup>55</sup> The first of Swaffer's reports covered the celebrations in London and featured in the edition of May 7th. The reporting was impressionistic and unreflective, but the linguistic character of the reports has ideological significance. The visual splendour of the official pageantry is lengthily described. In contrast to the (unmentioned) drabness of the lives of its readers, the newspaper presents a dense accumulation of lexical items from the field of rich colour:

golden - radiance - glittered - silver - shone - scarlet

Juxtaposed with these are lexical items which evaluate the character of the proceedings:

glorious - dignity - imposing - glory

The cumulative effect is to represent the spectator, and the reader, in all his ordinariness, as witness to the elevated splendour of the proceedings. It is the splendour and elevation of the official participants which are emphasised. The spectators also exhibit positive attributes, but of a different type. They are praised for:

order - patience - gaiety - kindness

The orderliness of the spectators was not, it was stressed, imposed by authority. There was "no bossing". Indeed, in spite of the gulf between the official participants and the ordinary spectators, as indicated in the descriptive language of the report, for this journalist the event constituted "a revelation to me of the ever-growing democracy of which we are all a part".<sup>56</sup> One way in which the text indicates a transformation in relations between governors and governed is in its constant reference to police-public relations. This is a celebration of the degree of social consensus, and it is more than coincidental that the *Herald* should have carried this emphasis in exactly the same way as the *Times* had done in 1887 at the time of Victoria's Golden Jubilee.<sup>57</sup> The police are almost unrecognisable in their affability. They appear in a variety of guises:

1) as entertainers/comics

"They ought to strike a medal for us, after all our long hours of duty,' said one Bobby to me chaffingly.."

"Policemen took the 'cake' for cheerful chaff."

"'Come on,' pleaded a Bobby, 'Get off that lion's tail [on Nelson's Column]. If you don't, I'll bring the lion tamer along.'

2) as objects of good-humoured fun

"...three policemen went by - one on a horse, one on a motor-cycle and one on a ordinary bicycle - they got one of the great laughing receptions of the day."

3) as "ordinary folk"

"A policeman's wife lost her place in the front row - she left it to see what her husband was playing at. He had a brunette from Manchester in his arms while his mate was hugged around the neck by a red-head from Ramsgate."

"Policemen from Elephant and Castle district, who slipped away to quench their thirst..."

4) as kindly and flexible figures

"Let the troops march past first,' he said to the pushing people very kindly.."

"'Steady,' shouted the policemen up against the Palace rails. They wanted only to lessen the rush in case of accidents. That was all."

"So one of the policemen on duty, after giving them [some small children] some coppers to buy some ice cream, allowed them to crawl under the locked gates to the other side."

Here is an ideal world in which the governed are happy to be so, where authority is maintained with consent and by a kindly word. An over-worked metaphor was deployed:

"London was one great family party."

If it was a family, there was, however, no suggestion here of the wrong members being in control. To reinforce the metaphor, a broad range of participants received mention: not only the grand and powerful, but their servants; not just the members of prestigious clubs in Pall Mall, but the inhabitants of "some of the poorest courtyards of London", who held their own celebrations in Bermondsey and Islington. There were very isolated reminders that the happy family was not entirely free of domestic problems: some unemployed men with a concertina singing "Land of Hope and Glory"; a man begging in the Mall. These were exceptions.

"Nowhere, on any of the stands yesterday, could you possibly have thought that England was a stricken land."<sup>58</sup>

The tone of patriotism and self-congratulation is restrained. Very little national labelling is used. In a text of approximately four thousand words, such items amount to: England (1); English (2); British (1). References to Empire occur only twice, when mentioning Empire Premiers. Where self-congratulation is expressed, it takes an indirect form. It is done by recording comments of observing foreigners, or by "wondering what foreigners think when they see us". The latter is a form of rhetorical questioning; the answer which the reader supplies is that the foreigner is impressed. Only once in the text is self-congratulation explicitly voiced.

"...when it comes to it, there is no country that can put up such a show as the British people."<sup>59</sup>

A few days later, the attention switched from street pageantry to a celebratory gathering in Westminster Hall, where the Lords and Commons offered loyal addresses to the King, who gave a reply. The report of this event in the *Daily Herald* is of particular interest because of the account of national history which it contains. The article's sub-heading is "Why Labour Could Take Part". The text is an extended eulogy of the Constitution. It begins with a review of the crisis of 1910, and dichotomises the participants.

the Tories	the King
Court flunkeys	the People
King's friends	Democracy

Diehard peers

Privilege

House of Lords

In so aligning himself with the people, the King had "saved the Constitution".

This *Daily Herald* article selects 1910 as a paradigmatic case to illustrate the benign working of the Constitution. It contains no reference to 1931. As we shall see later, right-wing accounts offer the latter as a paradigm. By contrast with the divisions of 1910, the scene in 1935 was, the text insists, characterised by unity under the Constitution. Marching in a "solid phalanx" were political adversaries:

Diehards and Labour men

the old-fashioned ones and the Reds

those who believe in privilege and those who..seek new freedom

What underpinned this unity? It was the Constitution, "which is our safeguard".

Dominating the discourse by its constant repetition is one lexical item:

freedom(s) (9)

free (1)

liberties (1)

"Freedom" is variously qualified: ever-growing (1); new (2); more (1). The Crown is represented as a crucial element, through its constitutional function, in the "ever-growing freedom of the British people."<sup>60</sup> The text embodies a Whig interpretation of history, in which progress is inevitable and freedom ever

-expanding. This treatment of royal jubilees as markers of social progress had a history at least as far back as Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, when Liberals presented it as a "commemoration of the advance of liberty during her reign".<sup>61</sup> Labour is a contemporary agent of this change, and its M.P.'s know that,

"...because of the freedom which their forebears had won for them - yes, and because of the freedom some of them won for themselves - there is promise of more freedom. For the fight will go on until the last battle has been won and men and women are economically free."<sup>62</sup>

The insistence of the case, achieved by the unusually heavy repetition of the word "freedom", is explained later in the text. The reader is invited to compare the political situation in his own country with conditions abroad.

"I thought of the friends I have in many parts of the world, now in prison or the victims of gross injustice."<sup>63</sup>

Most revealingly, the section of text in which "freedom" is repeatedly and insistently used is followed immediately by a direct address to the reader on the crux of the Jubilee question.

"You cannot resist this Jubilee, never mind what may have been in your mind a week or two ago."<sup>64</sup>

There are several points to make here. First, the address to the reader is placed in immediate sequence to the insistent passage on freedom. Although there is no lexically indicated relationship between the two, their spatial immediacy leaves the reader to draw only one inference: that the Jubilee is inherently related to freedom, and that to celebrate the former is to recognise the Crown's importance for the latter. Secondly, the modality is ambiguous. In "cannot", the reader may interpret an imperative, which would accord with the insistence of the preceding passage, or a reference to an inability, due to the overwhelming quality of the celebration. However, the next sentence reveals a deeper ambiguity.

"You notice, more and more, how the King must really regard himself as the head of a great family, that it is not merely a phrase."<sup>65</sup>

Here the pronoun "you" appears to be a conflation of three ergative agents: the reader; the writer; people in general. The sentence is semantically curious, as it posits a mental process (i.e. 'regard') as the grammatical object of a verb of sensory process (i.e. 'notice'). It attempts to substitute factual evidence detected by the senses for what is, in truth, a belief held by the writer. Personal belief is thereby transformed into general perception. Modality introduces a further element into the ergative pattern. The King "must really regard" is susceptible to varying interpretation. It may simply introduce a note of certainty to what is in reality pure speculation. Alternatively, it can suggest a process in which the monarchy is being "captured" by democracy and bending it to its needs.

The final *Daily Herald* text to be considered is an account of the Jubilee visit to South Wales by the Prince of Wales. The tenor of the piece is summarised in the sub-heading: "Miners and Millionaires Join in Welcome". Two juxtapositions are threaded the length of the text. First is the physical juxtaposition of the representatives of local capitalism and local Labour at a lunch in Cardiff's City Hall. This proximity is repeatedly introduced:

Labour Mayors..sat side by side with millionaire coalowners

Only 3 or 4 away from the Marquis of Bute..sat the Socialist..

Bishops sitting beside mere nobodies..

Lord Tredegar and Lord Davies, both millionaire landowners,

were there. So were the Labour Mayors of Swansea and Llanelli.

Consensus is the theme of the text. Divisions and differences cannot be denied, but they can be overcome if the occasion demands it and the will exists.

"They sank all their political differences for the day in welcoming the Prince of Wales...to Cardiff...the centre of a whole nation's tribute.. All Wales celebrated."<sup>66</sup>

The second juxtaposition is between wealth and poverty. The text organises this in a recurrent pattern:

wealth - poverty - instance of celebration in poor area

There is no reluctance to name and even to quantify poverty in Wales:

the most distressed townships

Merthyr, which has 98 per cent unemployment

have suffered in the great slump

the penury

semi-starvation (2)

a stricken land

Following these indications of severe social problems, the text immediately places evidence of the "loyalty" of the victims.

even the very poorest have taken part [in celebrations]

..most flags were to be found in Labour wards

Even the choir of miners sang "God Save the Prince.."

..and they are still loyal

This loyalty to the monarchy unites the nation, despite the economic disparities which the text acknowledges. Ultimately unresolvable in the bind established by these juxtapositions, is why this unity of sentiment cannot be translated into unity of political purpose. If only everyone worked together, as they cheered together at the City Hall, problems would be overcome. Unity and consensus is praised in the article, to the exclusion of the realities of different, and indeed

conflicting, economic interests. The conclusion of the article indicates the consequent confusion and frustration.

"I met all parties, yesterday, and all creeds. Why don't they help to build the new Britain? Why do most of them merely cheer?"<sup>67</sup>

The use of the rhetorical question, exemplified above, occurs in key positions in the text. There are three significant questions, which are left unanswered:

- 1) What chance could Republicanism stand against that sort of thing? [i.e. the enthusiastic reception of the Prince]
- 2) Who would have thought South Wales was a stricken land? [after having seen the pageant of industries]
- 3) Why don't they help to build the new Britain?

There are two possible reasons for leaving a question unanswered: the questioner is genuinely unable to answer; or the questioner knows the answer and is directing the reader towards it. The second type of question may be termed "catechistic". All of these questions above are of the catechistic type. Their function is to reinforce the consensus as projected within the text. The reader "reads in" the answers, and thereby subscribes to a common set of beliefs, rather than to a set of facts. In this case the set of beliefs involved are: that republicanism is a hopeless irrelevance; that Wales is economically and

socially stricken; that this latter condition is remediable, if only all political sides would work together.

As mentioned earlier, one device for reinforcing the ideology of consensus is the identification of those social groups which are outside that consensus. This text features two such groupings: Communists and a women's group.

"Communists had threatened trouble, but although about fifty formed a procession with a banner, they did not attempt to go near the show."<sup>68</sup>

This group is characterised negatively through word-choice. Both the verb and the verbal object are negative items: 'threaten' has undertones of violence; 'trouble' is vague, but undeniably negative. The actual details of the Communist protest are omitted, but one imagines they might have related to the social conditions to which the text refers, but without displaying much loyalty to the monarchy. As for the women's group:

"A women's march started from the valleys, hoping to get their grievances to the Prince's ears. But, late on Friday night, they were persuaded to go home on motor buses."<sup>69</sup>

Less hostility is apparent in the choice of lexis here, but the transitivity pattern of the last sentence is noteworthy. The choice of the verb "persuade" entails the consent of the women. Use of the passive voice enables the agent to be omitted, so we do not know the identity of the persuaders, or the

circumstances of the decision to return. These items are replaced by details of time and transportation. Instead, the reader can infer the role of the police in these incidents from the succeeding sentence:

"James A. Wilson, the Chief Constable of Cardiff, is in all these difficulties, a genius."<sup>70</sup>

No direct connection is made with the protest marches. The police are not identified in any action, repressive or otherwise. The *Herald's* reporting of the women's group may be contrasted with that in *Reynolds Illustrated News*, presented in the next section.

#### Reynolds Illustrated News

This was a Sunday newspaper which had a long and distinguished radical past. Ownership and policy had recently changed, and it was now published by the Co-operative Society, and reflected, in its political and industrial coverage, the values and policies of the Co-operative movement. It had been bought by the National Co-operative Publishing Society in 1929. Political and Economic Planning (P.E.P.) estimated its circulation in 1930 to be 420,000, and by 1937 to have risen to half a million. As for the composition of its readership, P.E.P. observed that,

"Reynolds is read to a large extent by members of the co-operative societies and may therefore be said to be indirectly owned by its readers."<sup>71</sup>

It did not have the massive sales amongst the working class enjoyed by the *Herald*. P.E.P. noted that "easily the most favoured newspapers on Sunday" among the working class were *The People* and the *News of the World*. Mass Observation found in 1948 that the readership of *Reynolds* was two-thirds Labour and one in ten Communist in their political sympathies, but that whilst nearly every second Labour supporter read the *News of the World*, only one in every twelve or thirteen chose *Reynolds*.<sup>72</sup>

The declared editorial policy in operation during the 1930's was contrasted by a post-war commentator with the more commercial contemporary policy.

"In the earlier days of Co-operative ownership, the Co-operative Press found that when it produced a newspaper which was not only advanced and progressive in its politics and on economic matters, but sought to cover all other aspects of life with equal seriousness, it was not possible to raise the circulation much beyond half a million."<sup>73</sup>

Despite the post-war shift towards a less serious approach, "the paper must continue to emphasise the advantages of public as against private enterprise, and social as well as individual responsibility".<sup>74</sup> Certainly the news coverage analysed in the following section bears testimony to the policy described. It exhibits an economicistic concern, a pervading awareness of and hostility towards the social consequences of capitalism, and an overall tone of seriousness which makes no concession to the popular appeal of royal celebrations.

### Analysis.

*Reynolds Illustrated News* began its Jubilee coverage with a series of articles concerning types of economic exploitation associated with the celebrations. These articles were highly critical of "malpractices", but avoided implicating the monarchy directly in those criticisms. Rather, the Jubilee celebrations provided a high-profile opportunity for the newspaper to continue a campaign against the excesses of capitalism. Its interest focused upon economic and employment issues, with political and constitutional matters all but ignored.

Two articles recorded the investigation of the practice of charging for viewing-points along the route of the royal procession from Buckingham Palace to St Paul's Cathedral.<sup>75</sup> Those window-owners extracting large amounts of money are contrasted with offices which reserved places for their own staff, or owners who were donating the proceeds to charity. It is essentially a moral case, and includes reference to the King, if only through a hypothetical aside.

"And supposing that the King himself felt that the private owners of windows ought to hand over the proceeds to charity, and that, failing a generous response, he decided to change the route at the last moment?"<sup>76</sup>

This sentence, with its interrogative mood, can be seen as fulfilling two purposes. First, by implication it associates the King's name with a proposal from the writer, adding legitimacy and weight to the criticism. Secondly, it attributes to the King, in an indirect manner, the same moral position as that

occupied by the newspaper, and by extension, its readership. The message echoes the aforementioned radical belief that the monarch is somehow an ally of their cause, and opposes the forces of corruption, unfairness and exploitation.

In reporting the processions to celebrate the Jubilee, *Reynolds* gave unusual prominence to several minor episodes featuring dissenting voices. In an article on provincial celebrations, half of the space was given over to four incidents. However, each incident was shown to have been "resolved": in two cases by criminal conviction; in one case by the humorous response of the King; in the other by a possible reversal of the negative situation. The problem-resolution pattern is ultimately reassuring, so the effect of including these incidents is simply to dramatise an otherwise repetitive account of celebration. Nevertheless, *Reynolds* was more informative than the *Daily Herald* on the Cardiff women's march. It may be recalled that the *Herald* had indicated that the incident was concluded when the women "were persuaded to go home". *Reynolds* also uses the passive construction, but employs a very different verb, and identifies the agent.

"..an 'army' of women marchers....had been intercepted by the police at Pontypridd."<sup>77</sup>

The point illustrates how the *Herald's* account sought to convey an unblemished consensus. But neither was *Reynolds* inclined to detail the women's grievances or to question the circumstances of the "interception". Like the other incidents featured, the account closes with details of resulting

criminal charges. Local newspapers, which might have been expected to provide more detailed coverage of the incident, curiously fail to do so. Generally Conservative inclined, and exceedingly patriotic on such occasions, such local examples of dissent were perhaps ignored as shameful and as blots upon the loyal response. The *Western Mail* did record the sentencing of two unemployed men from Rhondda who had planned to demonstrate in Cardiff against the Jubilee expenditure, but who had been halted in Pontypridd and then charged with assaulting the police.<sup>78</sup>

Daily Express.

The *Daily Express* had been owned by Lord Beaverbrook since the Great War, and at the time of the Jubilee had been under the editorial direction of Arthur Christiansen for two years. The 1930's were a decade of rapid circulation growth, as it overtook the *Daily Mail* and eventually established a lead over the *Herald*, with a circulation approaching two and a half million copies. According to Mass Observation's 1948 survey, its readership was distributed fairly evenly amongst every income and age group.<sup>79</sup> About half of its readers were Conservatives, and a quarter Labour. As the 1930's wore on, its domination of the lower middle-class market grew, with the *Mail* in relative and absolute decline. The complexity and diversity concealed by the term "middle class" as applied to the 1920's and 1930's has been well analysed.<sup>80</sup> Those elements of the middle class to and for whom the *Express* and *Mail* sought to speak were increasingly distinct, and were responding to different representations of the domestic and foreign worlds.

"The *Mail's* rivals were better attuned to middle-class experience in the 1930's. The emphasis of the *Daily Express* on escape, enjoyment and consumption became far more attractive than the staid approach of the *Mail*."<sup>81</sup>

The analysis which follows, of the *Daily Express*, and then the *Daily Mail*, offers evidence which supports this assertion.

The analysis of the *Express*'s treatment of the Jubilee differs from the previous analyses in that the texts examined are principally editorial comment rather than reports. This is because the *Express* devoted more editorial space to reflection on the Jubilee and associated topics than the *Herald* or *Reynolds*, and because of the intrinsic value of editorials to a study such as this. Editorials are where the newspaper's projection of reality or common sense is made; where the newspaper's ideology is clarified and re-established. One might anticipate that a national event, engaging the attention and the physical participation of vast numbers of the population, would be the site of an ideological struggle to establish meanings which reinforced existing representations of the world.

### Analysis.

The first text to be examined is an editorial of May 4th, headed simply "Opinion". If the main heading is uninteresting, the paragraph headings are not. As they are presented, vertically, these are:

In the Palace

In the Office

In the Shop

On the Farm

In the Home

The hierarchical organization is no accident, and serves to symbolize a view of society in which inequality is openly acknowledged, but in which the powerful and wealthy have responsibilities to those below them. Each paragraph contains social labels which identify these distinctions:

- 1) master/employers - people/typists/clerks
- 2) capitalists/investors - workers
- 3) master - man
- 4) big man - little man

Each paragraph then proceeds to advocate a restoration of the wage-cuts imposed during the worst of the Depression. The Jubilee should be the occasion for raising the living standards of the "little man". These improvements are to be, or should be, granted willingly by those above, rather than achieved by struggle from below. The text's imperatives are directed at the powerful:

Come now, employers, do the big, generous thing.

Restore the cuts.

Fill the cup in the cottage.

Lift up the hearts of the agricultural workers...

An hierarchical, paternalistic society depends, if consensus and stability are to survive, upon the dutiful exercise of their responsibilities by those in positions of power. The *Express* uses the occasion to make an explicit statement of its values.

"The *Daily Express* is the newspaper of the 'little man'...The *Daily Express* stands for individualism and humanitarianism, for equality of opportunity coupled with the reward for high attainment, for liberty of action that does not encroach upon the rights of others, and for faith in the destiny of the British race."<sup>82</sup>

The "little man" invoked here is an individual located in a hierarchy, who knows his place and who respects those above him who fulfil their responsibilities. The King, of course, is at the summit of that structure. A cartoon by Strube, two days later, encapsulates this representation of society. Strube's small, middle-aged clerk has mounted a plinth and is shaking hands with the King, a much taller, imposing figure in crown and robes. The little clerk raises his bowler hat as the King bends to shake his hand, smiling paternally. The caption is, "Congratulations, Sir".

Turning to the editorial published on the day of the main Jubilee celebration, an intertextual approach suggests another powerful element in the *Express*'s ideology. The service of thanksgiving in St Paul's Cathedral provides the newspaper with an opportunity to invoke the religious dimension

of monarchy. Much of the language of the text resembles that of the King James version of the Bible:

With panoply of power, he passes...

..the races who dwell under the King's hand

Once Death spread his dark wings over the King's home

Sorrows have come upon us, but in no measure like

that which has fallen upon other peoples of the earth

Put such vain thoughts far away

...with an humble and contrite heart..

The King and his Jubilee are linguistically embedded in a biblical context. It is an antique vision of monarchy, and one which asserts the spiritual dimension over the constitutional or social. The text concludes with an explicit reference to divine order, and a revealing connection between God, King and Empire.

"Today we see the power of a spiritual force in the affairs of men. Behold a Monarchy, pruned of its ancient prerogatives, yet increasing daily in its mystic influence, a symbol of the unity and might of a vast Empire.

In the cathedral, on the pavement where you stand, make this high resolve this day of Grace, that under God we will establish here the reign of Peace and Justice under this just King."<sup>83</sup>

The report of the Jubilee Day service at St Paul's Cathedral represents the spectacle as a piece of drama, in which the actors are the famous and powerful. The dramatic present tense is employed throughout the text to deliver the narrative. It is carefully structured, opening with an empty stage, onto which come the players, to whom we are introduced in turn:

Here is a famous judge..

Here is a dowager..

There is a debutante...

Here comes an Arabian..

Suddenly we see the King and Queen..

The writer is a member of the congregation, or of that part of the congregation whose role is, like the chorus in classical drama, to witness the events and actions of great men.

The wealthy and powerful are distinguished not only by their power to act, but physically by the splendour of their appearance. The text is dense with adjectives and nouns which introduce expensive and exotic aspects of appearance, remote from the life of the "little man":

in full evening dress

in the proud creations of Bond Street

scarlet-coated officer

flowing veils

beautifully gowned  
diamond bracelets and necklaces  
orange-tinted plumes  
silver, green, red, blue, royal purple, cloth of gold  
in mauve and green  
red, trimmed with gold  
in resplendent robes

The cumulative effect of this form of reporting is to reinforce those distinctions upon which is based the belief that hierarchy is the natural order of things. The "we" of the text, that part of the congregation who sit, stand and watch, were, in reality, composed of extraordinary individuals, for the "little man" was waiting on the pavement outside. "We" are never identified in the text. One of the achievements of the text is to incorporate the reader into that collective "we", by withholding identification which might betray the social remoteness of the members of the congregation from the reader; and by a narrative technique in which the reader's perspective emanates from a rear pew.

Another point of interest is the representation of ordinary people and their relationship to the event. Most newspapers carried reports of celebrations in the East End of London and in provincial locations, which featured communal festivities organized locally. Street parties in poor areas were commonplace. The *Express* made its visit to south London, but its focus was upon the experience of individuals, to the neglect of these communal phenomena. Individual subjects are represented as being in a personal

relation with the monarchy. Two headlines on the same page indicate this relationship, pointed up by the singularity of the possessive pronouns:

A Labourer to Meet His King and Queen

And Mr Tricker the Grocer ran to cheer his King

The report from Battersea deals with five local individuals. In each case, that named individual is described in mundane situations such as drinking tea, baking a cake, dress-making, when he or she is astonished to find the King is passing by. For all the vastness of the crowds who witnessed or participated in the Jubilee events, for the *Express* the crucial connection is between the individual subject and the monarch.

"..but this - for perhaps a hundred thousand Britons - was a moment apart. Just the King and themselves. Each one of them - each one of us."<sup>84</sup>

Each subject looked up to his monarch, like the clerk in Strube's cartoon, and the formal trappings of patriotism were almost superfluous, for the bond between them went much deeper. When the King entered the City of London, the people waiting sang "spontaneously".

"The National Anthem did not occur to them. They had no thought even of 'Rule Britannia'. Their words were the intimate recognition of the King's achievement. 'He's a jolly good fellow.'"<sup>85</sup>

Daily Mail.

At the end of the 1920's, the *Daily Mail* remained the popular newspaper with the largest circulation, built up under the ownership of Northcliffe. However, Northcliffe had died in 1922, and was succeeded by his younger and inferior brother, Rothermere. Before his death, Northcliffe had foreseen the rise of Beaverbrook's *Express*. By 1930:

"In the race for circulation the *Daily Mail* still had the lead but the *Daily Express* was hard on its heels, constantly narrowing the gap by superb popular journalism of a more sophisticated flavour than was to be found in the *Mail* and one more suited to the brittle gaieties and light-hearted extravagances of an age in which publicity had become the social king."<sup>86</sup>

The 1930's were to witness the relentless growth of the *Express*, and by 1937, the *Mail's* circulation figures had declined absolutely and relatively, having been passed by both the *Express* and the *Daily Herald*. In 1937, the *Mail* was selling 1,580,000 copies to the *Express's* 2,329,000. Rothermere was much less interested in journalism than in money, and his monstrous vanity led him to use the newspaper to advocate ill-judged and extreme personal political opinions.

As far as the composition of its readership is concerned, the 1930's saw a narrowing and marginalising of the *Mail's* appeal among the middle class. The newspaper had, at its peak in the 1920's, addressed in particular the private sector, the clerical lower middle class, advocating the case for a politics which protected the interests of that class, and for a 'national unity' which

recognised the threat from organised labour. For the *Mail*, the nation was the middle class. However, by the mid-1930's, its appeal and rhetoric had been overtaken by events and by the *Daily Express*, which gave a more relevant and recognisable voice to contemporary middle class concerns. The *Mail's* lead among the lower middle class was confined to the provinces, and even among the established middle class to the north and northwest.

"..so far from expressing the political outlook of the lower middle class as a whole, the *Mail's* continuing claim to leadership was confined to its success among elderly, provincial, established middle-class women..The paper had lost its plausibility, retaining the rhetoric of 1920 in the quite changed circumstances of 1934...advocating a hard, violent politics just as the National Government began to set itself up as the guarantor of democracy threatened by alien fascism."<sup>87</sup>

The 1948 Mass Observation survey found that the *Mail* was favoured more than the other popular papers by the higher income groups, older people and older women. Just over half of its readers were Conservatives, and a quarter Labour. In comparison with the other popular papers (*Herald*, *Express* and *Chronicle*), its readers were uninterested in reading politics or "serious" news.

### Analysis.

This analysis will focus upon several editorials and an article written by Rothermere himself. It is of particular interest to compare the approach of the *Mail* with that of the *Express*, for both were mass-circulation vehicles of

conservative opinion. The similarities and distinctions between the two have been summarised by Curran in these terms:

"The central core of the conservatism expressed by papers under the barons' control was a deep and emotional attachment to Britain and her Empire. This intense patriotism sometimes shaded off into open racism, and, particularly in the case of the papers controlled by Rothermere, aggressive anti-semitism."<sup>88</sup>

It will be recalled that the patriotism of the *Express* consisted, at its heart, of a sentimental personal attachment of the subject (the "little man") to his King, with little significance attached to race. The prominent article by Rothermere on Jubilee Day offers a radically different representation.

Rothermere's article is entitled "A Great Nation Salutes its King". That it is the nation which is in thematic position, and which carries the epithet "great", is entirely appropriate to the text. A simple word-count of certain key entities produces an illuminating set of figures:

<u>ENTITY</u>	<u>No. OF CITATIONS</u>
King/Sovereign	2
England/English	16
Britain/British	14
English/our race	6

Clearly, the text is concerned not with monarchy but with nationalism, underpinned by racial consciousness. Examining the elements placed in thematic position in the article's paragraphs reveal the overwhelming interest of the text.

This Britain that rejoices..

At home, Britain may claim to be..

She is above all the land of ordered liberty..

The creation of the greatest Empire..

When our race is denounced..

To the English character..

The pioneering spirit...

This list is not exhaustive. Rothermere's constant switching between the national labels Britain/British and England/English indicates a problematic area. At the heart of his dilemma is the need simultaneously to invoke the historical myths and literary associations inherent in "England", whilst laying claim to the wider territorial implications of Britain, most notably its overseas empire. Rothermere acknowledges, but does not resolve, his difficulty.

"..to remind the world of what Britain - or England - for so great a mind as Thomas Hardy's condemned as 'vague, unhistorical and pinchbeck' the title of 'Britain'- has accomplished.."<sup>89</sup>

The term "race" is employed as an inclusive label, with the possessive pronoun "our" as determiner in the majority of instances. It occurs only once with a national label, as "the English race". Apart from the national labels, with their inherent difficulties in expressing uncomplicated nationalism, the text employs personification of the nation in its dense use of personal and possessive pronouns:

she	4
her(s)	7
herself	1

Thus, the reader is appealed to as a member of a nation and a race, and the climax of the article takes the form of an appeal on these grounds.

"..to arouse ourselves and take firm and decisive measures for the safety of this land and the future of its race and of the Empire."<sup>90</sup>

As a final, but interesting aside upon Rothermere's nationalism, the text becomes lyrical when locating Englishness in a geographical setting. The description of that setting betrays the essential identity from which Rothermere extrapolates.

"The English race finds its proper setting in the English countryside....when the moan of doves is heard from immemorial elms...when

the woods are flooded with bluebells, when hawthorn blossoms whiten the lanes and the orchards glow pink against the vivid green."<sup>91</sup>

Not only is the national identity expressed through a rural idyll, but that rurality is quintessentially English, and southern English to be even more precise.

The *Mail* editorial of 7th May reiterated the subordination of all other aspects of the Jubilee to that of Empire. Entitled "A Day of Empire", the editorial contains the following lexical balance:

Empire/Dominions	9
Britain	1
Sovereign/King	5

Two-thirds of the editorial are devoted to the role of the King in consolidating the Empire. The Jubilee celebrations are praised for their "clockwork efficiency, splendour and public enthusiasm" and are described as "unsurpassed as a demonstration of personal affection for the Sovereign". However, the text returns to the theme of "loyalty" with which it began, but integrating it into the powerful sub-text of Empire. It concludes:

"Ours is an Empire the foundations of which are laid in loyalty and Justice."<sup>92</sup>

The possessive pronoun is used to modify three interlocking concepts:

our history - our King - ours is an Empire

Of these three, it is the latter which receives the most extensive commentary. The constitutional role of George V attracts little attention, and this is in revealing contrast to the *Daily Herald's* treatment. It will be recalled that the *Herald* identified the King with the cause of democratic advance, particularly focusing upon 1910. The *Herald* was tactfully silent on the constitutional crisis of 1931. In the *Mail*, 1931 was the only incident recalled:

"He has faced situations more dangerous and delicate than any British Sovereign has confronted in modern times. None can forget the decisive part which he played in 1931 when, in the strictest accord with constitutional principles, by his initiative he rescued this country from bankruptcy and collapse."<sup>93</sup>

Nowhere in its review of the King's reign does the *Mail* recall 1910. Although the *Mail's* selection of 1931 is in itself revealing, the connection between monarchy, patriotism and conservatism is quite overtly made in a slightly earlier editorial. Suggesting that a general election be held in the following October, the *Mail* sees the conditions as "favourable".

"The Jubilee celebrations will create an atmosphere favourable to the Government, because they must strengthen the fires of patriotism which burn in all British hearts."<sup>94</sup>

A recurrent theme in the *Mail's* treatment of the Jubilee celebrations is loyalty to the Throne. There is far less attention to the individual citizen's relationship to the monarch than is found in the *Express*, with its characteristic invocation of the "little man". It is, instead, a collective spirit that is invoked, and the nouns which categorise it are recurrent:

immense multitudes gathered to demonstrate their passionate faith

the multitudes....have assembled to express their loyalty..

the nation's faith in it [the monarchy]...

the nation....in loyalty of heart..

this Britain that rejoices with such loyalty and devotion..

an Empire the foundations of which are laid in loyalty..

enormous crowds whose fervent loyalty...

The *Mail* represents the Jubilee celebrations as evidence of a monolithic loyalty to King, country and Empire which suggests, in an obsessive concern with the latter, a sub-text of anxiety about its future, with the Indian nationalist movement ever stronger, and the implications of the 1931 Statute of Westminster still fresh in the mind.

#### Town Crier.

In contrast with the other newspapers analysed in this chapter, the *Town Crier* was local and provincial. Furthermore, it was aimed primarily at members of local Labour organizations, rather than at a mass, non-party readership. Despite these considerable contextual differences, the same

fundamental ideological processes are operating, as the events surrounding the Jubilee are interpreted and represented. The Labour Party in Birmingham, as elsewhere, contained a variety of attitudes towards the Jubilee, and was keenly aware of the opinions and beliefs held by its habitual and its potential supporters. With incontrovertible evidence of widespread popular affection for the King, and with associated displays of patriotic feeling, the *Town Crier* reflected some of the agonising and rationalising which went on in Labour circles. It provides a useful local insight into Labour's engagement with the issues raised by popular monarchy.

The *Town Crier* had started in 1919, founded and edited by W.J. (Will) Chamberlain, who had previously been a journalist with the *Western Times* and then the *Daily Citizen*. He was a Quaker and a socialist, having joined the I.L.P. in 1904, and then the Birmingham Labour Party during the Great War. In his first editorial, Chamberlain stated the aims of the new paper. It would keep the Birmingham people in touch with Labour and the local party in touch with itself. According to the newspaper's historian, the intended readership was limited.

"..essentially it did not aim to appeal to a wider public than the committed Labour Party member or trade unionist."<sup>95</sup>

Circulation was small, estimated in the 1930's at around two thousand copies. At the time of the Silver Jubilee and the Coronation, Chamberlain was no longer editor, but continued to write a weekly column under the name "Watchman". Some of his contributions are analysed below. The editor and

owner of the newspaper in the mid-1930's was Harold King, an old friend and colleague of Chamberlain.

### Analysis.

The main day of celebration for the Jubilee was May 6th. Its proximity to Labour's May Day celebration generated some revealing commentary, exposing tensions which were never satisfactorily resolved. If these tensions were to be summarised, their locus would be in the term "popular". In its more modern meaning, this can refer to the massive evidence of affection for the King across all social classes, testified to by contemporary reports of celebrations and street decorations in poor parts of cities, traditional Labour strongholds. It was a phenomenon which Labour, whatever its reservations, could not ignore. There is evidence of this difficulty in a *Town Crier* editorial which uncomfortably juxtaposes the May Day and Jubilee celebrations.

"Labour's May Day demonstration takes place, very appropriately on the eve of the 'Jubilee' celebrations, and it is a happy coincidence that the national celebration should be inaugurated by the workers' own celebration which, though not associated in any degree with the royal anniversary **as such** [my emphasis], marks a period of progress, dating back far earlier than the accession of King George to the throne, during which the struggle for emancipation and freedom has been slowly but surely progressing towards that great Commonwealth of the People which has drawn measurably nearer in the twenty-five years of the reign of our present monarch."<sup>96</sup>

How does the text characterise the relationship between the two celebrations?

The temporal proximity is ostensibly regarded positively, as expressed through "very appropriately" and "a happy coincidence". However, the nature of the appropriateness and the source of the happiness are not disclosed. In the light of what follows, the positive but undefined evaluation appears to be an attempt to represent a difficult conjunction as being uncomplicated; it is a preface which seeks to pre-empt the inherent complication. Finally, moves towards popular government have occurred during the King's reign, suggesting that the monarchy can, at least, exist in conjunction with democratic advance, but the term "Commonwealth" has unmistakeable associations with Cromwell and the English Republic. The text then proceeds to engage with the term "jubilee", and to appropriate it for Labour's own celebration and implicitly to question the genuineness of the other.

"Let us make this year's Labour Day a jubilee in the real sense of the word - 'a season of great public joy'- joy in the realisation of some of our dreams, but greater joy in the anticipation of the fuller and more complete triumph which is ahead."<sup>97</sup>

The implication is that the employment of the term "jubilee" for the royal celebration is inaccurate and ignores its "real" meaning. There is a hint of false consciousness. A Whiggish view of history, the representation of historical change as the gradual but ineluctable victory of democracy and freedom, remarked upon earlier in the *Herald's* treatment of the Jubilee, clearly underpins this text.

Dealing with the issues and dilemmas raised by the Jubilee, a regular contributor posed the question "Who are the True Patriots?" Despite offering a redefinition of patriotism, there was no question of withholding respect for the monarch. The writer declares the "highest regard for the King", but condemns the abuse of patriotic feeling to manipulate public opinion. The text exhibits the feature termed 'overlexicalisation'. This is a linguistic phenomenon which involves the application of many terms to one ideational entity, and tends to indicate an area of intense preoccupation in the experience and values of the group which generates it. The text in question displays this feature in the form of negative epithets applied to those deemed to be abusers of patriotism:

crawling  
 lickspittle  
 grovelling  
 mealy-mouthed  
 obsequious  
 entozoic  
 sycophantic  
 hypocritical

The concern apparent here is taken up again in a later editorial. Definitions of patriotism comprise the point at issue; and the appropriation of national symbols, including the monarch, by political opponents, is under attack. In this matter, reference back to the *Daily Mail's* representation of the Jubilee is particularly relevant, as is its blatant call for the patriotic sentiments aroused by

the Jubilee to be exploited by the National Government. The backdrop to this discussion was the "thousands of our Labour comrades who took an active part in the Jubilee celebrations all over the country".<sup>98</sup> The event itself is characterised as "a personal tribute to a wise and tactful, if only nominal, head of the nation", utterly unlike the *Daily Mail's* attempt to represent it as a celebration of race, nation and empire. Labour's opponents must be made to realise that,

"...we of the Socialist Movement were every whit as good patriots as those who have hitherto claimed that privilege as their own exclusive virtue."<sup>99</sup>

Nationalism and patriotism should not be confused, as the former embraced unacceptable situations and practices, employing the national flag as "a symbol of domination or conquest", a clear reference to colonial policy. Although the flag is not rejected,

"..it is high time that the old flag had a thorough spring cleaning so that it could once again become a symbol of the whole British brotherhood instead of the monopoly of the privileged and self-styled patriotic minority."<sup>100</sup>

The same edition carried an article by Jim Simmons, Birmingham city councillor and subsequently an M.P., which addressed the same problem. Acknowledging that royalty had "a hold on our people", and that patriotism was a powerful sentiment, Simmons' prescription was an eccentric mix:

"With regard to the flag - if the Tories insist on the Union Jack as their party ensign there is always the red ensign for us if we really want it. If the masses respond to the appeal of Patriotism let us give 'em not the tawdry tinsel trappings of Imperialism, but real patriotism that inspires them to demand that this should be THEIR country in reality....in my opinion Britain for the British would 'get' the people and clear away much of the prejudice against Socialism."<sup>101</sup>

Before the Jubilee, Simmons had condemned such celebrations as "a drug to deaden the pain of a cancer", and warned against the Jubilee becoming a "frenzy of sham patriotism expressed in flag-wagging and beer-swilling".<sup>102</sup>

The newspaper's former editor, writing under the pseudonym "Watchman" and as a "theoretical Republican", sought to explain the Jubilee events in terms of mass psychology. In themselves, mass demonstrations were neither good nor bad, only inevitable. It was the occasion which produces them that determined whether they were good or bad. So far as the Jubilee was concerned, it was harmless. This assertion was justified on several grounds: the loyalty being expressed was to a "democratic monarchic system"; there was no reason to believe that a Socialist system and a monarchic system were incompatible; better the British people cheer King George than a British Hitler or Mussolini.

### The Death of George V.

Six months after the euphoria of the Silver Jubilee came the death of the King. Naturally enough, comments upon the deceased tended towards uncritical tribute and appreciation, marked by a generosity of tone and spirit. Nonetheless, the public reaction of Labour to the death, and their reflections on the man and the institution of monarchy, give some indication of how the monarchy was viewed at this juncture. There was universal praise for the qualities of George V, as a constitutional monarch and as a man. The *Daily Herald*, continuing its customary adulation of sovereign and constitutional monarchy, paid tribute to the personal qualities: a lack of vanity; an ability to adapt to and identify with change; industry and devotion to duty. More importantly, "he realised better than any of his predecessors the true function of monarchy in a democratic nation and a democratic age".<sup>103</sup> In a lengthy review of his reign, the *Herald* included sections on the late King's riding accident in 1915 and on his stamp collection. The *Labour* magazine described him as "a kindly and conscientious man",<sup>104</sup> while Attlee identified his "selflessness, devotion to duty, kindness and humanity".<sup>105</sup> His qualities impressed even those who were not sympathetic to the monarchy itself. The secretary of the Birmingham Labour Party felt that:

"Whatever our opinions upon the principles of monarchy as such, and some of us hold very strong views on the subject, we can, at least, pay our tribute to the man who, having been thrust into a position of great responsibility, which he did not seek, did all that was humanly possible to carry out his onerous tasks with honesty and sincerity."<sup>106</sup>

The *New Statesman* called him "an honest gentleman, a wise sovereign and a devoted servant".<sup>107</sup>

Apart from the personal qualities of the late King, what united Labour commentators was a belief that the monarchy had been strengthened by his reign, and that it had never been stronger. An editorial in *Labour* welcomed this development, claiming that "constitutional kingship and parliamentary government mutually strengthen each other", and that republics fell all too easily to the prey of dictatorship.<sup>108</sup> Greece was offered as an example of a restored monarchy paving the way for the re-establishment of a parliamentary system. There was no regret about the decline of republicanism in Britain.

"...he [George V] had left the throne not only more firmly established than when he succeeded his father, but more strongly supported by the people's will than at any time in our history. Many of us can recall powerful republican movements in this country. But republicanism died during the late King's reign. It was killed not by any organised suppression, nor by legislation, but simply by the King's personality and popularity based on his devotion to duty."<sup>109</sup>

Pethick-Lawrence attributed to George V's strictly constitutional conduct and his punctilious dealings with the Labour Party his conclusion that "there was in 1936 little trace left of support for republicanism as a form a Government, and still less of any antipathy to the persons of the Royal House".<sup>110</sup> Another Labour journalist felt that George V had "made Britain safe for a Democratic Monarchy".<sup>111</sup> Underlying the praise both for a constitutional monarch and for

the Constitution itself, lay an uneasy awareness of how bad things were in other parts of Europe. Attlee, in his parliamentary tribute to the late King, mentioned how "great changes effected elsewhere by violence are brought about peaceably owing to its [the Constitution's] adaptability".<sup>112</sup> *Labour* asserted that "constitutional kingship and the institutions of free citizenship depend one upon the other".<sup>113</sup> *Labour's* only note of reservation about George V recalled the events of 1931, when he had strained his constitutional powers. However, this had been because "he was led astray by advisers who were unworthy of the trust he reposed in them".<sup>114</sup> Reference to 1931 also appeared in *Reynolds News*, which recorded that,

"Some have not scrupled to say that the whole business was a 'palace revolution' with the King himself as prime mover. It would probably be fairer to say that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald succeeded in misleading the King, as well as himself, as to the number of his followers who rated his beaux yeux higher than the principles on which they had been elected."<sup>115</sup>

This journal drew the conclusion, which echoed those of other non-Conservative newspapers, that George had "typified the average upper-class Englishman at his best, who made the British monarchy a democratic institution and Republicanism an academic issue".<sup>116</sup> As for the carefully cultivated image of a genuine family on the throne, and its extension to the 'family' of the nation:

"Now this seems to me to get very near to the central evil of royalty. It creates a spurious sense of community. We Socialists are conscious of the oppression done within this so-called family and especially the crowning oppression of those who toil by those who own - that the very name of family seems to us misleading."<sup>117</sup>

It was a necessary corrective, and a reminder that there was some residual republicanism within the Labour Party. By the end of the reign of George V, its voice was very rarely heard.

#### The Coronation of George VI.

The cumulative effect of the passing of George V and the Abdication of Edward VIII was to embolden the Labour leadership's public attitude towards the monarchy. The old King's popularity towards the end of his reign had deterred the Party leadership from even the mildest criticism of the character of the monarchy. Merely to have called for reform of the antiquated and elaborate court ceremonial would have implied criticism of George V himself, as his love of, and insistence upon, ceremony was public knowledge. With the disappearance of George V, and in the aftermath of the Abdication, the Party leadership clearly felt that calls for reform of the monarchy could be safely made. However, on the subject of the Coronation of George VI, the clash of opinion, the ideological tension, within the Labour Party, which had been

apparent over the Silver Jubilee, resurfaced. The change in the party leadership's public position will be examined first.

Evidence of a shift in attitude on the part of the leadership can be found in its bolder approach to questions raised about the Civil List. The Civil List came up for discussion in Parliament in May 1937, when Labour M.P.'s on both front and back benches called for a change in the character of the monarchy. The arguments assembled in support of the case were variations upon a theme of greater simplicity. Attlee and Greenwood were the principal front-bench spokesmen. Greenwood argued that Labour's objections to traditional displays of splendour and pageantry were not made on the grounds of financial expenditure. Ceremonial and ritual placed barriers between the King and the people, and this was "of no service to the democratic interests of our people".<sup>118</sup> He was at pains to distance the Party from any suggestion of republicanism, which he labelled a middle-class creed. Greenwood's, and the official Party's, position was to demand a democratic monarchy, shorn of its aristocratic features and reflecting a society in which social differences had been partially eroded. Far from weakening the monarchy, greater simplicity, and an end to the mystery which enveloped it, would help to strengthen the institution. Attlee provided a slightly different emphasis, in identifying as a problem for Labour the social character of the Court, with its unhealthy influence on the monarch. The status quo consisted of a royal establishment cut off from the masses of the people. This was a threat to the proper exercise of the Crown's constitutional role. Attlee raised the experience of the second Labour government.

"...there was a steady propaganda directed to influence the mind of King George on the question of the unemployed...which suggested that the country was being ruined by masses of people getting unemployment benefit when they did not deserve it or did not need it...When a Monarchy is maintained with very great pomp and ceremony there is a tendency for a King to be surrounded by people who have one particular background."<sup>119</sup>

Attlee wanted an enquiry into what provision should be made for the King in a society which, he believed, was moving towards equality and classlessness. Labour back-benchers focused upon the social distance between the Labour Party and the monarchy, and the consequent political handicap to the Party. With Court circles drawn from one social class, the monarch's understanding of Labour's case, and of the feelings of ordinary people, was inevitably impaired.

The Labour leadership felt that their views reflected a growing tide of public opinion. In the wider Labour movement, this feeling was shared. When the Civil List Select Committee rejected Attlee's call for greater simplicity, even the *Daily Herald*, a staunchly monarchist newspaper, declared in favour of reform.

"If it had been the public instead of the committee which had to vote on the proposal, it is safe to say it would have been carried by a big majority. For both in this country and in the Dominions there has been a strong and healthy growth of feeling that artificial conventions and an elaborate manner of life are

not merely unnecessary, but are also hindrances to a 'right understanding' between King and people."<sup>120</sup>

Likewise, the official Labour movement journal observed that there existed a widespread feeling that the distance between the sovereign and the people should be diminished, rather than increased by pomp and ritual.<sup>121</sup> The local Labour newspaper in Birmingham specifically cited Sweden as an example of a country in which the monarchy had been simplified, and strengthened as a result.

"The security of the Throne in a constitutional democracy rests not upon outworn tradition or precedent, or Court ceremonial or Society with a capital S, but upon the popular respect which simple human qualities, personal dignity and efficient public usages will always inspire and sustain...It is possible to preserve such of these ancient usages as may be colourful and wholesome and do away with all that makes for snobbery and the perpetuation of class distinctions."<sup>122</sup>

The case for a simplified monarchy rested upon twin false premises, identified as such by some contemporary observers. First there was a confusion between the extension of political democracy and the disappearance of social class. The former did not mean the latter, nor was the latter an inevitable consequence of the former. The ruling class may have been undergoing transformation, with a decline in some of its overtly aristocratic vestiges, but it was illusory to represent this as another step

towards classlessness. Secondly, the monarchy may have been a cause of superstition and irrationality, but it was also a product of these conditions. One commentator made an incisive observation on the call from some quarters for a Scandinavian-type monarchy.

"They might as well try to fight poison gas with a sword. Criticism of the Monarchy can only be part of the general struggle for reason against unreason, for equality against privilege. The Monarchy in its present form will last as long as inequality and superstition last and not very much longer."<sup>123</sup>

The debate about the monarchy which centred around the Civil List continued into the Coronation celebrations of May 1937. As at the time of the Silver Jubilee of George V, opinion in the Labour Party varied along a spectrum which had the *Daily Herald* at one end and *Tribune* at the other. What generated such intense and conflicting interpretations of the Coronation was the undeniable enthusiasm of the overwhelming majority of working class people. How was this to be understood? There were broadly two explanations, although it is perhaps too crude to locate more sophisticated analyses in one or other of these positions. In one version, it was evidence of the successful manipulation of the working class, in the interests of the ruling class in general, and of the National Government in particular. The working class were victims of cynical Tory exploitation. Thus Beatrice Webb characterised the Coronation celebrations as a "tremendously powerful dope...administered to the people of England",<sup>124</sup> while *Tribune* labelled it "a vast and immoral deception".<sup>125</sup> This perspective identified the phenomenon of working class participation with the

popular Tory patriotism of the late nineteenth century, a cultural politics which had "real attraction for many working people, and did so by drawing the radical teeth from the popular images of patriotism".<sup>126</sup> The Communist Party condemned the Coronation as a "deliberately planned propaganda campaign to work up a wave of patriotic feeling", which was aimed at assisting capitalism, militarism and imperialism.<sup>127</sup> However, the Communists made it clear that they were not against street parties and enjoyment, and readers of their Coronation pamphlets were advised to participate in the fun, but not to be deceived. Behind this concession, there was not just a tacit acknowledgement of the futility of opposing or denouncing popular street celebrations, but also the hint of an alternative understanding of what underlay these displays of "loyalism".

This alternative version of events, which refused to see the working class as passive dupes, was offered by John Strachey in the *Daily Worker*. Reporting that the back streets in the poorest areas of London were thick with flags, Strachey asked:

"What is the significance of this? A getting-together of workers - together in brotherhood - a common life."<sup>128</sup>

What the Conservative Party and the popular press represented as demonstrations of enthusiasm for the monarchy and as evidence of a reassuring working-class patriotism, might alternatively be seen as a spontaneous and autonomous expression of communal solidarity. This conclusion had been reached, following the Jubilee celebrations, by a South

London Labour member, who sought to explain the behaviour of the poor communities amongst which he lived.

"There was, among the poor, a quite spontaneous uprush of communal rejoicing which was very infectious. I felt the pull myself. What was celebrated was of less importance than the celebrating itself. Whole streets of families became neighbours in very truth and were liberated from much of the conventional shyness and reserve which prevents our pleasure in our neighbour's company."<sup>129</sup>

Hannen Swaffer in the *Herald* remarked on the importance of "street teas" to working class celebrations, tracing their origin to the time of the Armistice.<sup>130</sup> By the time of the Silver Jubilee they had become "the working man's new form of gaiety", and owed nothing to outside organisation.

"Boroughs don't organise those. They spring up like daisies."<sup>131</sup>

Were the celebrations, as Cripps alleged, a "political stunt by the Conservative Party",<sup>132</sup> or, as the *Daily Herald* claimed, "the demonstration of a people"?<sup>133</sup> It is not impossible that, in the hands of working-class participants, popular Coronation celebrations became something other than the intentions of their propagators. This is an observation which has also been made about late nineteenth and early twentieth century manifestations of popular patriotism.

"What is striking is the extent to which working-class people imposed their own interpretations on patriotic institutions and occasions." <sup>134</sup>

The *Daily Herald* treated the Coronation as it had the Silver Jubilee. Its coverage did not differ from that of other popular newspapers, with pages of photographs and trivia. Francis Williams recorded that the surge in the *Herald's* circulation during the Coronation made even Elias temporarily happy, and was dismissive of objections to the nature of its coverage.

"Intellectuals of the left were very indignant when we published long descriptive stories of the Coronation...to satisfy a taste they refused to admit existed."<sup>135</sup>

Commenting on the events of Coronation Day, attention was drawn to the "spontaneity" and "genuineness", and the objections of the left were contemptuously dismissed. (This is covered in the textual analysis section later in the chapter.)

"It is this Coronation genuineness which has been missed by that little minority which seeks to persuade itself, in defiance of all the plain evidence of eye and ear, that the whole thing is an artificial creation. There is neither sense nor dignity in this attitude. This Coronation is as real and genuine an experience of the British people as anything ever was."<sup>136</sup>

In an article in the same issue, Hannen Swaffer reiterated the view that "all except the Communists and a few left-wingers" had come to accept the monarchy as a crucial element of a form of government which preserved freedom. The latter point was one heavily stressed by the *Daily Herald*, which saw the Coronation as setting the country apart from the totalitarian states, where celebrations marked the victory of one creed over others.

"The King is neither a dictator nor a Party man. He is a constitutional King in a parliamentary democracy. And yesterday was the celebration by all people, irrespective of Party, who mean to honour its rules."<sup>137</sup>

The same theme was expounded in an article by Ponsonby, Labour's leader in the House of Lords. He observed that democracy seemed to thrive better under a constitutional monarchy than in republics, but also acknowledged that "the time must come, if real progress is to be made towards a genuine social democracy, when the tradition of monarchy and the practice of Socialism will be found to be incompatible".<sup>138</sup> However, this was something for the future, and from past experience, Labour could expect fair treatment from the Crown, notwithstanding the reactionary opinion prevalent in a Court "manned by an almost exclusively Tory aristocracy".<sup>139</sup>

Whilst the *Daily Herald* and its contributors represented the Coronation celebrations as evidence of genuine attachment to institutions and a form of government better than most, others in the Labour Party interpreted the events differently. Those on the Party's left, heavily engaged in promoting the Unity Campaign, denounced the events as cynical manipulation of working class

opinion. It was again Cripps who attracted most attention. In a series of speeches, he made two basic complaints: that money was being wasted on the celebrations; and that the events were being exploited by the Tories. At the end of April, he deplored the turning of the Coronation into "an international circus, which was being done today by the Conservative Party for its own benefit".<sup>140</sup> Then just before Coronation Day, Cripps made a spirited denunciation, the language of which offended monarchists inside and outside his own party.

"In all this Coronation bunting or bunkum, the Government appears to have overlooked the essential nature of the struggle which is proceeding in this country. I have no objection..to people celebrating if they wish on any proper occasion...But the present circus which is being carried on and organized and for which the Government, incidentally, are paying three-quarters of a million out of national funds - apart from the millions which are being spent municipally all over the country - is simply being run as a political stunt by the Conservative Party. They realize, I suppose, that the Monarchy, which is the chief prop of their political position, had a rather nasty blow last August and this is the time to rehabilitate it."<sup>141</sup>

The last point, whilst being the most radical of his criticisms, was not the primary cause of the fierce reaction which followed, but his use of the term "bunkum" on this occasion, and "tomfoolery" on another. Amongst those responsible for organising and financing Coronation events were many

Labour-controlled councils. Some working class Labour politicians were quick to respond *ad hominem*. The Labour Mayor of Manchester retorted that:

"When Sir Stafford Cripps alluded to the Coronation as bunkum, he was once again talking without thinking. I suppose there was no bunkum when he went down on one knee before the father of the present King to receive his knighthood, and there is not much bunkum about the country which gave Sir Stafford the riches he possesses."<sup>142</sup>

Cripps's reply to the criticism was that the issue was not worth fighting over, and that he regretted his reference to "tomfoolery" because the storm it had raised had obscured matters he regarded as more significant.

In his comment that the monarchy was the chief prop of the Conservative Party's political position, Cripps had voiced an opinion which was more fully developed elsewhere on the Labour left. Clearly there was a conviction that the Government were engaged, through the Coronation events, in undermining the Unity Campaign, and that it was a frustratingly successful ploy. *Tribune* carried an article by Bevan which listed the purposes of the Coronation: to give the King an appearance of divinity; to consolidate the social pyramid; and to spread the illusion of a national "community".<sup>143</sup> In other issues of the journal, the anger felt on the left was vented.

"..Labour will be - or ought to be - ashamed of the part it played in the proceeding. It will have the uncomfortable feeling that His Majesty's Opposition, whose business it is, presumably, to oppose something or

somebody, only succeeded in supporting a circus run by the enemies of the working class."<sup>144</sup>

Earlier in the chapter, reference was made to Strachey's contention that the celebrations by the working class could be understood as affirmations of their class solidarity, and that the connection to the royal event was rather incidental. Less theoretically, it could be explained as simply a welcome excuse for a good time. Such arguments cut little ice for Hayter Preston in *Tribune*. The Coronation had been an "idolatrous spectacle".

"...millions of British workers turned their backs on all that is meant by democracy and prostrated themselves before the chief idol of capitalist imperialism. No doubt many socialists will try to explain this wholesale liquidation of class faith and hope on the theory of the mass spree. But that theory is valid only so far as the children's bun-fights are concerned."<sup>145</sup>

There were two distinct objections to the Coronation celebrations by critics on the left. The first, less radical, argument, deplored the partisan use made of the event by the Government. This assumed that the monarchy could and should be outside the contest for political power. In contrast, the case hinted at in part of Cripps's speech and elaborated in *Tribune* was that the monarchy constituted an integral and crucial element in the capitalist system. Dr Alfred Salter had long emphasised the monarchy's function in upholding that system, and repeated his view at the time of the Coronation.

"The eyes of the common people are to be dazzled, their minds hypnotised, their imagination bewildered, so that they may readily accept the present social order as eternal."<sup>146</sup>

The other constituents of the United Front shared this belief. The I.L.P. condemned the Labour leadership's participation in the Coronation, which served only to hide the realities of capitalism.

"The Coronation is the supreme occasion of Capitalist Society. The head of the Capitalist State is crowned and all sections of the Capitalist State join to do him honour. It is the occasion when all the powers at the disposal of the ruling class are mobilised to create an overwhelming demonstration of national unity and loyalty."<sup>147</sup>

Contrast was made between the cost of royalty and the level of state support for the unemployed. A similar set of arguments was deployed by the Communist Party (C.P.), which issued a series of three pamphlets on the Coronation. These were written for an audience beyond the party membership, and made concessions to popular approval of the festivities. The C.P. was against the Coronation, but not against street parties. If a worker was offered a free tea for his children, he should accept it, whilst demanding proper feeding for the rest of the year. The advice was to take part in the events, but not to be deceived.<sup>148</sup>

This qualified critique by the C.P. was evidence of an awareness on the left that outright hostility to the Coronation celebrations was liable to be

counter-productive. The popular enthusiasm displayed on 12th May could be treated in various ways: by distinguishing between an understandable desire for a good time and enthusiasm for the monarchy; by rejecting any working class participation as a sad example of ruling class manipulation of the workers; or by accepting unconcernedly that working class people were as loyal to King and country as any others. The predominant attitude in the Labour Party was summarised thus by Kingsley Martin.

"The Labour Party, and indeed the left as a whole with numerically unimportant exceptions, says about the monarchy, as it says about the Empire: 'Of course there's a lot of ballyhoo about all that and we protest against the use of a national symbol for the purposes of conservative propaganda. But to go with the relatively few extremists and attack the monarchy, the Empire and the Coronation, is simply to play into the hands of our opponents, who will have the vast majority of the people with them anyway. Far better proclaim our loyalty with the rest and so be in a position to catch the public ear when we point out that there are still slums in England, still unemployment, and that the glass coaches and golden crowns don't fill hungry bellies.'"<sup>149</sup>

What evidence exists would appear to justify Martin's assessment of a "vast majority". It is likewise hard to deny Ziegler's generalisation, based on the evidence of the Mass Observation Day Survey on 12th May, 1937, that:

"Of those who ventured an opinion....there can be no doubt that the vast majority -90% probably of the several hundred whose views are featured..in the Mass Observation Archive - were looking forward to the day with some eagerness and planning how best to enjoy an occasion which seemed unlikely to recur for many years."<sup>150</sup>

The realpolitik of the Labour Party on this occasion, as expressed in the article by Kingsley Martin, was perhaps less a cynical attempt to swim with a popular tide of opinion than the outcome of a tangle of conflicting beliefs and emotions. Some in the party were unquestioning loyalists: the Labour Party rooms at Warrington displayed the largest Union Jack in the town.<sup>151</sup> Others publicly rejected the whole business, and were thrown into fountains for their pains.<sup>152</sup> Others in the Party had more mixed feelings, sharing, if not articulating, the sentiments of a Mass Observation informant of left-wing views.

"I was surprised how much I responded to the atmosphere of the crowd, the cheering etc. I felt a definite pride and thrill in belonging to the Empire, which in ordinary life, with my political bias, is just the opposite of my true feeling. Yet I felt a sense of relief that I could experience this emotion and be in and of the crowd...Therefore you will understand that the carnival spirit of the actual Coronation Day really was a holiday for me, and I say this without cynicism. I wonder how many others felt the same....Reviewing it all calmly afterwards, one sees how very dangerous all this is... because it makes it in the end harder for us to think and behave as rational beings...It is too

dangerous a weapon to be in the hands of the people at present in power in this country."<sup>153</sup>

### Textual Analysis.

#### Daily Herald.

The *Herald's* coverage of the Coronation may be conveniently divided into three categories: editorials; feature articles with historical/constitutional themes; reports of the national and local celebrations. These categories will be treated separately, notwithstanding some overlap in subject matter.

The first of two editorials on the Coronation, entitled "The King is Crowned", is a spirited attempt to refute the arguments of left-wing critics and to align the newspaper with popular opinion, and thereby with its own readership.<sup>154</sup> The first two paragraphs seek to characterise the events in terms which deny the case made by the left. Although the arguments of the critics are not rehearsed, nor their rhetoric examined, their unspoken presence is reflected in the evaluative language of the text. The opponents of the celebrations are identified twice, once indirectly and then directly. In both cases, their numerical insignificance is emphasised:

"He will be a rare person who is not moved by today's Coronation.."

".that little minority which seeks to persuade itself..."

The nouns and adjectives employed to characterise the celebrations can best be understood as a response to these opponents.

..the spontaneity of this Coronation..

..this Coronation genuineness..

as real and genuine an experience of the British people..

a national demonstration..

the people's free decision that the Monarchy is retained

These terms serve to deny the charges of artificiality, political manipulation and class bias. The dominant category label in the text is "the people", appearing eight times. The "people" are identified as the key participants, in two senses: as participants in the celebrations; and as grammatical participants in a variety of transitivity patterns. The latter is revealing. Where the term occurs in transitive structures, the "people" are actors in processes, and their autonomy of action is repeatedly indicated.

it is the people which has placed him

it is by the people's free decision that the Monarchy is retained

the people of this country governs itself

the people..to make something more of the Coronation

this people forms a nation

a free and enfranchised people

The "people" are in control of events, in a political system of open democracy; manipulation and compulsion are implicitly denied.

The second editorial was entitled "United in Freedom".<sup>155</sup> Whilst the previous editorial had as its sub-text the case against socialist criticism of the Coronation, the second was a justification of constitutional monarchy in the light of the unpleasant alternatives on the Continent. At the same time, it engaged with domestic arguments on the subject of unity, and sought to locate traditional Labour values in the royal celebrations. The terms of the title dominate the text, two of a group of terms relating to political values which recur throughout:

unity/united x 7

freedom/free x 7

democracy x 5

community x 3

totalitarian/dictators x 4

The contrast between totalitarianism and a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarch was but part of the argument. Alongside this point, the text contains some sharp observations about Labour critics of the Coronation. Having identified unity as a salient phenomenon apparent during the celebrations, the first half of the text is an exercise in exposition and qualification of this term. As the text acknowledges, critics of the Coronation object to it because it represents a "sham unity which does not exist". The response to this charge is that while there may be differences in political

programmes or economic ideas, there remains an underlying unity which results from agreement about the political methods by which such matters are resolved. To this extent, the Coronation was a celebration of democracy. Pointedly, the *Herald* chastised Labour critics who claimed, in contrast, that the Coronation was a celebration of Conservatism.

"..some of those who call most urgently for the 'defence of democracy' do not recognise democracy when they see it."<sup>156</sup>

The *Herald* strenuously attempts to represent the Coronation celebration as embodying traditional Labour values. Besides "freedom" and "democracy", there are other significant lexical cues which invoke such values:

so harmonious a comradeship as was manifest yesterday

a free people together in such solidarity..

if all men and women are to have an equal chance..

This interpretation of the events of May 12th was offered alongside accounts of those events which emphasise and dwell upon phenomena whose relationship to modern democracy is less than obvious. It is to the *Herald's* reports of the Coronation that we now turn.

The *Herald* gave as much space to the celebrations as did the Conservative popular newspapers, and deployed writers of national reputation to describe them. H.V. Morton covered the events in Westminster Abbey, and

his *Herald* readers are immersed in a fantasy world remote from drab lives and everyday concerns.

"The scene below is absolutely mediaeval. All the primitive colours of the Middle Ages are alive down there in the tiers of seats where every man is in uniform or in the mantle of some ancient order of chivalry. The women are mostly in Court dress with white feathers in their hair; the men are mostly in scarlet."<sup>157</sup>

Complementing Morton's detailed handling of the pomp and circumstance, Hannen Swaffer was "among the crowds". The focus switched from the majesty and magnificence of the Abbey to the qualities of a London crowd. It was the crowd which became the object of celebration in Swaffer's idiosyncratic approach. He preferred the good-natured, long-suffering, ordinary Londoners to the procession itself.

"Now frankly, except for the crowds...I would not have walked a hundred yards to see yesterday's procession."<sup>158</sup>

The concept of the "crowd" is central to Swaffer's representation of events. The *Herald* had a series of articles entitled "Crown and People", the last of which was a piece by Swaffer on "The Crown and the Crowd". The term "crowd" is a loose, undefined one, which permits Swaffer license to generalise about popular opinion concerning the monarchy. By failing to specify who is reacting in a particular manner, there is greater scope for the incorporation of

Swaffer's own impressions and beliefs. The "crowd" becomes a flexibly deployed and powerful agent in historical processes, both as witness and arbiter of change. In his survey of changing relations, beginning with Victoria, between monarchs and the "crowd", Swaffer uses the latter initially to designate the spectators of the Coronation procession of George V. However, Swaffer continues by invoking the "crowd" and attributing to it a unanimously held set of sentiments; sentiments which are in reality Swaffer's own speculations and interpretations.<sup>159</sup>

"..the crowds felt that she [Victoria] embodied in her stumpy frame the qualities..."

"The crowd literally paid her [Victoria] reverence."

"The crowd..admired his [Edward VII's] way with women."

"..in spite of his [Edward VII's] brusqueness of which the crowd knew nothing.."

"..the crowd in a second would have lost its liking for him [Edward VII]."

"When Edward VIII came, the crowd thought of him as Prince Charming."

"The crowd adored him [Edward VIII]."

It becomes clear that the "crowd" signifies more than simply the massed onlookers at ceremonial occasions. Elsewhere, the term seems synonymous with the electorate, which possesses ultimate power within the political system. By implication, the label subsumes *Herald* readers.

"..the Throne...accepted by all Parties, except the Communists and a few Left-Wingers, as the symbol of a form of government under which can be worked out whatever degree of Liberty the crowd wants....Monarchs may come and go but the people remain...They reign by their people's will - and for so long as the people wish."<sup>160</sup>

If the "crowd" controls events, for Swaffer, as for the Labour Party, further reform of the monarchy is desirable: a move towards the Scandinavian and Belgian examples, in which the monarch may "mix freely among the crowd" and an end to the practice of surrounding the monarch with "people chosen from one class". There is, however, no doubt about the superiority of the Constitution over all others. And in that "eternal miracle which is Britain", the monarch is crucial, for "if the King went, heaven knows what might happen".<sup>161</sup> Whilst the "crowd", as presented by Swaffer, is a free, mature, informed body which knows what it wants and which holds ultimate power, the attention given to the symbolism of inequality, privilege and mysticism in the *Herald's* coverage of the Coronation ceremony and procession produces tension, if not contradiction, between these two representations.

#### Reynolds News.

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that *Reynolds News* showed virtually no interest in the Silver Jubilee celebrations, and the little coverage that was given was severely economicistic, more anti-capitalist than anti-monarchist. There is a clear shift in editorial policy for treatment of the Coronation. Whilst the newspaper continued its exploitation theme (this time concerning

producers of Coronation goods in Birmingham), it also turned its attention to the ceremony itself, popular celebrations, and included some historical/analytical features on the monarchy. In all these areas, however, there was far less space given than in the *Herald*, whilst the tone was far less respectful. To point up this contrasting approach, attention will be focused on three areas of coverage: an account of the ceremony in the Abbey; an article on the relationship between monarchy and people which mirrors Swaffer's piece in the *Herald*; and reports of popular celebrations.

The report of the ceremony in the Abbey was juxtaposed with a report of the day in Jarrow. The description of the scene in the Abbey is laden with irony and with suggestions of farce. The ritual of coronation, invested with mystic significance in the *Herald*, is stripped down linguistically in the *Reynolds* article, in a series of unadorned passive constructions.<sup>162</sup>

The King is presented

His usurpers are challenged

He is anointed

The King is crowned

The absence of evaluative adverbs and adjectives is striking. The interest instead lies in the selection of verbs which highlight the absurdity and farce which deny the event the dignity and majesty it seeks.

The Archbishop fumbles

One aged lord...stumbles

..my lords and ladies jostle...cursing

The unrepresentative nature of the onlookers in the Abbey was emphasised, rather than the splendour of their appearance. Only the Prime Minister and Ramsay MacDonald were "representatives of you and me and the fellow next door", and the writer was pleased to escape from "the gilded crowd".

A consequence of the less austere policy in reporting the Coronation was the allocation of space devoted to describing street parties. The newspaper could acknowledge popular enthusiasm for the Coronation without endorsing the politically and ideologically unacceptable. As Swaffer had treated it in the *Herald*, the occasion becomes one for celebrating the qualities of ordinary people. In Swaffer's column it was the amiability of the London crowd which earned praise: in *Reynolds*, it was the capacity for organisation exhibited by the inhabitants of poorer areas.

"Hard working men and women with little enough time to spare have revealed a genius for detailed organisation."<sup>163</sup>

In advance of the celebration, *Reynolds* was labelling it as the "Tea Party Coronation". However, an accompanying article offered a different perspective, dealing with popular manifestations of patriotism. The proliferation of coronation goods and fashions is described but regretted.

"Everything in London is coloured in keeping with the Coronation season. The heart of the British Empire is patriotic through and through...I

suppose a true-born Briton ought to be delighted by the amazing aspect of our greatest city. But I confess my day-long tour of London has given me the blues."<sup>164</sup>

All the writer could offer in the face of this unwelcome but incontrovertible evidence was the limp assertion that "gay as all the patriotic bunting is, it is the people themselves who are the living decorations". Repeating that the phenomenon had saddened him, the writer offers no explanation of his reaction. Readers are expected to understand and to share the ideological position which generates it. *Reynolds* adopted a paradoxical position on the Coronation: by increasing the space given to a royal event, it was tacitly admitting the interest of its readership; through a critical or disapproving perspective on the event, *Reynolds* was simultaneously invoking a radical scepticism consistent with the newspaper's traditional political sympathies.

#### Daily Express .

The *Daily Express* treatment of the Silver Jubilee had been characterised by an acknowledgement of a social gulf between the monarch and the "little man", who represented its ideal reader. Despite this gulf, the relationship was marked by mutual affection and an uncritical attitude towards the hierarchical arrangement. The most striking aspect of the *Express*'s treatment of the Coronation was an extension and refinement of this approach, which contains

embryonic echoes of the modern tabloid handling of royalty. If one were to summarise the ideological basis to the approach, it would be a projected social unity achieved through the disguising and denial of social distinctions.

The most striking technique for achieving this effect was selection of register. In an article describing the scenes inside and outside the Abbey, the newspaper's senior reporter, Trevor Wignall, employed demotic terms to describe the actions of members of the aristocracy.<sup>165</sup> Thus,

for a quick and furtive pull at a cigarette  
 he had hardly got the fag going  
 several others with gaspers in the curves of their palms

The implicature of the employment of such language is to deny underlying differences between the aristocracy and the reader. The coronets and ermine do not symbolise real distinctions, but only mask the essential human ordinariness beneath.

Care was taken not to idealise the events. The readers were not expected to suspend their disbelief in the perfection and super-normality of royal events. This is a tacit admission that a highly reverential, adulatory and humourless representation of royalty was no longer effective. If a projection of social integration was to be made credible, it could not be achieved by portraying royalty or aristocracy as embodying different and superior qualities.

"Normal" human reactions to the events were emphasised:

things were becoming seriously dull  
what I heard of it [the radio broadcast] was so desperately dull  
things were slow for the first three hours  
they [spectators] had been bluffed into getting up before it was light

The talk of enormous crowds..was sadly overdone

I had strolled to my expensive parking place

..by eight we were tired of watching strong men swinging  
their coronets

Whilst the illusion of perfection of organization is carefully deconstructed, the common humanity of those present is repeatedly alluded to:

Peers steal from the Abbey to smoke

Page boys tease waiting nobles

A photograph shows page boys, not holding ermine trains, but sitting tired on the Abbey steps, "perhaps thinking of the joys of a big tea and bed". Occasionally, the theme of common humanity is explicitly raised:

That was the best human touch

I do not want to be told again that our children peers are different from  
kids of their age in Manchester

There is an ironic treatment of those conspicuous symbols of inequality in evidence around the Abbey:

"I walked....in a rather moth-eaten black felt hat, a dark overcoat and with race glasses slung round my neck. I would not have mentioned this if there had been a crown on my head, or if a peer's cloak had been slung from my shoulders." <sup>166</sup>

Two areas of tension co-exist with this approach. First, despite the ironic treatment of social difference, the text reserves its irony for the aristocracy: royalty is treated respectfully and admiringly. Secondly, because of that ironic treatment, the category terms used to denote higher social ranks acquire an ambiguous status. The implicature and the reception of these terms by the readers are unknowable, but, given the surrounding text, they possess a subversive potential which suggests at least an ambivalent attitude towards social equality. The terms include:

The souls of the infants of our BETTERS were....

..he had hardly got the fag going when others of his RANK

So many of the GREAT OF THE EARTH went by us..that the  
vision grew weary.

What emerges quite clearly from Wignall's text is a recognition that, for the *Express*, and for the type of reader whose views it sought to guide and reflect, the old social hierarchy was open to question and challenge. Although not for a moment indicating an impulse towards social levelling, the text exudes confidence about the qualities and values of the "little man". To continue a quotation cited above,

"That was the best human touch of the day for me, not only because for a moment it made us all equal..."<sup>167</sup>

'Not only because it made them feel equal' entails the proposition that a feeling of equality is positive, and that is not a sentiment which one instinctively associates either with a Coronation or with the Beaverbrook press. However, it accords entirely with the *Express*'s self-representation as the voice of the ordinary man, whose deferential relationship to his monarch does not preclude a knowing scepticism about the constituents and workings of the upper reaches of the social hierarchy. This does not purport to be the voice of radicalism, but of the "common man", more confident than before of the value of his language and experience. Loyalty to the King and to the nation are utterly beyond question, but it is a nation with class structure and relationships undergoing profound change.

Lest it be thought that Wignall's article is unrepresentative of the *Express*'s position, the case argued above can be supported by the contents of further articles in the same edition of the newspaper. An editorial emphasised that the essence of the Coronation was a compact between the

King and his people. The "multitude" shout "God Save the King", the "crowd" roared their delight and the "public" showed their pleasure. As the final *Express* text to be considered, the editorial published on Coronation day draws together many of the themes characteristic of this newspaper's approach to popular monarchy.<sup>168</sup> First is a declaration of national greatness strongly linked to empire and to commonwealth. Then, prominence is given to "the People's Part". In this section of the editorial, there are very striking similarities with the *Daily Herald*'s position, analysed above. As did the *Herald*, the *Express* elevates 'the people' to a position of ultimate control. They are "the source of power and wealth and glory", and they "lift up the King to be the leader".<sup>169</sup>

"..in the ultimate possession, the throne of England is the property of the people of England."<sup>170</sup>

It is noticeable that whilst the *Herald* had largely avoided national labels, only rarely referring to the British people, the *Express*, in two sections of this editorial, amounting to approximately two hundred words, had included:

the King and Queen of England

the English monarchy

the great Kings of England

the throne of England

the people of England

the most beloved Englishman

National identity is of far more significance than in the *Herald*, and it is a national identity narrowly conceived and defined.

Daily Mail.

It is instructive to begin to analyse the *Daily Mail* by contrasting immediately its projection of national identity, in an editorial on Coronation day, with that of the *Express*, as indicated above.<sup>171</sup> The "English" label is used only once, in describing Westminster Abbey as "the most hallowed of all English fanes". The choice of the term "fanès" is a characteristic piece of archaism, an employment of lexis which distances the text from contemporary, everyday language. A further example is:

"We have the King's solemn pledge of his life to his office in woe or weal."

It is a mystificatory technique to be found to a lesser extent in the *Express* and not at all in the other newspapers under analysis. Returning to the question of national labelling, the *Mail* identifies the relevant entities as:

the British nation

the British throne

the Empire x 6

the Dominions

the Commonwealth of Nations

Clearly, the King is not the essence of England, but at the centre of a far-flung Empire. The text abounds with superlatives and hyperbole. Doubt and reservation are banished.

the greatest Empire the world has ever known  
 the most magnificent and majestical [service] known to man  
 unequalled splendour and beauty  
 radiant with colour as never before

The following day's editorial similarly abounded with hyperbole, and reveals nothing about "disappointing" crowds.<sup>172</sup>

a ceremony more magnificent than any of its forerunners  
 never in the history of British monarchy...  
 never has London housed multitudes so immense and eager  
 the unparalleled vigil of scores of thousands  
 the perfection of organisation

the vision in the Abbey surpassed in its loveliness anything  
 that the handiwork of man has contrived in modern times  
 its almost unearthly beauty

As for the ceremony in the Abbey, the *Mail* adopted the converse approach to that of the *Express*. The *Express* commentary was constructed around a

series of revelations: about the imperfections of the arrangements; about the "ordinariness" of the nobility. The unstated premise was that the ceremony and its participants were expected to be extraordinary. By failing to meet those expectations, the ceremony achieved something more significant. The ordinary was the human, and in key moments identified in the text, a common humanity moves the monarchy-people relationship onto new ground: the Queen turned to the King to whisper something; the "shock" felt when both shook hands with the Duke of Norfolk; the newly light-weight Princess Juliana; Queen Mary's welcome which "went right to the heart". In contrast to this theme in the *Express*, the *Daily Mail's* commentator, the novelist Hugh Walpole, adopted a initial pose of scepticism, which is then gradually dissolved by the experience of the Abbey.

"Suppose I found this thing to be in these days the sham sentiment of an outworn tradition!...Is this not nonsense, seen in the light of these changed and changing times? If I think so I shall say so."<sup>173</sup>

Fortunately for Walpole and the *Mail*, he did not find it to be nonsense. He posed the question:

"Had this crowning any meaning at all for the men and women of our time?"

In providing an oblique answer to this question, Walpole attends to the spiritual and mystical dimensions of the Coronation far more than any other newspaper's treatment. The pageantry and the social character of the event

are minor elements, but the drama is principally the King standing before his God. The language of the text makes no concessions to the demotic, and the intent of the selection of language, and of the attention to the spiritual dimension, is to raise the event to the sublime. A further article reinforced the mystical interpretation with an insistence on the transforming power of the Coronation.<sup>174</sup>

the impression of potent and mysterious change  
they had been transformed in some mysterious way

the hands were no longer the hands of the woman we know but  
hands made to hold the Sceptre

he was no longer a man, but the idea and substance of a King

Whilst the *Express* had found the essence of the event to be its humanity, despite the glitter and the pageantry, the *Mail* made no attempt to prick the bubble of mystical perfection which surrounded it. The tone and orientation of the *Mail's* treatment is exemplified in another article which describes the procession from the Abbey.

"In that most sacred moment of the King's crowning....before the eyes of the exalted throng in Westminster Abbey, the mystic seal of his sovereignty was set no less deeply in the hearts of the multitudes of his people who awaited him along the royal way to Buckingham Palace."<sup>175</sup>

The people are reduced to loyal "multitudes", assembling in unprecedented numbers to show their loyalty. No hint of criticism or cynicism intrudes, and "human interest" plays little part in its reports. To use a phrase which occurs more than once in the *Mail*, the audience and the reader glimpse scenes "from the realms of Faery". In contrast, the *Express* offers a more complex tableau. Alongside portentous editorials are articles which carry a different and, to modern eyes, a more familiar tone. The "people" are more intrusive: the potency of their political influence is emphasised; their assumed value system and experience are incorporated when depicting the celebrations, constituting a form of flattery of the reader; the exalted and powerful are pointedly subjected to a commentary in which those values of the "little man" provide the framework of reference; in some articles, use of demotic linguistic forms seeks to encourage identification with the events by a popular audience, and to flatter that audience into believing that the pawns were now more powerful than the king and queen.

### Conclusion.

For the Coronation, as for the Silver Jubilee, the obvious feature of the Labour Party's response was the plurality of views. If the majority opinion favoured participation in the events, a vocal minority expressed its downright opposition. More interesting than the split itself were the beliefs underpinning the respective positions. Amongst those advocating participation there were varying motivations and degrees of enthusiasm.

Some were unequivocal royalists, as attached to King and Country as any Conservative might be. A rather different case was the socialist whose scepticism, and even hostility, concerning the monarchy had been diminished by the longevity and perceived quality of George V's kingship. Then again, there were those who claimed to be celebrating the Constitution. One of the distinguishing features of Labour press coverage of both Coronation and Jubilee was its concentration upon the happy constitutional advantages conferred upon the British people by historical evolution. The monarchy was represented as an integral, and in some cases, conditional, part of the growth of political democracy. It was a distinctive argument, which was not replicated in the right-wing press. As a backdrop, the destruction of democratic institutions on the continent of Europe made "the King in Parliament" appear ever more desirable a constitutional arrangement. Underlying all these positions was a keen appreciation of the popularity of George V, and the enthusiasm of the mass of Labour supporters to join the celebrations. For all but the most intransigent anti-monarchs, it made sense to go along with the popular will.

A discernible change of tone had emerged by the time of George VI's Coronation. The Abdication had, at least temporarily, made vulnerable what had appeared an unchallengeable monarchy. It seemed not only necessary but opportune to raise the question of reform of the monarchy, and this the Party leadership did. However, it was a brief moment of opportunity, and there seemed no clearly envisaged alternative form of monarchy, and certainly no stated route for transformation. The impetus for change receded as the trauma of the Abdication subsided.

The contrastive textual analysis reveals different representations of popular monarchy. If the *Daily Herald* was pro-monarchy, it was so in a different way from its right-wing rivals. Each of the newspapers which celebrated the Jubilee did so in its own terms. Each appropriated the monarchy to its own value system. Thus the *Mail* celebrated the King as head of the Empire, and leader of his "race". The monarchy retained a strongly spiritual character, and embodied quite mysterious qualities which defied rational explanation. The *Express* projected the King at the head of a social hierarchy, albeit a changing one, and as the personal sovereign of the lower middle-class citizen. In contrast, the *Herald* endorsed the Constitution, and the King's role within it. The King was bound up with the freedom of the people. If its view of the Constitution might be considered complacent, or its failure to address the implications of 1931 less than intellectually honest, that view is made more comprehensible given the alternative scenarios a few hundred miles away. Finally, it is worth recalling readership figures, and the perhaps uncomfortable truth that very large numbers of Labour voters, as well as potential voters, were immersed not only in the popular monarchy of the *Herald*, but in those of the *Express* and the *Mail* also. The monarchy was textually located at the heart of several distinct, but not necessarily exclusive, representations of British society. Whilst its value may have been diversely perceived, only on the political margins was that value denied.

- <sup>1</sup> Labour Party NEC Minutes, February 27, 1935
- <sup>2</sup> Labour Party NEC Minutes, February 27, 1935
- <sup>3</sup> Cited in *Daily Worker*, April 6, 1935
- <sup>4</sup> *South London News*, May 18, 1935
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *South London Press*, May 17, 1935
- <sup>7</sup> *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, June 1935
- <sup>8</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 6, 1935
- <sup>9</sup> A. Fenner Brockway, 1995 ed., *Bermondsey Story: the Life of Alfred Salter*, London, p184
- <sup>10</sup> *South London News*, June 7, 1935
- <sup>11</sup> *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, June 1935
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Fulham Chronicle*, March 24, 1935
- <sup>16</sup> Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Delegate Committee, March 26, 1935
- <sup>17</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, March 27, 1935
- <sup>18</sup> TUC Archives, 292/23.1/13
- <sup>19</sup> *Derby Evening Telegraph*, March 7, 1935
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 13, 1935
- <sup>22</sup> *Birmingham Post*, May 1, 1935
- <sup>23</sup> *Daily Worker*, April 17, 1935
- <sup>24</sup> *Birmingham Post*, April 3, 1935
- <sup>25</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Town Crier*, May 10, 1935
- <sup>27</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 9, No.220, May 11, 1935, p671
- <sup>28</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 9, No.259
- <sup>29</sup> *Forward*, May 18, 1935
- <sup>30</sup> *Forward*, May 11, 1935
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Forward*, May 4, 1935
- <sup>33</sup> Williams, *Contentious Crown*, p144
- <sup>34</sup> Letter to Clive Wigram, Lansbury Papers M449-210
- <sup>35</sup> *Daily Herald*, April 30, 1935
- <sup>36</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> Hansard 301 H.C. Deb. 5s 981
- <sup>38</sup> *Town Crier*, May 17, 1935
- <sup>39</sup> *Daily Herald*, April 25, 1935
- <sup>40</sup> *Forward*, May 4, 1935
- <sup>41</sup> *Forward*, May 11, 1935
- <sup>42</sup> *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, July 1935
- <sup>43</sup> Cited in D. Thompson, 1993, *Queen Victoria: the Monarchy and Gender*, Birmingham, p9
- <sup>44</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 6, 1935
- <sup>45</sup> Cited in Estorick, op.cit., p146
- <sup>46</sup> *Socialist Leaguer*, June 1935
- <sup>47</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> *Socialist Leaguer*, July-August 1935
- <sup>49</sup> F. Williams, 1957, *Dangerous Estate*, London, p198
- <sup>50</sup> H.H. Fyfe, 1949, *Sixty Years of Fleet Street*, London, pp200-201
- <sup>51</sup> H.H. Fyfe, 1936, *Press Parade*, London, p27
- <sup>52</sup> Curran, *Power without Responsibility*, pp65-66
- <sup>53</sup> Roger Fowler, 1991, *Language in the News*, London, p49
- <sup>54</sup> Francis Williams, 1946, *Press, Parliament and People*, London, p153
- <sup>55</sup> See Tom Driberg, 1974, *Swaff*, London
- <sup>56</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 7, 1935
- <sup>57</sup> See Williams, *Contentious Crown*, p253

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- <sup>58</sup> ibid.
- <sup>59</sup> ibid.
- <sup>60</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 10, 1935
- <sup>61</sup> Williams, *Contentious Crown*, p142
- <sup>62</sup> ibid.
- <sup>63</sup> ibid.
- <sup>64</sup> ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 13, 1935
- <sup>67</sup> ibid.
- <sup>68</sup> ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> ibid.
- <sup>70</sup> ibid.
- <sup>71</sup> P.E.P., op.cit., p275
- <sup>72</sup> Mass Observation, 1949, op.cit., p102
- <sup>73</sup> Co-operative Press, n.d., *Co-operator in Fleet Street*, London, p16
- <sup>74</sup> ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> *Reynolds Illustrated News*, March 31 & April 7, 1935
- <sup>76</sup> *Reynolds*, March 31, 1935
- <sup>77</sup> *Reynolds*, May 12, 1935
- <sup>78</sup> *Western Mail*, May 18, 1935
- <sup>79</sup> Mass Observation, 1949, op.cit.
- <sup>80</sup> e.g. Tom Jeffery, "A Place in the Nation: the Lower Middle Class in England", in R. Kosher, 1990, *Splintered Classes*, London, pp70-96
- <sup>81</sup> Tom Jeffery & Keith McClelland, "A world fit to live in: the *Daily Mail* and the Middle Classes, 1918-1939", in James Curran et.al., 1987, *Impacts and Influences*, London, p47
- <sup>82</sup> *Daily Express*, May 4, 1935
- <sup>83</sup> *Daily Express*, May 6, 1935
- <sup>84</sup> ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> ibid.
- <sup>86</sup> Williams, *Dangerous Estate*, p183
- <sup>87</sup> Jeffery, in Kosher, op.cit., p82
- <sup>88</sup> Curran, *Power Without Responsibility*, p63
- <sup>89</sup> *Daily Mail*, May 6, 1935
- <sup>90</sup> ibid.
- <sup>91</sup> ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> *Daily Mail*, May 7, 1935
- <sup>93</sup> *Daily Mail*, May 6, 1935
- <sup>94</sup> *Daily Mail*, May 2, 1935
- <sup>95</sup> Peter Drake, "The Town Crier: Birmingham's Labour Weekly", in A. Wright & R. Shackleton, 1983, *Worlds of Labour*, Birmingham, p108
- <sup>96</sup> *Town Crier*, April 26, 1935
- <sup>97</sup> ibid.
- <sup>98</sup> *Town Crier*, May 17, 1935
- <sup>99</sup> ibid.
- <sup>100</sup> ibid.
- <sup>101</sup> ibid.
- <sup>102</sup> *Town Crier*, February 8, 1935
- <sup>103</sup> *Daily Herald*, January 21, 1936
- <sup>104</sup> *Labour*, Vol.3, No.6, February 1936, p122
- <sup>105</sup> C.R. Attlee, 1954, *As It Happened*, London, p84
- <sup>106</sup> *Town Crier*, January 24, 1936
- <sup>107</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol.11, No.277, January 25, 1936, p105
- <sup>108</sup> *Labour*, ibid.
- <sup>109</sup> ibid.
- <sup>110</sup> F. Pethick-Lawrence, 1942, *Fate Has Been Kind*, London, p191
- <sup>111</sup> *Town Crier*, January 24, 1936
- <sup>112</sup> Hansard 308 H.C. Deb 5s 19
- <sup>113</sup> *Labour*, ibid.

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- 114 *ibid.*  
 115 *Reynolds*, January 27, 1936  
 116 *ibid.*  
 117 *ibid.*  
 118 *Hansard* 324 H.C. Deb 5s 459  
 119 *ibid.*  
 120 *Daily Herald*, May 4, 1937  
 121 *Labour*, Vol.4, No.10, June 1937  
 122 *Town Crier*, May 7, 1937  
 123 *Political Quarterly*, 1937 reference lost  
 124 Diary of Beatrice Webb, May 14, 1937, Passfield Papers  
 125 *Tribune*, May 14, 1937  
 126 Cunningham, op.cit., p21  
 127 Communist Party, 1937, *Parade of War*, London, p14  
 128 *Daily Worker*, May 12, 1937  
 129 *Rotherhithe Labour Magazine*, June 1935  
 130 *Daily Herald*, May 10, 1937  
 131 *ibid.*  
 132 Cited in Estorick, op.cit., p154  
 133 *Daily Herald*, May 13, 1937  
 134 Cunningham, op.cit., p25  
 135 Francis Williams, 1970, *Nothing So Strange*, London, p142  
 136 *Daily Herald*, May 12, 1937  
 137 *Daily Herald*, May 13, 1937  
 138 *Daily Herald*, May 12, 1937  
 139 *ibid.*  
 140 *The Times*, April 26, 1937  
 141 *The Times*, May 10, 1937  
 142 Cited in F. Tyler, 1942, *Cripps: a Portrait and a Prospect*, London, p30  
 143 *Tribune*, May 7, 1937  
 144 *Tribune*, April 16, 1937  
 145 *Tribune*, May 14, 1937  
 146 *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, March 1937  
 147 *New Leader*, May 14, 1937  
 148 Communist Party, 1937, *One Happy Family*, London  
 149 Kingsley Martin, 1937, "Public Opinion and the Coronation", in *Political Quarterly*, Vol 8, pp434-  
 442  
 150 Philip Ziegler, 1978, *Crown and People*, London, p54  
 151 Mass Observation Day Survey for May 12, 1937. Questionnaire  
 152 A student was thrown into the fountain in Chamberlain Square, Birmingham, for writing a scurrilous article about the royal family in a university socialist broadsheet.  
 153 Mass Observation Day Survey for May 12, 1937 CO44  
 154 *Daily Herald*, May 12, 1937  
 155 *Daily Herald*, May 13, 1937  
 156 *ibid.*  
 157 *ibid.*  
 158 *ibid.*  
 159 *ibid.*  
 160 *ibid.*  
 161 *ibid.*  
 162 *Reynolds News*, May 16, 1937  
 163 *Reynolds News*, May 2, 1937  
 164 *ibid.*  
 165 *Daily Express*, May 13, 1937  
 166 *ibid.*  
 167 *ibid.*  
 168 *Daily Express*, May 12, 1937  
 169 *ibid.*  
 170 *ibid.*

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<sup>171</sup> *Daily Mail*, May 12, 1937

<sup>172</sup> *Daily Mail*, May 13, 1937

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*

## Chapter Five - The Abdication of Edward VIII

### Introduction: the political background to the Abdication

The political events which culminated in the Abdication constituted a brief episode, but an episode rich in interest for the present study. Within those days and weeks, the Labour Party was obliged to engage with a genuine constitutional crisis involving the Crown and monarchy, in contrast to the hypothetical crises dealt with in books and articles produced on the left during the early 1930's. Many of the perceptions and anxieties which had characterised internal Labour debate on the Crown, resurfaced and were challenged by crucial and urgent realities. Some people were in no doubt where their loyalties lay, and maintained a clear position throughout the crisis. Others found their attitudes shifting under the course of events. A few more admitted, in retrospect, that they had been mistaken and expressed relief that their cause had been defeated. The divisions of opinion within the Labour Party over the Abdication cannot be reduced to a simple left-right distinction. Not only was there the recurrent question of how Labour should regard, and whether and how it should exploit, the Crown's residual powers, but there was also a monarch who was manifestly more political than his immediate predecessors, and whose politics were open to a variety of interpretations. It must not be forgotten, either, that the Abdication occurred against an international backdrop of advancing Fascism, and in particular the Spanish Civil War. For many in the party, the catastrophic events on the Continent

imbued the Abdication crisis with even greater significance, although for a few that crisis was regarded as irrelevant to, and a distraction from, what was unfolding in Spain and Germany. Positions adopted depended partly on the relative importance attached to particular aspects of the wider political context, and partly to the ways in which the Constitution and the monarch himself were perceived.

Broadly speaking, the Labour Party, like the nation at large, had felt increasingly comfortable with George V as king. There had been moments, notably in 1911, 1914 and 1931, when the Crown had seemed to be in sympathy, or even collusion, with reactionary interests, but George V had played the role of constitutional monarch to the general satisfaction of the Labour Party. Even those, such as Laski, who were critical of the constitutional powers of the Crown, and of the social and political effects of a monarchical system, had a certain admiration and respect for George V as a constitutional monarch. George V had become a model of such, and this in itself protected the monarchy against its critics. He was rightly assumed to be conservative in his social and political views, but these were privately held. It was, therefore, a radical departure from precedent when Edward, as Prince of Wales, offered his opinions on sensitive political questions.

Throughout his adult life, Edward had taken more than just an passing interest in domestic politics. As Prince of Wales he had not shrunk from expressing views on the most controversial of questions. During the General Strike, he had gone out with the police, and lent his car and chauffeur to assist

in distributing the *British Gazette*. His visits to the depressed areas in the late 1920's and early 1930's were well-publicised, and his concern about unemployment was frequently expressed.<sup>1</sup> He summoned David Kirkwood to hear the Clydesider's ideas about the problem, and Kirkwood was impressed.<sup>2</sup> Edward's sense of urgency and concern over unemployment seemed an implicit criticism of the National Government's inaction. Those who knew Edward were quite aware that this did not signify left-wing views. Harold Nicolson described him in the early 1930's as very right-wing, and when Edward discussed the Blackshirt movement with his equerry, Aird, in 1934, the latter declared that they "both thought it quite a good movement except for Mosley".<sup>3</sup> Edward's admiration for the policies of the Nazis, in particular on unemployment and housing, was not secret. His suggestion, made in June 1935, that a delegation from the British Legion should visit Hitler to offer "the hand of friendship", was followed two days later by his notorious charge that members of the L.C.C. were "cranks" for abolishing the Officer Training Corps (O.T.C.) in schools under its jurisdiction. For many in the Labour Party, here was evidence not just of political partiality, but of partiality for the most unacceptable form of politics. One local party journal accused Edward of breaking the cardinal rule for royalty of avoiding the public expression of views on controversial subjects.

"Is it possible to suspect that the Prince has joined the National Government....By those less kindly disposed toward His Royal Highness, it will

be averred that there is a very close resemblance between his utterances and the National Government's policy of alliance with Hitler and contempt for peace."<sup>4</sup>

As far as the Labour Party was concerned, where one stood on the question of Edward depended upon what one identified as most significant: the very fact that the heir to the Throne adopted public positions on controversial issues; his sympathy with the plight of the disadvantaged in the depressed areas; or his admiration for the German Nazis.

Beatrice Webb was unable to form a judgement about Edward's politics, declaring that:

"No-one knows what are Edward's opinions, except that he loathes the Anglican Church, associates with a bad-mannered lot and cares for the comfort of the unemployed man. Whether he is...communist or fascist is unknown. He may not know himself. Some say he is intimate with the German Embassy and is a reactionary."<sup>5</sup>

Kingsley Martin, in advocating a compromise solution to the crisis over Edward's proposed marriage, focused upon the positive aspects of his character and upon his social conscience.

"Everyone knows that his speeches, both as Prince of Wales and as King, have commonly expressed his personal feelings; everyone knows that when he visits a distressed area that he does so...because he is genuinely and deeply troubled about the misery and poverty which successive governments have failed to relieve."<sup>6</sup>

Some individual Labour M.P.s demonstrated that their judgement had been coloured by Edward's interest in social problems. A.G. Walkden, the Labour M.P. and former General Secretary of the Railway Clerks' Association, spoke of the good effect which Edward's visit to South Wales had had on the Government, and declared that "I am all for the King, through and through".<sup>7</sup> Louis Fenn, writing in the Birmingham Labour paper, drew positive conclusions from Edward's visits and speeches and indulged in a little fantasy:

"Perhaps, as his father backed Asquith against the Lords, Edward VIII may some day back a courageous Socialist Government against military or financial sabotage."<sup>8</sup>

In the same newspaper, the regular political commentator reflected on the qualities of the late George V and the promise of his successor. The article revolved around an apparently unconscious, but revealing, irony. It acknowledged that George V had been a Tory, but he had made Britain safe for a "Democratic Monarchy" because there was "no record of his personal

political views ever being allowed to interfere with the proper exercise of his duties".<sup>9</sup> Edward had earned the admiration of A.J. Cook, which augured well, and the writer was convinced that "the new King wants a better Britain and is ready to see great, and what may be regarded as revolutionary changes."<sup>10</sup> There was clearly a temptation for some on the left to welcome the political involvement of a monarch believed to hold, however vaguely, left wing views.

There is evidence that others in the Labour Party thought Edward's views were antithetical to Labour's own. Open expressions of criticism were uncommon, although that was probably the result of a reluctance to make hostile public comments about a popular royal figure. Baldwin reported to Edward himself the words of a Clydeside M.P.

"I see we are going to have a fascist King, are we?"<sup>11</sup>

A correspondent in a provincial Labour newspaper recalled those of Edward's views which placed him in opposition to Labour, such as his labelling of opponents of the O.T.C. as "cranks".

"Furthermore, he has been guilty of praising national capitalist planning which may be a step towards a Corporate State. The present King is not the same as the Prince of Wales who, in 1926, was friendly with A.J. Cook....[Edward] may take unconstitutional steps when the next capitalist crisis arrives and we will be amazed to find democracy swept away."<sup>12</sup>

It was not just the views themselves which aroused disquiet for some in the party, but also Edward's practice of declaring them very openly. Morrison found this a worrying phenomenon.

"While on a visit to South Wales, King Edward VIII made public declarations about unemployment which could be construed as criticism of the Government. It was a Conservative Government and the words themselves were acceptable to the Labour Party. But I did not think well of it, for it was a case of the Sovereign publicly expressing views on matters which were the subject of political controversy. However, he would appear also to have political views adverse to the Labour Party."<sup>13</sup>

Morrison's comments concern the question of the Crown's impartiality and detachment from party politics. It was not just a matter of the King's opinions, but of what he intended to do about them.

Chapter Three of this work examined the debate which was conducted in the Labour Party during the early 1930s on the role of the Crown and the use of the royal prerogative. It will be recalled that the principal concern was about the prerogative being employed to prevent Labour taking office, to obstruct attempts to overcome the House of Lords' opposition, or even to suspend normal democratic government. On the other hand, the prerogative would, hypothetically, become available to a socialist government which might

require exceptional powers to overcome opposition to its legislation. The prerogative could be viewed simultaneously both as undemocratic and as the instrument for ensuring that the democratic will prevailed. At the time of the Abdication, one Labour point of view sought unscrupulously to derive advantage from the crisis, even if this meant dragging the Crown to the centre of political controversy. The *Daily Herald* attacked those who "have crazily advised the Labour Party to 'seize its chance' by converting the constitutional difficulty into a political crisis, forcing the resignation of the Cabinet and forming a Government".<sup>14</sup> An example of this "crazy" position was that adopted by two Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford, A.L. Rowse and G.F. Hudson. They suggested that Labour should come out in support of the King and offer to form a government if Baldwin resigned. They could then ask for a dissolution and fight an election not just on the royal marriage, but on the National Government's record. Labour should thus declare in favour of a morganatic marriage (in which a person of high rank marries a person of low rank, with the latter not being elevated to the rank of the former, and any issue not having entitlement to the higher party's titles etc.), or of allowing the King the freedom to choose his spouse. In this way, the Tories would be thrown into confusion, and be uncomfortably obliged to oppose the King. Surprisingly, Hugh Dalton confessed to having some sympathy for this strategy, albeit only temporarily.

Writing to Hudson after the Abdication:

"In the early stages of this affair I was inclined to share the views expressed in your letter. But I soon changed my mind."<sup>15</sup>

Rowse tried to put pressure on the Labour Party through Attlee and Dalton, who had come down to All Souls during the crisis. In retrospect, Rowse admitted that he and Geoffrey Hudson were wrong, but that "it was the very fact that the unfortunate King was being drummed out by Baldwin, Dawson and Lang, to the accompaniment of the usual humbug and cant that put us on his side".<sup>16</sup> For others in the party, it was the urgency of the international situation which justified Labour taking whatever advantage it could from the constitutional possibilities. The *Town Crier* quoted a telegram sent by six Birmingham socialists to Attlee on 4th December.

"Don't back Baldwin's King ramp; take office and save Spain."<sup>17</sup>

*The Times* believed that there were "a few Labour members who feel that the opportunity could be used to make a certain amount of political capital", but was sure that this would be strongly discouraged by "responsible" sections of the party.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from attitudes towards the King himself and towards the role of the Crown and of the royal prerogative, other influential factors behind Labour positions can be identified. Two of the most obvious were the question of the marriage itself, and of the character of Mrs Simpson. Another factor was the

feedback which the party leadership received on popular feeling amongst its own supporters about the marriage. These will be considered within the account and analysis of the Abdication crisis.

#### The unfolding crisis and Labour's response.

It was not until early December that the British people were informed by the press of the proposed marriage, and of its constitutional ramifications. By that time, the leadership of the Labour movement had already made clear its position. Attlee and Citrine had both met Baldwin and, without either having consulted any colleagues, or having made any official commitment on behalf of the Party or the T.U.C., offered their unequivocal support to the Prime Minister. When Citrine was invited to Chequers on November 7th, 1936, Baldwin took the opportunity to elicit his attitude to the news about Edward and Mrs Simpson, which Citrine had heard during his recent visit to the United States. Citrine confidently claimed to know how the British people in general would feel about the marriage.

"People like him, but what they would stand from him as Prince of Wales they are not ready to stand now that he is a King."<sup>19</sup>

Baldwin told Citrine that he had already had a meeting with the Labour Party leader, at which Attlee had declared that the Labour Party had no objection to an American becoming Queen, but that Mrs Simpson would be an

unacceptable choice. Neither would the party approve of a morganatic marriage.<sup>20</sup> Citrine's diary records his conversation with Baldwin.

"I told him that I thought he was undoubtedly interpreting the mind of people in the Labour movement. We were republican at heart but we realized that the limited monarchy as it had operated in Great Britain during the life of the late King George V, was probably about the safest system in present circumstances, despite the hereditary drawback, that we could possibly have. I did not see how the alternative of a President was a possible one without dragging him into politics as a partisan....I had heard some peculiar stories about the King when he was Prince of Wales, but fortunately I had one of those minds which could not carry tittle-tattle and I had forgotten all the particulars...I went on to say that in the circumstances the P.M. was taking the right course. Mrs. Simpson had now been divorced twice. How was it possible in the circumstances for the King to marry such a woman with the respect of people?"<sup>21</sup>

At this stage, it must be remembered, Attlee and Citrine were giving personal opinions about the unsuitability of the King's choice of spouse. The 'Crown versus Parliament' issue was for the future. The King seems to have differed from Citrine in his interpretation of the Baldwin-Attlee meeting. As Beaverbrook recorded in an unpublished narrative of the events:

"The King told me further that Mr. Baldwin had consulted Mr. Attlee and that the P.M. reported that Mr. Attlee was opposed to the morganatic marriage. But he did not think Mr. Baldwin had sized up Mr. Attlee's attitude correctly. Nor did he think that Mr. Attlee would be against the morganatic marriage in the long run."<sup>22</sup>

How widely the rumours about the King and Mrs Simpson had circulated in the Labour Party before December is impossible to gauge. However, as the news had reached the left-wing press in both England and Scotland, it can be assumed that it was common knowledge in at least the higher reaches of the Party. Kingsley Martin had been aware of the scandal "for months", and by mid-November was also aware that certain assurances had been obtained from the Labour Party leadership. In his private diary for 24th November, Martin recorded:

"I tackled Pritt on 18th November about whether it is true that the Cabinet threatened to resign if the King insists on marrying Mrs S., and whether it is true that leaders of the Labour Party (some, I don't know which) have promised to refrain from exploiting the situation in that case - which would mean forcing the King to abdicate."<sup>23</sup>

In mid-November, the I.L.P. newspaper had attempted to include an article criticising the press silence. The gist was that the King's personal relations

were his own business, but that when the international press was carrying the story, it was ridiculous that the British press should be silent. The article never appeared, as the newspaper's printing company refused to print it. Kingsley Martin was prepared to publish an article in the *New Statesman* defending the King's right to choose the wife he wanted, and by 26th November the article was in the King's hands, but although Edward was delighted with its contents, he did not want immediate publication and it did not appear.

By the time the news of the crisis broke in the British press on 3rd December, it had reached the stage by which it could be represented as the danger of a challenge by the Crown to the authority of the Cabinet. It was in this way that the readers of the *Daily Herald* were introduced to the crisis. An editorial spoke cryptically of a grave difference between the King and the Cabinet. There was no mention of Mrs Simpson, but simply a reference to the difficulty in drawing a line between the public and private affairs of a king.

"For this reason, affairs which would be a private citizen's private affair are matters upon which a constitutional monarch should, and must, consider the advice of his elected Ministers."<sup>24</sup>

The point was reinforced by an article in which Laski discussed "Crown and Cabinet". Again without mentioning specifically any current events, Laski examined the constitutional position faced by a monarch who did not find the advice of his ministers acceptable. He would have to find other ministers who

could offer alternative advice and who could command a majority in the Commons. This would necessitate a General Election, which the new government might not win. But,

"...even his [the King's] victory would be a grave constitutional event, since it would make him an independent source of power in the State, whose views would be actively canvassed by parties. This would end the theory of the Crown's neutrality, which is pivotal to our political system."<sup>25</sup>

On 4th December the *Daily Herald* established the line which was to remain constant throughout the crisis. This was a firm insistence that the crisis was about the preservation of parliamentary government. Once the King had received the advice of his Cabinet, the only courses open to him were abandonment of the proposed marriage, or abdication.

"Either the King is bound to accept his Ministers' advice, or else the British democratic Constitution ceases to work, and the nation is confronted with issues which go back to the constitutional struggles between King and Parliament of 200 years ago."<sup>26</sup>

On the marriage itself, the *Herald* remained ambiguous. While expressing sympathy with the King, marriage to Mrs Simpson would cause too much discontent at home and in the Dominions. It fell short of expressing moral

disapproval of the King's choice, and there seemed an awareness that some of its readership might be hostile to an "Old Guard" campaign against Mrs Simpson. The newspaper sought to distinguish its own case from the campaign of those who objected to Mrs Simpson because she was an American and a commoner. With this position, they had no sympathy. The language of the editorial also reveals sensitivity to the affection for the King held by at least a portion of the newspaper's readership.

"The people well know that the 'Old Guard' would fight against the King's marriage to a commoner. They well know that the King's intimacy with the people, his nearness to them, his sympathy with their difficulties, his concern for their troubles, are not altogether pleasing to this 'Old Guard'.<sup>27</sup>

However, the newspaper urged the Cabinet to make clear their grounds for objecting to the marriage, to demonstrate that it was not a matter of snobbery. For itself, the newspaper appeared to accept the Cabinet's judgement, and to imply that the justifiable objection was to the King marrying a twice-divorced woman. Implicit in the *Herald's* coverage of the crisis was an uncomfortable awareness that for some, if not most, of its readers, Edward was the people's monarch, the King with a common touch and an interest in the lives of the poor and deprived. So, immediately after the Abdication, attention switched to the new King George VI, focusing upon those speeches in which, just as his brother before him, he showed concern for the working class, through his

interest in industrial welfare and co-operation, and discreet concern about the high level of unemployment.

The position which the *Herald* adopted was consistent, but there is evidence that before the crisis became public, powerful voices were expressing opinions very different from its eventual line. J.S. Elias of Odham's Press, the *Herald's* publisher, seemed to Beaverbrook to be initially sympathetic to the King.

"Churchill and I had an interview with Mr Elias of the *Daily Herald*. He was personally favourable and gave us reason to hope that he would support the King. But his Labour Party colleagues, who dictated policy, over-ruled Mr Elias and supported the Abdication."<sup>28</sup>

However, Elias later explained that his personal feelings were mixed, with an innate sense of loyalty to the King in conflict with his strong belief in the sanctity of marriage.<sup>29</sup> The latter views, he felt sure, were shared by a large number of others, including, presumably, many *Daily Herald* readers. Similarly with Francis Williams:

"My first reactions were to wish the King well in this matter. However, it soon became clear from the reports that came flooding in from the East End of London and from industrial areas in the Midlands and North and in South Wales that the general mass of middle- and working-class readers of the

*Herald* were deeply upset by the suggestion that a woman who had been twice through the divorce courts might become Queen.<sup>30</sup>.

Bevin, whose influence over the newspaper was a powerful one, was tempted at one point to exploit the possibility to embarrass Baldwin, despite the high risks involved. Bevin wrote to Attlee on December 7th, some days into the public crisis:

"We cannot forget that old Baldwin did us over the Trades Union Act, over Abyssinia, over re-armament and over peace at the last general election...The risk of personal government is great: on the other hand so is the risk of backing the Government without the facts."<sup>31</sup>

The fact that the *Herald* adopted and maintained the position which it did, seems, however, to have stemmed from Bevin's conviction that it was too dangerous to ignore the constitutional implications of the crisis. Whatever he may have written to Attlee, Bevin had already made a clear, public declaration of his own belief:

"The principle that will guide this great Labour movement in every Constitutional crisis is that we shall not allow anything to take place which weakens the supremacy of Parliamentary Government."<sup>32</sup>

Certainly, Attlee believed it was Bevin who was responsible for ensuring that the *Herald* "kept its head and dealt with the matter in a statesmanlike, not merely a sensational manner".<sup>33</sup> Francis Williams recalled that Bevin had previously been critical of the *Herald* for giving more space to royalty than he thought it worth, but "was now convinced that royalty was an important popular institution which ordinary people wanted preserved without a stain on its character".<sup>34</sup>

The *New Statesman* had a distinctly different position from that of the *Herald*, a reflection of a difference in readership and of the idiosyncratic views of its editor, Kingsley Martin. As mentioned earlier, Martin had been sympathetic to the King's position, and had offered to include an article in the *New Statesman* which would provide Edward with support. When the journal eventually declared its view, however, it was circumspect, if not contradictory. In a leader entitled "King and Country", the proposed marriage was described as "a matter for legitimate public concern", and then later as "his own affair".<sup>35</sup> Given the unprecedented constitutional dilemma and the "lamentable" prospect of the King's abdication, a compromise was advocated in the form of a morganatic marriage. The King's personal qualities were praised. Seven days later the story was altogether different. Regret at the Abdication was now severely qualified: in the long run "all democratic institutions, including the Monarchy itself, may be safer for the change".<sup>36</sup> The writer, quite probably Martin himself, hinted at "shortcomings in Edward's character" and stated that

"it is an open secret that much of the society that surrounded King Edward has been irresponsible and politically, as well as morally, undesirable".<sup>37</sup> Martin exhibited here the inconsistency which Bevin found characteristic of Labour's intellectuals.

What of the position adopted by and within the Parliamentary Labour Party? Attlee had, of course, given Baldwin his personal support in November, but without disclosing anything to his party colleagues. Once the newspapers had broken the news, the P.L.P. could no longer be excluded from involvement in the events. The P.L.P. Executive Committee met on the evening of December 3rd, and expressed its "disquiet" at the course of events. According to Ernest Hunter, political correspondent of the *Daily Herald*, there was a discernible change of opinion in the P.L.P. Initially, it was felt that the private affairs of the King should not be subject to interference. The crucial factor behind the changed attitude was the information that the King had taken the initiative, by requesting the Cabinet to introduce special legislation to accommodate his proposed marriage. Hunter believed that,

"The opinion in the Parliamentary Labour Party is steadily hardening in support of the view that the authority of Parliament must be upheld against the personal wishes of the King...At least 90 per cent of Labour M.P.'s when it comes to a final decision, will be found to support the Cabinet's refusal to bring forward such a measure."<sup>38</sup>

In explaining this shift in the P.L.P. in favour of the Cabinet's position, Hunter cited, besides the question of the authority of Parliament, awareness of the strength of feeling in the Dominions; and of the danger of the growth of a mass movement which opposed parliamentary government and which could lead to Fascism. Meanwhile, the Labour Party refused to commit itself publicly either way, and maintained the fiction that Attlee "has not given any undertaking, nor has he been asked for any".<sup>39</sup> The opposition was merely being informed. At an N.E.C. meeting on 7th December, Attlee outlined the current situation and indicated what, in his view, would be the reaction in Parliament and in the country to various eventualities. Although there was a two-hour discussion, it was decided that "as no crisis had yet been reached, the N.E.C. was not required to reach any conclusion".<sup>40</sup> The P.L.P. met again on 8th December, and was addressed by Attlee on behalf of a united Executive, and, although no vote was taken, the meeting came out overwhelmingly in support of the view that in the event of a definite constitutional breach between the King and his Ministers, the authority of Parliament must be upheld. It was believed that only a handful of Labour M.P.'s would take the risk of appearing to take the side of the King against Parliament.

In the House of Commons, there was virtually no discussion of the issues involved, with Baldwin providing the barest details about the Cabinet's refusal to introduce enabling legislation to permit a morganatic marriage. The only hint of dissent from the Labour side was an enquiry from Ernest Thurtle, Lansbury's son-in-law, about the possibility of a Commons' vote on the

question of a morganatic marriage. Amongst other things, this indicated how far Thurtle's view on the monarchy had changed, for it was he who had seconded the republican resolution at the Labour Party conference of 1923. In the session which received the message of abdication, only Josiah Wedgwood, of the Labour backbench M.P.'s present, offered an opinion. Wedgwood and Thrtle had attended a meeting at the offices of the Imperial Policy Group on the evening of December 7th. There they met a group of supporters of the King, comprising about forty Conservatives from both Houses of Parliament. Wedgwood was motivated in his support for the King mainly by his dislike of the King's religious opponents. He had been scarred by the treatment received at the time of his own divorce.

"It was really because I liked him [the King] and hated the Archbishop."<sup>41</sup>

The I.L.P.'s republican amendment to the Abdication Bill was supported by only two Labour M.P.'s, Dr Alfred Salter and G.D. Hardie, brother of Keir Hardie. In November, Attlee had told Baldwin that the Labour Party would, when it became aware of the facts, oppose the choice of Mrs Simpson and object to any plan for morganatic marriage. Subsequently, Attlee claimed to have been fully vindicated in this view.

"I found that I had correctly gauged the Party attitude. Despite the sympathy felt for the King and the affection which his visits to the depressed

areas had created, the Party - with the exception of a few of the intelligentsia who can be trusted to take the wrong view on any subject - were in agreement with the views I had expressed."<sup>42</sup>

#### Divided opinion on Labour's left.

It is difficult to recall another event which had produced such divergent reactions on the left of the Party. Several factors appear to have been in operation. There was the ambiguous nature of Edward's political sympathies, with some on the left preferring to recall his comments about the poor and unemployed, without focusing upon his proposed solutions to social and economic problems. Others, in contrast, were attentive to the rumours about his and, particularly, Mrs Simpson's, enthusiasm for Hitler and Mussolini. Additionally, there was political desperation at Labour's parliamentary impotence in the face of domestic economic depression and the alarming advance of fascism on the continent. Some were tempted to exploit the political opportunity of the crisis to increase Labour's popularity and its chances of gaining power. Some others shared the Party leadership's concern that the powers of Parliament, and the principle that the Crown acted on ministerial advice, should be preserved. Those with republican convictions regarded the events as a rare opportunity to attack the monarchy while it was weakened. The following account examines arguments and views across this spectrum. It is by no means an exhaustive taxonomy, but offers an indication of the breadth of opinion and, in some cases, of the depth of confusion.

Turning first to Edward's supporters on the Labour left, their argument was essentially two-fold. Their enthusiasm was not for the monarchy *per se*, but for this most unusual of monarchs: one whose politics seemed to them to be of the left. Edward's publicly expressed anguish about the social problems of the distressed areas were the grounds for this belief. Secondly, and in consequence, Edward was regarded as the victim of a conspiracy by the political right, led by Baldwin, who feared his popularity and his radical politics. Labour and the King thus shared a common enemy. The fellow-traveller and Labour M.P., D.N. Pritt, was active in canvassing support for Edward in the days before the Abdication, and in close contact with Edward's solicitor, Walter Monckton. Pritt described the feeling of Edward's friends that Baldwin and his government were "determined to rid the Empire of this rebel King with red sympathies".<sup>43</sup> Writing nearly thirty years later in his autobiography, Pritt still adhered to his belief that Edward had been dismissed by a financial oligarchy.

"His [Edward's] real crime was that he had, on a number of occasions, publicly expressed sympathy and horror over the conditions - and especially the houses - in which both workers and unemployed had to live."<sup>44</sup>

Next were those who held that the whole crisis was simply a distraction from matters of genuine concern to the Labour Party, and irrelevant to the political interests of the Party. They refused to engage with the constitutional issues involved, or to declare an allegiance in what they characterised as a bogus

contest of strength between King and Parliament. Lansbury publicly expressed the view that the whole business was an irrelevance and a distraction from the important matters of poverty and unemployment. For him, the question of Crown versus Parliament did not arise, because Parliament had not been required to decide anything, but had merely received information about the crisis. Moreover,

"...I think the King knows as well as any of us that in a struggle of that kind, the overwhelming mass of people will see that democratic Parliament remains supreme."<sup>45</sup>

He believed that a compromise solution could and would be found. Lansbury's public statements generally followed this line, but if accounts of his private views are to be believed, his position appears more ambiguous, if not confused. Laski recalled that Lansbury had been prevented from starting "a salute to the democratic King", although what exactly is meant by this is not clear.<sup>46</sup>

Also representative of this position was the current chairman of the Socialist League, William Mellor. During the crisis, Mellor sought to distance himself from the positions of both Government and King. Describing the choice put before the King as "hard", he counselled caution about supporting the

Government. His explanation of the crisis was that the Government saw the unconventional Edward as a threat to their own long-term interests.

"I charge the Government with having created a crisis. I say quite openly that their reason for so doing is that they believe that if the King is allowed to marry Mrs Simpson, he will, by so doing, cut from under the existing Church and State many of their props and securities."<sup>47</sup>

Mellor, in an article which echoed Lansbury's approach, complained that the proposed marriage had "swept Spain, unemployment, the menace of war, the German-Japanese alliance against the Comintern, into the background of news".<sup>48</sup> He regarded it as a "small matter". Mellor's Socialist League colleague and mistress, Barbara Betts (later Castle) was reported as calling on the Labour Party not to support Baldwin and demanding that the King be told to obey the Constitution.<sup>49</sup> This argument seems to underpin a call for Labour independence by a logical inconsistency.

If Edward's supporters on the left were rather eccentric or marginal figures, the same could not be said of those who advocated support for the Cabinet. Laski was the left's most prominent and consistent supporter of Baldwin's position. He wrote three articles for the *Daily Herald* over the course of nine days, the first of which was referred to earlier in this chapter. That article had not mentioned the current circumstances, but had nevertheless established the Crown versus Parliament issue as the significant one. In his second article,

Laski repeated this argument, but made his comments more specific. Neither the personality of the King, nor the wisdom or otherwise of his choice, really mattered. Instead, it was crucial that no precedent should emerge from the crisis which would make the Crown a source of independent political authority.

"..if the right of independent monarchical power is established, it may be invoked on other occasions for purposes utterly incompatible with democratic constitutionalism."<sup>50</sup>

If there were to be a general election, called on the question of the power of the Crown, and that election decided in favour of the Crown, the King would become once more the master of the Constitution. Laski, in an oblique reference to colleagues on the left who saw in the King a sympathetic spirit, denied the significance of the King's political inclinations.

"It is irrelevant...that there are symptoms, above all in domestic affairs, that the King sympathises with an attitude nearer to that of the Labour Party than to that of the Cabinet."<sup>51</sup>

Laski himself held no such illusions about the King's politics, whether international or domestic. He wrote to an American friend on December 11th:

"Don't believe the nonsense you hear that he's a socialist. He is no more a socialist than J.D. Rockefeller or any other rich man who has occasional prickings of conscience."<sup>52</sup>

He also opposed the principle of morganatic marriage on the grounds that it was symbolic of "that caste system to which the Labour Party is opposed". (Ellen Wilkinson also expressed opposition to morganatic marriage, but on the grounds that it offended against sexual equality.<sup>53</sup>) His third and final *Herald* article appeared after the Abdication, and celebrated the reassertion of Parliament's supremacy. It contained echoes of Laski's old preoccupation that Conservatives might seek to use the Crown's influence in some future political crisis. Laski believed that this had "received a mortal blow by the King's abdication".<sup>54</sup> As for his respected colleagues on the left who had advocated support for the King's plan, which they foresaw leading to the dismissal of the Government and the formation of a Labour government, Laski believed them to have been mistaken and shortsighted. Even had Labour won such an election, he did not believe it would have carried with it the kind of firm and tenacious support necessary to see through a socialist programme. Some months after the crisis, Laski observed that,

"....not a dozen of the British intelligentsia had understood what the struggle was about. He laughed at those who held that Mrs Simpson might possibly marry Edward without becoming Queen, declared that 'Cripps was silly'

too'...and ended characteristically with the remark that 'it will be difficult, without revolution, for the new man to interfere in policy. That, after all, is the main thing."<sup>55</sup>

Cripps was at least prepared to engage with the legal and constitutional questions raised by the King's proposed marriage. His view was rather idiosyncratic, disagreeing with the opposition to Mrs Simpson as the King's choice, whilst approving of the Cabinet's refusal to countenance a morganatic marriage, and of its insistence on the King accepting ministerial advice. He could see no sufficient reason to force the King's abdication because of the choice he had made, but believed that social prejudices and snobbery were behind the objections to Mrs Simpson.

"I cannot help feeling that if the lady in question had been a member of the English aristocracy, under precisely similar circumstances, quite a different decision would have been made."<sup>56</sup>

As for the King's request that legislation be introduced to permit a morganatic marriage, Cripps declared this unnecessary as the circumstances themselves were not exceptional. In British law there was no such thing as morganatic marriage. Finally, there was the question of Parliament's supremacy.

"The more vexed question that is raised is whether in this matter of his marriage the King is bound as a constitutional monarch to accept the advice of his ministers. The answer to that question indubitably is, 'Yes, he is bound.'"<sup>57</sup>

Finally, there were the republicans, for whom the constitutional implications and immediate political considerations were less significant than the opportunity afforded to air the republican case. Amongst this group, Aneurin Bevan's views are certainly worthy of consideration, particularly as he was involved, if in a very minor way, in the consultations which accompanied the crisis. There is evidence that Beaverbrook believed Bevan might be sympathetic to the King's predicament, and Beaverbrook's diary records a dinner appointment with Bevan and Bracken on December 3rd. Although not the most reliable of sources, Beaverbrook, in a draft account he prepared for use by Edward in his book (but not ultimately included), gave this summary of Bevan's attitude.

"It is understood that Mr. Aneurin Bevan was in favour of the morganatic marriage plan, and it is possible that after a period of confusion a very mixed government might have been formed out of the wreckage of the existing parties."<sup>58</sup>

Bevan certainly took a very different position from the Labour Party leadership on the constitutional issue of Cabinet advice, maintaining that the real point

was not whether the King should accept that advice, but whether it had been the correct advice. When these views became known, Bevan received an invitation from Beaverbrook to meet the King at Beaverbrook's London home. The King asked Bevan what he thought might be the reaction of the Parliamentary Labour Party if he insisted on marrying Mrs Simpson.

"His reply was that his own feelings were entirely neutral, but if the King wished to understand the feelings of the members of the Party, he could not do better than ask himself what would be the reaction of a typical middle-class woman in Surbiton."<sup>59</sup>

In an article in the first issue of *Tribune*, Bevan developed his ideas on the Abdication crisis into a more general analysis of the socio-political role of the monarchy. Starting from the Mellor/Lansbury depiction of the crisis as a diversion from the "sombre reality" of poverty and social deprivation, Bevan offered a critique not just of the monarchy, but of the predominant line of approach to the crisis adopted by the Labour Party. The role of the monarch was that of "bulwark-in-chief for the British social system", and the political representatives of the ruling class were upset because Edward had "violated their class code, betrayed their class interests and placed their whole carefully preserved structure in peril of destruction".<sup>60</sup> What should the Labour Party have done? Bevan acknowledged the difficulty of declaring either for or against the King's conduct. However, he rejected the mainstream approach, typified by

the *Daily Herald*, and Laski's articles therein, that it was a problem of the King against Parliament. The party should have declared itself against "the mumbo-jumbo of the whole business", and thereby sought to undermine the institution of monarchy.

"No charge could have been made against it of dragging in a Republican issue. Such an issue was implicit in the situation. The Labour Party has too much reverence."<sup>61</sup>

Bevan's whole approach to the crisis was virtually identical to that of the I.L.P. There is also some evidence that this view was shared by some in the Labour Party in the country. In Birmingham, there was resentment that the *Daily Herald* should lump together with Pollitt and Mosley all those who felt the King should be able to marry whom he liked, and frustration at the approach of the parliamentary leadership.

"Why are our leaders so anxious to preserve the prestige of the Crown. Republicanism is not usually a burning issue in this country, and Labour does well - in most cases - to ignore it. But why should Labour go out of its way to help the ruling class maintain its whitened sepulchres inviolate."<sup>62</sup>

Although at this time no longer affiliated to the Labour Party, the I.L.P.'s reaction to the crisis should not be ignored, as it offers a point of contrast to the

Labour Party's, as well as constituting part of the context of left-wing opinion. Weeks before the crisis broke in the press, the *New Leader* had included an article which the printing company had then refused to print. Originally intended for publication on November 13th, it eventually appeared on December 11th. Beginning with a denunciation of the censorship of the British press on the subject of the proposed marriage, the article offered sympathy on a personal level to somebody faced with social bigotry.

"If it is true that the King is insisting on his right as a man to marry the wife of his choice, the sympathies of all broad-minded people will be with him..."<sup>63</sup>

This did not, however, amount to support for the King, as the article referred to worrying rumours about Mrs Simpson's fascist sympathies. The editorial in the December 11th issue shifted the emphasis away from personal sympathy, and warned against such sentimental reactions infecting the working class movement. In terms of the King's own politics, the insight was acute. The writer was unimpressed by Edward's expressions of sympathy for the unemployed; such a tactic quite accorded with the fascist practice of championing the underprivileged. The main weight of criticism was reserved for the Labour Party leadership, and the course advocated in the article was exactly that which the *Daily Herald* denounced as mistaken and foolhardy. The Labour Party, it was suggested, should take office immediately if the King decided to refuse the Cabinet's advice and sent for Attlee. If Labour declined to do so,

"This would be throwing away a great opportunity. From a working class point of view it is much more important to get rid of the National Government than to secure a monarch who satisfies the old aristocracy and the Archbishop of Canterbury."<sup>64</sup>

This ignored the obvious objection that such an approach would greatly strengthen both the political power of the monarchy, which the I.L.P. opposed, and the personal influence of a monarch whom the I.L.P. believed to have fascist tendencies.

At the beginning of the crisis, there were rumours that the I.L.P. had pledged its support for Baldwin, but the position was clarified by a statement from Brockway, the I.L.P. General Secretary, on 4th December. He declared that the I.L.P. was uncommitted to either side, and regarded the crisis as significant only in its capacity to weaken the hereditary system of monarchy.

"[The I.L.P.] is Republican and anti-Monarchical. It sees in the crisis evidence of the fundamental unsoundness of the Monarchical system, which brings into sharp conflict the undoubted human right of the King as a man to marry whom he likes and the political consequences of such action on the Church and State, of which by accident of birth he is head."<sup>65</sup>

This was the principal theme of the I.L.P. contributions in Parliament when the abdication message was received there. In Maxton's view, the hereditary principle made such an crisis inevitable at some stage, and the institution of monarchy was an anachronism which had no place in an advanced country. Buchanan was more personal in his line of attack, asserting that Edward was being disposed of because he was "a weak creature". In the debate on the Abdication Bill on 11th December, the I.L.P. moved a republican amendment, and Maxton explained to the House of Commons, in a classic statement of Scottish socialist republicanism, why a socialist was necessarily a republican.

He was:

"For the socialist system of society as a society of equality - economic equality, social equality - with neither Kings nor Courts, nor nobles, nor peers, for a no-class society. Here today we are asked to give our consent to the continuation of the outstanding symbol, the very head and front, of a class society."<sup>66</sup>

He was prepared to admit that during the previous three reigns the constitutional monarchy had worked reasonably well, but after the current events, it would never work as well again. In seconding the motion, Campbell Stephen recalled the events of 1931, and the feelings of Labour members "that there had been a departure from procedure and intervention into politics by the Monarch...."<sup>67</sup> Taking up Attlee's restatement of the old social-democratic

contention that it was fundamental economic problems which were important, and not the "distraction" of republicanism, Stephen countered that the two were, in reality, inextricably linked, as "the monarchical system has a very great significance with regard to the maintenance of the present economic order".<sup>68</sup> The republican amendment attracted just five votes, with I.L.P. members joined by two Labour backbenchers, Salter and Hardie, and the Communist Willie Gallacher. After the Abdication, an article in the *New Leader* expressed shock at Labour's support of the monarchy, and explored the necessity but insufficiency of a republican constitution for a socialist society.

"It is not enough to say that a President is no better than a King. A President elected by the people is at least a representative of the people and can be changed by the people. But to say this is not to suggest that Republicanism is itself the alternative to the Monarchical system. Socialists are concerned not so much with the head of the State as with the general body of the State. We want not a Republic but a Workers' Republic..A King would be impossible in a Workers' Republic. A President would be necessary in a Workers' Republic."<sup>69</sup>

This clear and reasoned view of the relationship between socialism and republicanism stood in contrast to the Labour Party leadership's attachment to a reformed, constitutional monarchy, which would, it believed, help to

guarantee the parliamentary democracy through which Labour would transform British society.

As the I.L.P. position offers perspective to Labour's, so does that of the Communist Party. In several ways, the Communist response to the abdication crisis resembled the I.L.P.'s, asserting that the party stood for a "Workers' Republic" and wishing a plague on both houses. As Campbell Stephen had done, Pollitt recalled 1931 as evidence that the monarchy remained a political force on the side of capitalism.<sup>70</sup> Just as had the I.L.P., the Communists called upon Labour to seize the opportunity to form a government. However, the attempt to explain the origins of the problem was reduced to characterising it as a struggle between "the rival gangs of capitalism", which were the "Baldwin gang" and a "rival gang of big capitalists".<sup>71</sup> Bosses of capitalism required a puppet to conceal their class rule, but in this instance the puppet had begun to act like a human being, which put the enterprise at risk. Whereas the I.L.P. had grudgingly accepted the relative success of the constitutional monarchy in modern times, the Communists rejected not just the monarchy but the entire Constitution.

"In the U.S.S.R. the Constitution of Socialism triumphant, in Britain the Constitution of Monopoly Capitalism. In the U.S.S.R. .t.he Constitution...which guarantees for evermore social and political liberty for all."<sup>72</sup>

The monarchy was, according to Strachey, "an integral part of the governing class machine", and the mere citation of precedents of good constitutional practice would not prevent the monarchy from being used against the working class in the future, when real issues of class power arose.<sup>73</sup> The latter point was one often made on the Labour left in the early 1930's, but mainstream Labour, and particularly the leadership, saw the Constitution, and within it the constitutional monarchy, as the guarantor of freedoms denied under foreign dictatorships, including the U.S.S.R.

#### Reflections on the Abdication.

The Labour Party leadership had supported Baldwin unequivocally during the crisis, but in the immediate aftermath there was an attempt to formulate a distinctive party position on the monarchy. It was a position different from the republicanism of the I.L.P. or from those, such as Bevan, on its own left wing. It also sought to distance Labour from that uncritical adulation of the monarchy which characterised Conservative opinion. It sought reform rather than abolition of the monarchy, and reflected an awareness of the impossibility of reconciling the existing social character of the monarchy with Labour's own values. Attlee took the opportunity provided by debate on the Abdication Bill to set out these views. He was careful not to place any blame on the royal family for the "vulgar adulation" and the "unreal halo" placed upon them. Responsibility lay with the press and with the "interests which stand for wealth and class privilege".<sup>74</sup> Attlee called for a change in the character of the

monarchy, with greater simplicity and less Court ceremonial, and drew attention to the "narrow and privileged class" character of the courtiers.

"I hope that we shall see a new start made. I believe this is necessary if constitutional monarchy is to survive in the present age...We as a party stand for the disappearance of class barriers and moving towards equality...and in the interests of this country, we should see the utmost simplicity in the monarchy..."<sup>75</sup>

This approach was echoed by Kingsley Martin in the *New Statesman*, who hoped that the new King would not be built up into a popular idol, and who praised the attitude towards the monarchy displayed in Scandinavian countries.<sup>76</sup> An anonymously written article in the *New Statesman*, probably the work of Martin, distinguished between the monarchy's constitutional function and its exclusive social character. The former did not necessitate the latter. "Democratisation" of the Court was desirable; by this, the writer meant a more socially representative Court.

The calls for reform and simplification continued to be made during the discussions of the Civil List Committee at the time of George VI's accession, and Attlee believed that this reflected feeling in the country at large about the character of Court life. The party leadership seemed quite prepared to accept an hereditary monarchy which retained undefined constitutional powers through the royal prerogative, if only that monarchy could appear less

aristocratic and socially exclusive. The public criticism of the monarchy made in the weeks following the Abdication might have seemed bold by Labour's normal standards, but a cautious leadership clearly felt that public opinion would support it, and that was always a key consideration preceding any publicly declared opinions about the monarchy.

As for the departing Edward, there was general relief amongst the party leadership that he had gone, to be replaced by a safer bet. Attlee felt that the monarchy's prestige had been damaged, but "in the event it was fortunate", in allowing George VI to raise the monarchy "to greater heights than ever before".<sup>77</sup> Salter considered, too optimistically, that the damage to the monarchy was not just severe but permanent, and that the Abdication crisis had threatened the whole social order, a peril of which the ruling classes were quite conscious.

"The sacrosanctity of Royalty has been destroyed. The halo of Kingship has been shattered. The veneration for the Crown has been broken...For one dreadful week the upper classes were in a state of fervid anxiety, amounting to terror, lest if the monarchy went they too would lose their rank and privileges."<sup>78</sup>

The rumours of Edward's political sympathies with the far right were given substance by his visit to Germany in 1937, which provoked Herbert Morrison into issuing a public rebuke in *Forward*.

"He [Edward] had always failed to realize that in a constitutional monarchy, neither the heir to the Throne nor the King can publicly manifest opinions on controversial matters...[These expressions of opinion] were constitutionally dangerous and not inconsistent with those Fascist tendencies with which (quite possibly unjustly) he is credited....He cannot be permitted to re-enter public life - in this country at any rate."<sup>79</sup>

Josiah Wedgwood, the P.L.P.'s chief supporter of the King, later admitted that he had been mistaken, in the light of both contemporary and subsequent evidence.

"Our fan mail was unbounded for some days, but I noticed the Fascist touch about many of the letters of my new admirers; and the subsequent career of the Royal Duke in Austria, Germany and France inclines me to think that Baldwin was wise..."<sup>80</sup>

As Edward departed, the Labour leadership, as much as Baldwin's Cabinet, welcomed a return to the bourgeois respectability which had characterised the reign of George V, and breathed a sigh of relief that a dangerous episode had been concluded. The Party's parliamentary leadership, the *Daily Herald*, Bevin, Laski and others, had combined to help ensure that Baldwin's Cabinet prevailed. They had played a supporting part in what

Beatrice Webb characterised as "the most superb manifestation of good manners on the part of the British governing class",<sup>81</sup> and must share the credit (or blame) with Baldwin, of whom "many whispered that he had saved the British monarchy".<sup>82</sup>

### Textual Analysis.

#### Daily Herald.

The texts to be examined in this section are, for the most part, editorials, but as in the previous chapter, some attention will be given to reports from Hannen Swaffer. Analysis indicates an alteration in tone of address to its readership, although the *Herald's* analysis of the crisis and its preferred outcome remained entirely consistent throughout. In accounting for this changed tone of address, one factor was surely the perceptions of public opinion concerning the King's plan to marry. There is some evidence of an initial tension between the political instincts of both the editorial staff and those above them, and the commercial concern that the newspaper should not offend its readership by adopting an unpopular line. Ironically, the resolution of this tension appears to have resulted from a happy coincidence; that the constitutional objections which formed the ostensible basis of the *Herald's* case required the same outcome as did the moral objections of its readership, as depicted by informal surveys of opinion.

The *Herald*'s first editorial dealing with the subject, on the front page of the paper, is characterised linguistically by two distinctive patterns of transitivity.<sup>83</sup> The first represents Baldwin as agent, and repeats the modality of necessity<sup>84</sup>:

Premier must tell all facts

Mr Baldwin must dispel the secrecy

The second pattern represents the people and Parliament as the receivers in passive structures:

Parliament and the people are surely entitled...

the mind of the country is liable to be diverted..

At this stage, the King does not appear either as ergative agent or as grammatical subject, but only as an indirect object. At the heart of the editorial is repeated lexis, which indicates a key concern:

rumours...are spreading

the danger of rumours spreading

The rumours in question were clearly of vital concern to the *Herald*, as they had potential appeal to at least some of the readership:

"It is being suggested that the Cabinet's concern is not merely over the King's personal affairs, but over his political activities - his interest in unemployment and distressed areas, and foreign affairs."<sup>85</sup>

The paragraph which contains this sentence is sub-titled "Political Affairs?", but the question is not answered, nor is the accuracy or inaccuracy of the rumours assessed.

Unusually, the same edition of the *Herald* carried a second editorial, inside the newspaper. The narrative structure of the editorial is revealing. The first section takes careful account of the sensibilities of its readers, anticipating both their sympathy towards the personal predicament of the King and the potential appeal of the "democratic" aspect of marriage to a commoner. This opening section is dense with adjectives and nouns which indicate a keen awareness that readers have to be won over from an initial position of sympathy for Edward.

human (x3)

humanity

acute distress

profound grief

purely personal

private

suffering

sympathy

This concentration of terms occurs within a paragraph of approximately one hundred words.

The next section of the text summarises the objections to the marriage, whilst noticeably withholding any moral judgement of its own on the question of divorce and re-marriage. The modality in this area contrasts with that employed in discussion of the constitutional issue:

**these views may be wise..**

**they may be relaxed in the future**

On the constitutional question of accepting Cabinet advice:

**we cannot see how the Cabinet could have done otherwise**

**only one reply is possible**

**Labour must be sensitive to the constitutional**

**implications...**

In seeking to persuade its own public of the correctness of its position, the *Herald* cites wider public opinion as sufficient reason to support the Cabinet:

vast numbers of people here and in the Dominions  
millions of our people

The closing section of the editorial attempts to establish the democratic credentials of its position:

popularly elected Ministers  
British democratic Constitution  
the Government which the people has freely chosen  
democratic satisfaction

The insecurity underlying the *Herald's* appeal to its readers was even more apparent in the following day's editorial.<sup>86</sup> It purported to comment on the reactions of:

the people (x4)  
the country as a whole  
the general public  
wide sections of the public

The reactions were characterised within one, hundred-word paragraph as:

great bewilderment

misconception

misunderstanding

not...a clear picture

The anxiety manifest through this example of overlexicalisation plainly relates to its own readership. That readership is not directly identified as sharing in the "misconception", as that could well be regarded as insulting or patronising. However, the basis of the "misconception", and the categorisation of some key participants in the crisis, indicate that too many of the *Herald's* readers share the "misunderstanding" of "wide sections of the public". The basis of the "misconception" is the belief that the objection to the King's choice of wife is her origin i.e. from outside "the ranks of aristocracy or dynasty". Those (such as, presumably, readers of the *Herald*) who have no time for snobbery would react against such anti-democratic prejudice. The *Herald*, conscious that it was attempting to align its readers with a politically uncongenial government and an equally uncongenial wider political establishment, attributed a different motivation to the latter. The "people" and "the Old Guard" might find themselves temporarily on the same side, but for different reasons.

"The people well know that the 'Old Guard' would fight against the King's marriage to a commoner. They well know that the King's intimacy with the people, his nearness to them, his sympathy with their difficulties, his concern for their troubles, are not altogether pleasing to this 'Old Guard'.<sup>87</sup>

This is a discernible change from the previous day's categorisation as 'mere rumour' the suggestion that the Cabinet's opposition to the King's plan emanated from their dislike of the King's democratic instincts. The concession that his political beliefs did motivate some of the King's opponents made the picture more complex.

The final editorial devoted to the crisis is more robust in tone than previous ones.<sup>88</sup> The uncertainty, implicit in the constant references to the King's qualities and the justifiably high level of his popularity, disappeared. Believing it was faced with a genuinely divided readership, the *Herald* had, until December 7, taken pains to express its understanding of those who took the King's part. Two developments occurred which encouraged the *Herald* to adopt a new robustness. The evidence arriving at the *Herald's* offices that the "general mass" of its readers were "deeply upset" at the possibility of Mrs Simpson becoming Queen, emboldened the newspaper's appeal to its public. Moreover, the pro-King demonstrations over the weekend in London provided the *Herald* with an opportunity to characterise supporters of the King's right to marry as anti-democratic. This strengthened the *Herald's* case, maintained from the outset, that the fundamental issue was the constitutional right of democratically elected ministers to have their advice accepted. The *Herald* reduced the categories of participants in the crisis to two. The net effect of this reduction was to place Labour supporters of the King's position into alliance

with unsavoury elements. This latter group, the "bedfellows" of Labour people who took the King's side, was characterised as small and extremist:

the minority demonstration  
the small groups behind it  
critics of the democratic principle  
Sir Oswald Mosley and Mr Harry Pollitt  
(not) passionate defenders of the democratic principle  
newspapers...publicly advocating Fascism

The *Herald* sought by its categorisation to deny the possibility of any "third way" ( i.e. neither aligned with the Cabinet nor with the far-right supporters of the King), and to stigmatise any naive attempt to exploit the King's popularity and his perceived political radicalism in order to defeat the Government.

Turning briefly from the strictures of the *Herald*'s editorials to its reporting of the events as they unfolded; the widely-read and admired Hannen Swaffer recorded the announcement in Parliament of the King's abdication.<sup>89</sup> Far from suggesting that the crisis had damaged the monarchy, even temporarily, Swaffer's message was "business as usual". His report represents the events as a demonstration of the strength and durability of Britain's Constitution, and also of the character of the British, epitomised by Stanley Baldwin. *Herald* readers are implicitly asked to celebrate the peculiar,

admirable British way of resolving a crisis, and to see their own imperturbability reflected in Baldwin's performance. To take the latter point first:

the unaffected dignity, the simpleness  
 he (Baldwin) told in plain, unvarnished words  
 in words so unaffected  
 a simpleness of speech  
 ..his frankness..the very ingenuousness of it all

This undemonstrative performance found reflection in the behaviour of the public outside the House of Commons.

People moved along. There was no fuss, no excitement  
 London passed on its way

Swaffer's romantic, unradical and rather conventional view of monarchy and Empire, provides the framework for his reporting of events.

An uncritical acceptance, even a celebration, of the imperial Crown, was complemented by a celebration of the virtues of a constitutional monarchy, in which the popular will was triumphant.

"...the Commons had survived crisis after crisis and preserved, for our heirs, a great heritage of liberty. Yesterday, another crisis had passed."<sup>90</sup>

It is well to reflect on the implications of a Labour newspaper offering such an interpretation of the crisis. It is perfectly fitting that so conservative a story should have as its hero the figure of Baldwin. Whilst the narrowly constitutional focus of the *Herald's* editorial treatment may have been sensible and necessary, Swaffer's particular, conservative contextualisation of the crisis more accurately represented the *Herald's* customary treatment of royalty and monarchy.

#### Reynolds News.

As a weekly newspaper, *Reynolds News* had restricted opportunity to report the episode, with one edition on 6th December, and the next one appearing after the Abdication had taken place. Nevertheless, these two editions will be analysed, particularly as their editorials differed radically from other articles devoted to the crisis. If any *Reynolds* reader had anticipated a radical analysis of the issues raised by the King's proposed marriage, they would have been grievously disappointed. The first editorial devoted to the subject is characterised by an almost exaggeratedly restrained and reverential tone, and is curiously oblique in its reference to the nub of the problem.<sup>91</sup> An eighty-word opening paragraph is dense with abstract nouns, and particularly nouns of sentiment:

esteem rejoicing sorrow sympathy (x2) regret  
controversy sincerity emotions

The deployment of all these abstract nouns within two highly complex sentences suggest a reluctance to broach the issue in plain terms. The editorial begins with praise of the King.

"A King whose service to the people promised to make him the most popular monarch in history..."<sup>92</sup>

One could observe that this was not so different from the initial commentary in the *Herald*. However, *Reynolds* displays a reticence in dealing with the causes of the crisis which is difficult to comprehend. There is no mention of public disapproval of the King's choice of spouse, nor of the actual or potential influence which this disapproval might have upon the Government. As far as the readers might discern from the editorial, the crisis stemmed simply from the Cabinet's refusal to legislate to enable a morganatic marriage. The editorial then affects not to understand why the King should have made such a request.

"Why the King desires to make the lady his wife but not his Queen we do not know."<sup>93</sup>

This disingenuous statement has the effect of closing down the real area of conflict; that the King indeed wanted Mrs Simpson to be Queen and that this was unacceptable to large numbers of the public.

Having failed to set out the true origins of the dispute, the editorial turns to the "constitutional problem". Here, its conclusions mirror those of the *Herald*, with references to:

the people's prerogative

our democratic freedom

the King must accept the advice of his Cabinet

The editorial then relapses into the initial tenor; into vague expressions of goodwill and hope which offer no indications of how the crisis might be resolved, of what the alternatives appear to be, or of what the newspaper's preferred outcome was.

"In that spirit the nation can face its crisis calmly and whatever the outcome can settle its problem with fairness and equity, with the dignity becoming a Democracy on whom the eyes of the world are fixed, and without weakening those ties of loyalty which now link King and People."<sup>94</sup>

The blandness and disingenuousness of the editorial suggest how far away from its radical traditions the newspaper was moving, under commercial pressure, to broaden its appeal and to increase circulation.

Blandness seasoned with complacency best describes *Reynolds* other editorial on the abdication crisis.<sup>95</sup> The outcome is portrayed as a victory for "the people", "the people's prerogative" and for "Democracy". The depth of the divisions during the crisis, even within the Labour Party, and the strength of feeling on both sides, are denied in the misleading assertion that:

"During seven days the nation refused to be divided against itself.."<sup>96</sup>

However, there is reference to the attempts made by Rothermere, Beaverbrook and Mosley to create a "King's party"; attempts which the people treated "with contempt". Self-congratulation is in order, as the outcome demonstrated the strength of British democracy.

"A problem which could not have been raised anywhere else in the world without bloodshed, has been resolved here without the firing of a shot or the cracking of a head."<sup>97</sup>

The blandness and complacency of the *Reynolds* editorials are, however, at odds with the tone and contents of several articles and reports carried by the same issues of the paper. There would seem to have been

internal conflict between those contributors adhering to *Reynolds* old, radical, anti-monarchical tradition, and a newer, commercially-driven element. The latter was attempting to broaden the newspaper's appeal, by adopting a position which resembled the *Herald*'s enthusiasm for Britain's constitutional monarchy. Opposing this was the former editor of the *New Leader*, H.N. Brailsford. His article, entitled "Monarchy or Republic", adopts a hostile, critical tone, not only towards the monarchy itself but towards the *Daily Herald*.<sup>98</sup> On the former, Brailsford employed terms which emphasised the anachronistic and mystificatory nature of monarchy in the modern world.

outworn    relics    unreason    unreality  
obsolete    sacerdotal    opiate

Unlike the conservative representation of monarchy, in which maintenance of tradition was heralded as a strength, Brailsford represents it as an affront to modernity and as a barrier to genuine democracy. On the latter subject, Brailsford parts company both with the *Herald* and with his own newspaper's editorial line, rejecting their uncritical belief in the democratic character of Britain. The last editorial in *Reynolds* on the crisis had interwoven particular key phrases, indicating by its textual organization the inter-dependent nature of the following :<sup>99</sup>

people's prerogative (x2)

Democracy

constitutional monarchy

the Constitution

Political Democracy (x2)

In contrast, Brailsford characterises Britain as a partial democracy.

"We are allowed to enjoy our democratic rights in this docile island because we rarely choose to use them."<sup>100</sup>

Brailsford employs category labels which are found neither in the *Herald* nor in *Reynolds* editorials.

the governing class                    the capitalist ruling class

the plutocracy                    that ruling class

The monarchy is a functional element in a class society, and has "served powerfully to preserve things as they are".<sup>101</sup>

In condemning the *Herald's* position during the crisis, Brailsford implicitly criticises his own newspaper. The constitutional arguments which had been deployed in the editorials of both newspapers and in the several

contributions by Laski in the *Herald* are dismissed as "pedantry", and according to Brailsford, were not the real reasons why many in the party had accepted the leadership's position.

"If it [the Labour Party] were really thinking on the lines the *Daily Herald* laid down, few of us could support it...What Labour saw, and rightly, was the ugly chance that a party of the King's men might be formed to exploit this crisis."<sup>102</sup>

More interestingly for a writer of Brailsford's shrewdness and insight, he posed a series of questions concerning the conservative opposition to the King. Although the questions are not answered directly, they emerge from the "instinct" of "many of us", which suggests that Brailsford, a more than usually astute observer of the political scene, shared the premise of his questions with a wider Labour audience.

"Was there not a clash of temperament and outlook between the Old Guard and this spirited young King? Had not his visit to South Wales something to do with it, or perhaps even his bolder pilgrimage to the wreckage of Karl Marx House in Vienna? In short, was the Old Guard depositing, with the Church's aid, a young man who had courage and popular sympathies?"<sup>103</sup>

The implicit answers to Brailsford's questions seem to be "yes", which placed him in disagreement with the *Herald*. The latter had, it may be recalled, referred to the rumours of "Old Guard" disapproval of the King's views, only to dismiss the overall significance of that disapproval. Brailsford's arguments, and his suggestion that "many of us" held these views, hint at a rather complex set of Labour attitudes operating behind the public facade, at variance with the ostensibly straightforward, constitutional point insisted upon by the party leadership.

Unlike the *Herald*, *Reynolds News* carried reports of statements in support of the King, from Labour politicians, union leaders and a local party.<sup>104</sup> The *Herald* had reported only Conservative and Fascist expressions of support for the King, as its editorial policy appears to have been to suppress any direct evidence of Labour support for Edward. *Reynolds* was, at least, prepared to report the Labour prospective parliamentary candidate who supported the King's right to choose whom he liked as his wife, the union leader who pledged the loyalty of his membership to the King, and the Northampton Labour councillors who sent a telegram to Attlee and to the King, urging the former to take office if invited by the latter.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps as a consequence of a more liberal editorial policy, or perhaps with a more intrusive and persistent radical strain undercutting its 'respectable' editorial line, *Reynolds* offered a confused and confusing treatment of the abdication crisis, which stands in contrast to the consistency and discipline of the *Herald* during the episode.

Daily Express.

The editorials which will comprise the main focus of this analysis are characterised by two points of emphasis: the qualities of the King; and the real state of public opinion. A further area of interest is the attribution of responsibility for the crisis, and the representation of the capacities to act of the respective participants. Taking this latter point first, there is a striking point of contrast with the version offered by the *Herald*. Both newspapers published editorials on December 4th which expressed dismay at the lack of information, which prevented the public from understanding the problem clearly. The respective headlines are:

PREMIER MUST TELL ALL FACTS (*Herald*)

Tell The People! (*Express*)

However, the *Herald's* version denies any active agency to the King. It is the Cabinet, and more particularly the Prime Minister, who are located in this ergative role. The *Express* editorial places the King in the role of initiator of action. However, unlike the *Herald*, the *Express's* headline does not indicate who should do the telling. Also, whilst the *Herald*, within the headline and immediately afterwards, specifies the teller, and repeats modality of compulsion, the *Express* waits until nearly the end of its editorial before identifying the King as being the "teller" in question. In calling for the King to "tell the people", the *Express* employs an interesting linguistic construction.<sup>106</sup>

"Let the King speak then. Let the King give his decision to the people. And let him give the reasons for it too."

This construction projects the King into the role of informer, offering his version of events, whilst qualifying his agency. The verb "let" can be interpreted here as expressing a mere proposal, or as a call for permission to be granted. The former seems the more likely intended meaning, but it also serves to disguise and qualify the King's autonomy to act. The *Express* seems aware that in calling for the King to put his case to the people, speaking for himself and not through his ministers, it was in dangerous constitutional waters. The bulk of the editorial is concerned with the King's qualities. Whilst the *Herald* had acknowledged these and the King's popularity, they were then displaced; they were "not the question". For the *Express*, those qualities formed the centrepiece of its case, and the constitutional point about ministerial advice was not just displaced, but entirely ignored throughout its commentary on the crisis.

The Government had received no mention in the editorial of December 4th, but by the following day, after Baldwin's statement to Parliament, the *Express* brought the Government into the picture as the unambiguous agent of the crisis.

"Mr Baldwin and his Government are making a direct challenge to the King...It is a man-made crisis...This thing can be brought to a close whenever Mr Baldwin and his Government desire - by withdrawing their opposition to the King's intention of marrying."<sup>107</sup>

In the previous day's editorial, the King was accorded the agency of choice, but in the second editorial the Government is accorded the agency of resolution of the crisis.

A final point of contrast with the *Herald* pertains to the identification of public support. Although neither newspaper possessed any scientifically-gathered data about public attitudes, they both associated 'public opinion' with their own respective positions.

"For Mr Baldwin and the Government do not reflect the true feelings of the British people if they base their opposition to the marriage - as their press supporters do - on the grounds that Mrs Simpson has divorced her husband."<sup>108</sup>

A key aspect of the newspapers' handling of the crisis was a struggle to establish the coincidence of public opinion with the newspaper's own position, and to challenge their opponents' attempt to appropriate public opinion. The *Herald* had done so through its references to "millions" and "vast numbers" of people, seeking to influence its own sceptical, pro-King readership by implicitly

categorising them as part of the unrepresentative minority. In the *Herald's* case, the putative "millions" also help to project the Government's stance as popular, and Baldwin's attitude as representative of public opinion. By December 7th, the *Express* was on the defensive in this matter. Unlike the *Herald*, which merely asserted "public opinion", the *Express* was moved to question it.

"...powerful voices are claiming to speak in the name of 'public opinion'. These voices are against seeking a settlement on the basis of respecting the King's wish to marry. Just what is that 'public opinion'? It has been assumed among things that the Empire countries are ranged behind the British Government on this question. As the days pass and 'public opinion' is manifested not only in newspapers but in demonstrations of loyalty and the talk of the street, it becomes plain that the Empire public is as little informed and as undecided as our own."<sup>109</sup>

Two points immediately arise: the *Express* noticeably does not claim itself to be speaking in the name of 'public opinion'; in listing its manifestations of public opinion, the *Express* demonstrates the frailty of any claim to know accurately what that opinion was. However, the *Express* does claim the recruitment of the popular will to its own cause.

"In this business, the people have not yet had their say. We imagine that they will. And we believe they will put a meaning to it when with all their heart they sing....Long to reign over us, God save the King."<sup>110</sup>

There was an almost threatening undertone to this prediction. The *Express* failed to specify the mechanism by which the people would have their say; a general election in which a "King's party" took part, or large street demonstrations, were the obvious means of expression.

Daily Mail.

Although Beaverbrook and Rothermere were bracketed together by the *Herald* as anti-democratic supporters of the King, the *Express* and the *Mail* were quite different in their treatment of the crisis. Labour supporters who read either of these two newspapers were exposed to undiluted praise of the personal qualities of the King, but two significant differences between them will be examined: the way in which popular opinion is handled; and the crucial bearing of the Empire and the Dominions on the way the *Mail* reacts to the unfolding events. As with the other newspapers, it is editorials which will provide the textual source.

The *Mail* began its commentary with a moderate and balanced summary of the situation, mentioning at once, unlike the *Express*, that it concerned the relations between the King and his ministers, and arose from

the King's marriage plans.<sup>111</sup> This first editorial praised the record and conduct of the King and expressed hope for a solution to the crisis. However, the following day saw a marked shift in tone and attitude. Baldwin had yet to address Parliament on the subject, but the *Mail* appeared to be reacting to increased levels of speculation about abdication, and to criticisms of the King. Linguistically, there is high-frequency use of modal verbs:

It [abdication] must never happen

The King and his Ministers must find a way out

he must not be hurried

The country should be clearly informed

The nation should be taken into the confidence..

There is an insistence and urgency in the language, and in characterising reaction in the country, the text avoids nominalization in favour of direct attribution of feeling to the public:

The people want their King

His subjects know..

They resent most strongly...

His subjects well know...

His country is proud of him

It [the country] is not prepared to part with him

As with all the newspapers, the *Mail* operated on assumptions about levels of popular support for the King. It purported to know the attitudes and mood of an undifferentiated public:

..the determination of the country grows..

It is their [his subjects] belief that..

His country is...ready and eager to follow..

..he has their sympathy and affection.

At least the *Mail* attempted to provide some evidence of popular support for the King by referring to a meeting on 3rd December for the "Defence of Freedom and Peace" in London at which the 7000 people present repeatedly cheered the King's name.

Whilst Baldwin's statement to Parliament served to ignite the anger of the *Daily Express*, its effect on the *Mail* was quite the reverse. The stridency and certainty of the previous day's editorial melted away. The key to the change lay in Baldwin's reference to the replies received from the Dominions, which had been asked for their response to the proposed marriage and to the possibility of a morganatic arrangement. The *Mail*, with its unqualified devotion to the Empire and the Dominions, was caught in a bind. Only two days before, the King's imperial role had been cited as one reason why abdication would be calamitous.

"Today by the effect of the Statute of Westminster he is the lynch-pin of Empire and the sole link between the Mother-country and the Dominions. When such is the position there is every confidence among his wide and varied peoples that he will answer the Imperial call in the same splendid manner as so often in the past."<sup>112</sup>

The reply from the Dominions, as presented by Baldwin, was that neither Mrs Simpson nor morganatic marriage was acceptable, a point which the *Mail* claimed was of "immense importance". With the caveat that "much depends on the manner in which the situation was put to the Dominion Governments", the *Mail* appeared to bow to the inevitable in acknowledging the significance of the Dominions' attitude in determining the Prime Minister's position.<sup>113</sup>

"The Prime Minister's statement will seem to many stiff and uncompromising...But Mr Baldwin's attitude has largely been affected by the replies of the Dominion Governments."<sup>114</sup>

The *Mail's* resignation to losing the King is further indicated in the next editorial to appear.<sup>115</sup> There are no modals of compulsion or advisability, but the text is replete with nominal groups indicating states of mind. These structures indicate crisis without indicating or invoking courses of action.

acute and painful anxiety

agitated consultations

affectionate concern

profoundest concern

overwhelming concern

intense concern

deep sympathy

heroic tragedy

deeply lament

The overlexicalisation in evidence here might indicate not just regret at the overall calamity of the loss of a popular monarch, but regret that, hard as it was for a loyalist newspaper such as the *Mail* to admit, the outcome was of the King's own making. Although embedded in a conditional structure, the attribution of responsibility to the King is unambiguous.

"If by his Majesty's own act of will the King's subjects are to lose the benefit of his vast knowledge of the Empire..."<sup>116</sup>

Mrs Simpson's offer to withdraw appeared to give the *Mail* some slight hope of avoiding abdication. Calls for action and indications of necessity reappear, expressed through modality which had been noticeably absent from the previous days' editorials.<sup>117</sup>

This reflects the *Mail's* gradual shift of attitude, beginning from the Dominion governments' rejection of the marriage proposals, towards a tacit demand that the King must abandon the marriage and remain on the Throne. Unlike the *Express*, it does not invoke the King's right to choose his spouse. Given the feelings of the Dominions, such a choice did not exist. Instead of the right to choose, the *Mail* increasingly emphasises the King's duty to serve. If Mrs Simpson is prepared to sacrifice her wishes, then, the *Mail* implies, so should the King.

"If the King shares her sacrifice and now reaches a decision for which the nation hopes, he will be wondrously repaid...Duty is the lodestone of Sovereigns...It is the prayer and dearest hope of uncounted multitudes..that he will turn to them again with the noble words: 'I serve'".<sup>118</sup>

Despite its desperation that the King should choose to stay and serve, the *Mail* was neither bitter nor condemnatory when Edward abdicated. It retained its affection for him:

a beloved King

a splendid King

Its position was essentially loyalist, described in a piece of self-reference:

"The *Daily Mail* stood by Edward VIII, and it will ever stand by George VI. Whatever other newspapers may fail, the *Daily Mail* will not, in this primary duty to the country."<sup>119</sup>

Apart from its consistently loyalist tenor, the *Mail* had expressed its approval of Baldwin's "correctness" of attitude. It had made little of the Crown versus Parliament issue, and nothing of the morganatic marriage idea. The bombastic loyalism of the *Express* was never a possibility for the *Mail*, once the opposition of the Dominion governments to the marriage had become clear. The *Express*, with its strident populism, was prepared to deny the significance of the replies from these governments, asserting that they did not reflect the views of the respective populations. The *Mail*, more respectful of established structures of authority, accepted their importance, and the newspaper's treatment of the crisis derived from this factor an uncharacteristic caution and moderation.

A point of interest is provided by an open letter to the *Mail*'s editor from Rothermere, the proprietor.<sup>120</sup> In many ways, Rothermere's letter reflects the *Mail*'s dilemma over the crisis. Effusive personal praise for the King accompanies recognition of the "good intentions" of Baldwin. However, in two respects, Rothermere's approach differs from his newspaper's. First, he makes positive reference to the idea of a morganatic marriage, and claims that this was always the intention of the King.

"When it was declared in Parliament that morganatic marriage was unknown to the law of England, it should have been remembered that also unknown to the law of England is a constitutional situation similar to the present and the legislation which abdication would necessitate."<sup>121</sup>

Moreover, Rothermere fails to mention or to take account of the replies of the Dominion governments. His newspaper had provided daily reports of reactions in the Empire, and Baldwin had informed Parliament that the proposed marriage, including a morganatic one, was unacceptable to those Dominions. On this occasion, Rothermere's normal imperial considerations were subordinated to his enthusiasm for the King's cause. Ironically, his newspaper adopted a position more sensitive to the interests of imperial unity than did the great Fleet Street imperialist himself.

### Conclusion.

The leadership of the Labour movement, in the persons of Attlee, Bevin and Citrine, and its leading constitutional expert, Laski, maintained an unflinching commitment throughout the crisis. It was a commitment to the principle of the Crown's subservience to Parliament, although the role of Parliament was far smaller than that of the Cabinet during the abdication crisis. In this commitment, the leadership demonstrated both its belief in the Constitution, and a strong disinclination to entertain any move which might

allow the Crown's influence to be reasserted. Strong leadership was required, given the temptations offered by the situation to undermine the National Government, and to break the political impasse in which Labour found itself in the 1930's. Ranged against this position were those who were prepared to exploit any opportunity to wrest power. The dangers inherent in appearing to advocate the course supported also by Churchill, Beaverbrook, Rothermere and Mosley, were either not apparent, or were considered worth the risk, given the domestic and international emergencies. The speed with which events took place, once the matter had been made public, assisted the leadership's cause. Grass-roots opinion in the Party is difficult to assess, but there was little time for any momentum to develop behind calls for Labour to support the King, whether that support might be motivated by misperceptions of the King's radicalism, or by pure opportunism.

The newspaper analysis throws up several points. The *Herald*'s firm and uncompromising line may have been more fragile than first appears. Its presentation of the case reveals an anxiety that the constitutional issue of Crown versus Parliament was not as appealing or emotionally powerful as the personal drama of the King's dilemma. Uncertainty about the attitude of its readership, and of the wider public, underlies the earlier articles during the crisis. The dangerous atmosphere in which the *Herald* pursued its case is illustrated by the approach of the *Daily Express*. It is worth reiterating that the *Express* had a circulation of more than two million, one quarter of whom were Labour voters. Its behaviour reflected the irresponsibility of its proprietor, and

helps to set in perspective the statesman-like conduct of the Labour leadership and the movement's official newspaper. The *Daily Mail*'s refusal to take up the King's case helps to point up Labour's position. As was seen at the time of the Silver Jubilee, those moments when national awareness is heightened generate revealing insights into the ideology of political groupings. For the *Mail* in December 1936, its devotion to the idea of Empire subordinated all else, even at the expense of loyalty to the monarch. For the *Express*, or for Beaverbrook in particular, all was subordinate to personal loyalty to the monarch. Its populism and increasingly demotic tone, remarked upon in Chapter Four, inclined it to appeal over the heads of governments and politicians to popular opinion. The whiff of 'Church and King' mobs was in the air. In contrast, for the Labour leadership (with the *Herald* as its mouthpiece), the Constitution was all. Its belief in the sovereignty of Parliament, and its faith in the constitutional monarchy as it had developed over the previous fifty years, gave Labour no alternative but to support Baldwin and his Cabinet.

- <sup>1</sup> See Philip Ziegler, 1990, *King Edward VIII*, London, pp184-186
- <sup>2</sup> David Kirkwood, 1935, *My Life of Revolt*, London, p260
- <sup>3</sup> Ziegler, op.cit., p209
- <sup>4</sup> *Rotherhithe Labour Magazine*, June 1935
- <sup>5</sup> Diary of Beatrice Webb, December 5, 1936, Passfield Papers
- <sup>6</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol.XII, No.302, December 5, 1936, p881
- <sup>7</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 7, 1936
- <sup>8</sup> *Town Crier*, January 31, 1936
- <sup>9</sup> *Town Crier*, January 24, 1936
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> Cited in Ziegler, op.cit., p304
- <sup>12</sup> *Town Crier*, February 7, 1936
- <sup>13</sup> Morrison, *Government and Parliament*, p95
- <sup>14</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 8, 1936
- <sup>15</sup> Cited in Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, p112
- <sup>16</sup> A.L. Rowse, 1961, *All Souls and Appeasement*, London, p51
- <sup>17</sup> Cited in *Town Crier*, December 11, 1936
- <sup>18</sup> *The Times*, December 9, 1936
- <sup>19</sup> Lord Citrine, 1964, *Men and Work*, London, p326
- <sup>20</sup> C.R. Attlee, 1954, *As It Happened*, London, p86
- <sup>21</sup> Citrine's Diary, Citrine Papers 10/1
- <sup>22</sup> Beaverbrook Papers BBK G/23 p6
- <sup>23</sup> Cited in Kingsley Martin, 1968, *Editor*, London, p181
- <sup>24</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 3, 1936
- <sup>25</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 4, 1936
- <sup>27</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 5, 1936
- <sup>28</sup> Lord Beaverbrook, 1966, *The Abdication of Edward VIII*, London, p68
- <sup>29</sup> R.J. Minney, 1954, , *Viscount Southwood*, London, p288
- <sup>30</sup> Francis Williams, 1970, *Nothing So Strange*, London, p141
- <sup>31</sup> Cited in Alan Bullock, 1960, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, Vol.1, London, pp589-590
- <sup>32</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 5, 1936
- <sup>33</sup> Cited in Bullock, op.cit., p590
- <sup>34</sup> Williams, op.cit., p142
- <sup>35</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol.XII, No..302, December 5, 1936, pp880-1
- <sup>36</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol.XII, No..303, December 12, 1936, p965
- <sup>37</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 5, 1936
- <sup>39</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> NEC Minutes, December 7, 1936

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- <sup>41</sup> Cited in C.V. Wedgwood, 1951, *The Last of the Radicals*, London, p220
- <sup>42</sup> Attlee, op.cit., p86
- <sup>43</sup> Diary of Beatrice Webb, December 5, 1936, Passfield Papers
- <sup>44</sup> D.N. Pritt, 1965, *Autobiography, Vol. I: From Right to Left*, London, p94
- <sup>45</sup> *The Times*, December 7, 1936
- <sup>46</sup> Kingsley Martin, 1953, *Harold Laski*, London, p106
- <sup>47</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 7, 1936
- <sup>48</sup> *Socialist*, December 1936/January 1937
- <sup>49</sup> *New Leader*, December 11, 1936
- <sup>50</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 7, 1936
- <sup>51</sup> ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Cited in Kramnick & Sheerman, op.cit., p344
- <sup>53</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 9, 1936
- <sup>54</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 12, 1936
- <sup>55</sup> Cited in Martin, op.cit., p106
- <sup>56</sup> Cited in Strauss, op.cit., p89
- <sup>57</sup> Cited in Estorick, op.cit., p153
- <sup>58</sup> Beaverbrook Papers BBK G/24 Box 15 Folder XV
- <sup>59</sup> M. Foot, 1961, *Aneurin Bevan*, Vol. 1, London, p208
- <sup>60</sup> *Tribune*, January 1, 1937
- <sup>61</sup> ibid.
- <sup>62</sup> *Town Crier*, December 11, 1936
- <sup>63</sup> *New Leader*, December 11, 1936
- <sup>64</sup> ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> Hansard 256 H.C. Deb 5s 2205-7, December 11, 1936
- <sup>67</sup> ibid. 2210
- <sup>68</sup> ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> *New Leader*, December 18, 1936
- <sup>70</sup> *Daily Worker*, December 4, 1936
- <sup>71</sup> *Daily Worker*, December 8, 1936
- <sup>72</sup> *Daily Worker*, December 7, 1936
- <sup>73</sup> *Daily Worker*, December 8, 1936
- <sup>74</sup> Hansard 256 H.C. Deb 5s 2204-5, December 11, 1936
- <sup>75</sup> ibid.
- <sup>76</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol.XII, No. 303, December 12, 1936, p965
- <sup>77</sup> Attlee, op.cit., p86
- <sup>78</sup> *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, January, 1937
- <sup>79</sup> Cited in Frances Donaldson, 1979, *Edward VIII*, London, p333
- <sup>80</sup> J.S. Wedgwood, 1940, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, London, p235
- <sup>81</sup> Diary of Beatrice Webb, December 12, 1936, Passfield Papers
- <sup>82</sup> Martin, *Editor*, p186
- <sup>83</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 4, 1936
- <sup>84</sup> "modality" refers to the selection and use of modal verbs indicating, for example, necessity, possibility, ability etc.
- <sup>85</sup> ibid.
- <sup>86</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 5, 1936
- <sup>87</sup> ibid.
- <sup>88</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 7, 1936
- <sup>89</sup> *Daily Herald*, December 11, 1936
- <sup>90</sup> ibid.
- <sup>91</sup> *Reynolds News*, December 6, 1936
- <sup>92</sup> ibid.
- <sup>93</sup> ibid.
- <sup>94</sup> ibid.

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<sup>95</sup> *Reynolds News*, December 13, 1936

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Reynolds News*, December 6, 1936

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Daily Express*, December 4, 1936

<sup>107</sup> *Daily Express*, December 5, 1936

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Daily Express*, December 7, 1936

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Daily Mail*, December 4, 1936

<sup>112</sup> *Daily Mail*, December 3, 1936

<sup>113</sup> *Daily Mail*, December 5, 1936

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Daily Mail*, December 7, 1936

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Daily Mail*, December 8, 1936

<sup>118</sup> *Daily Mail*, December 9, 1936

<sup>119</sup> *Daily Mail*, December 14, 1936

<sup>120</sup> *Daily Mail*, December 7, 1936

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

## Chapter Six - The Labour Party and the Honours System.

One side-issue of the relationship between the Labour Party and the monarchy is the honours system. The sovereign is the fount of honours, and may support or resist nominations for them. Politicians may be the recipients of honours, or, when party leaders, be the source or channel of nomination. In the period under analysis in this thesis, substantial parts of the system involved hereditary titles and privileges. All of these points were (and are) problematic for a Labour Party with democratic, egalitarian or even just meritocratic pretensions. In describing the period immediately following the Great War (which saw the introduction of many new honours), Cannadine indicates the core of the problem.

"Here were hierarchical honours for a hierarchically conceived society. And it worked, connecting the craving for recognition with the acceptance and reinforcement of social hierarchy —a connection which has remained indissoluble in Britain ever since. As witness the enthusiasm with which trades unionists and Labour politicians came to embrace it. Behind this lay the British monarchy itself; the fountain of honour and the apex of traditional society..."<sup>1</sup>

Of all the pre-democratic vestiges of British public life, the honours system involved more Labour politicians and trade union leaders in more controversy

than any other. When the Labour Party held office, attention focused on the Prime Minister's powers of patronage. At other times, the question was whether, or in what circumstances, Labour leaders should accept honours. The disputes arising throw into light two related points of contention: whether or not the honours system, in a reformed, non-abused form, should have any place in a modern society; to what extent the Labour Party could or should accommodate itself to an inherently egalitarian and undemocratic system.

Honours became a major source of controversy within the Labour Party for two complementary reasons. During the Great War, Labour politicians and trade union leaders began to receive honours for services to the nation. These services were either of a direct kind, such as membership of the wartime coalition government, or more indirect, such as co-operating with the changes in employment and industrial practices demanded by wartime production. To the substantial anti-war minority in the party, such honours added insult to injury. As Henderson became a Privy Councillor and Ben Turner received an O.B.E., it appeared to some in the party that Labour's leadership was being drawn into ever-closer relations with political opponents.

"...the official Labour Party and the majority of leading trade union officials are becoming more and more suspect owing to their acceptance of places and honours from the Government - honours and places given with no damned nonsense about merit."<sup>2</sup>

The objection at this time was more to the conferment of honours for "war service" than to the acceptance of honours *per se*. So Ben Turner defended his acceptance of an O.B.E. by citing the letter of announcement from Lloyd George.

"It mentioned nothing about the war. It was granted for services rendered to our trade union. That was why I accepted the honour."<sup>3</sup>

The premise seemed to be that if a recipient was being rewarded for honourable reasons, there was nothing wrong with acceptance. The system itself did not present a problem, only specific applications of it. However, there were more radical Labour objections to the wartime honours, exemplified in C.H. Norman's explicitly republican I.L.P. pamphlet.

"All members of the Labour Party should be asked to pledge themselves against taking office until they are in the majority and against taking any kind of orders, decoration or honours from the King...the sweeping away of the honours system...would also be of benefit to the community which is only likely to occur when the Labour Party governs the country."<sup>4</sup>

The sale of honours, by both Conservative and Liberal administrations, had a long history. There had been allegations in 1894 and 1906 that honours had been procured after certain individuals had contributed

to party funds. In 1914 and 1917 the question of the sale of honours had been raised in the House of Lords. On the latter occasion, examples of abuse had been cited, and a tariff of prices corresponding to the degree of honour had been quoted. By 1919, the scandal was so grave that the House of Commons could no longer ignore it. The Labour Party supported an attempt to end the secrecy which surrounded sources of party funds, voting for an unsuccessful motion which demanded that "the bestowal of honours in recognition of subscriptions to such funds should be discontinued". Officially, the Labour Party went no further than condemning the abuses of the honours system, but individual M.P.'s went further. Jack Jones, member for Silvertown, was one of these.

"So far as some of us are concerned, we protest against nobility in the sense of giving men handles to their names, and we demand a real nobility that is a nobility of service with all of us doing our fair share of public service and taking the reward which that service gives."<sup>5</sup>

This was categorical opposition to participation in the honours system. This position demanded a common citizenship, the abolition of artificial social distinctions and the elevation of service as the primary individual motivation. This argument found its most eloquent advocate in R.H. Tawney, whose ideas are considered later.

As controversy over the abuse of the honours system made reform of it imperative, Labour was forced to define more clearly its attitude to the issue. Some aspects were unproblematic: Labour opposed hereditary honours and those awarded for payment. When, in 1922, Parliament considered the establishment of a Select Committee to examine the method of submitting names for honours, J.R. Clynes, then leader of the Party, denounced the practice of conferring honours for payment or for political service.

"Give them...for merit....A distinction conferred for services ought not to become a title or a privilege for another purpose. Hereditary titles are totally inconsistent with our present-day democratic circumstances."<sup>6</sup>

Clynes appeared to accept the award of honours for "genuine merit", rejecting only the hereditary and the corrupt features of the system. Of greater ultimate significance than Clynes's attitude was that of MacDonald. He consistently stated his opposition to the farce which the honours system had become in practice, and declined to accept personally any title save the customary "Right Honourable" which accompanied a Privy Councillorship. However, he did not share Jack Jones' ideal of a society free of all honours and titles except that of "citizen". MacDonald believed that,

"Democracy is not at all inconsistent with laurels. A people of simple and chaste tastes may quite properly say to those who have served it well and in singleness of purpose: 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"<sup>7</sup>

What MacDonald found abhorrent was the fact that these honours had often been awarded to the wrong people. As far as he was concerned all honours had been devalued, for even Privy Councillorships had been bought and sold between 1906 and 1910. He struck out against the vulgarising of honours, and demonstrated that his objection was not to the honours themselves but to the recipients thereof.

"We should feel right in the centre of our souls the disgrace of a titled crowd of nobodies...The ways of a rich plutocracy have for long been corrupting us and have even found harbourage in Labour cracks. The whole evil is symbolised in the traffic in 'honours' and the man who is decorated."<sup>8</sup>

He proposed a thorough investigation by a future Labour government into abuse of the honours system, with a committee having powers to send for papers and persons connected with the sale of honours.

"Every peer created within the last twenty years should be asked to send under oath a statement of his peerage transactions, and if information is suppressed or falsified he should be prosecuted for perjury. No one who has

bought a peerage should be allowed to vote in the House of Lords...All those who have bought their way into the Privy Council should be dismissed at once and that body should be purified again."<sup>9</sup>

Like other Labour leaders, and many politicians of other parties, MacDonald was scandalised by some of the honours awarded in the 1920's. Sir William Vestey, a meat contractor who had profiteered during the war and then moved his business abroad to avoid taxation, received a peerage. When Sir Joseph Robinson, recently prosecuted in South Africa for corrupt practices, was recommended for a peerage, the outcry was such that the Government had to accede to the demand that a Royal Commission investigate the honours system.

The Commission's critical gaze focused on the issue of political honours. It recommended that a committee of three Privy Councillors be set up, to which the names of candidates for honours would be submitted, together with a reason for recommendation, a statement of service, and a statement from the party's patronage secretary or manager that no payment or expectation of payment was associated with the proposed award. In addition, an Act should be passed which would penalise anyone promising an honour for payment or trying to secure an honour for payment. Henderson was Labour's representative on the Commission, and he refused to sign its report. In his "Note of Dissent", Henderson maintained that the recommendations were inadequate to prevent venality or to allay public suspicion. Presuming that the

Privy Councillors on the proposed committee would be from the Prime Minister's own party, Henderson could not see how party interest and funds could be entirely disregarded. In calling for an end to political honours, Henderson, perhaps unwittingly, condemned all honours.

"In a democratic country it is a distinguishing mark of the good citizen that he interests himself according to his opportunity in the well-being of the community. It is indisputable that public service of great value has been rendered by men and women whose thoughts have never dwelt upon titled reward, and in view of the difficulty of keeping the honours list pure, I do not believe that the abolition of political honours would in any way diminish either the volume or quality of the services given to the community by its citizens."<sup>10</sup>

This conclusion was more than simply Henderson's own opinion. His note of dissent was produced with the help of the Research Department, jointly operated by the Labour Party and the T.U.C.

When the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Bill came before the Commons, Labour supported it, despite the reservations made by Henderson. The official party policy was to support this compromise as it would end the worst abuses, but on the left of the party a more radical approach to the question of honours was voiced by Scottish I.L.P. members; a complete abolition of the system. Thus James Maxton:

"It would be raising the whole dignity of public life in this country if people retained their own names without prefix or affix of any description."<sup>11</sup>

George Hardie, like Maxton a republican as well as an opponent of the honours system, refused to vote for the Bill on the grounds that "the man with real honour about him is the man who refuses all these things and keeps clean for life".<sup>12</sup> Like republicanism, this was a position strongly held by a minority of individuals in the Labour Party, but it was never likely to influence the pragmatism of the Party leadership.

Some people found it difficult to believe that a Labour government would act differently from its predecessors over the sale of honours. According to an I.L.P. pamphlet, just before Labour first took office some I.L.P. officials were approached by an agent for a wealthy individual seeking a title, who was prepared to subscribe between twenty-five and thirty thousand pounds to I.L.P. funds in return.

"When he discovered that there was 'nothing doing', his amazement was laughable to witness. 'All other parties do it,' he said, 'why not the I.L.P.'"<sup>13</sup>

The first Labour Government did not confer honours on anyone for political services, but MacDonald still found that honours and titles generated some of the most lively controversy surrounding his Government. A hint of future trouble had occurred at the Labour Party Conference in 1922, when

membership of the Privy Council was discussed. With the formation of a government, Labour was faced with the problem of the award of courtesy and hereditary titles. Accepting the convention that at least two of the six Secretaries of State should sit in the House of Lords, MacDonald circumvented the difficulty as best he could. Haldane, Parmoor and Chelmsford, who were already peers, were recruited as ministers. Olivier and Thomson, to whom he gave peerages, were either unmarried or without heirs to their titles. With only minimal exceptions, the conferment of hereditary titles for constitutional reasons was generally accepted within the party.

However, when the King's Birthday Honours List was published in June 1924, it proved to be more controversial. Conforming to the recommendations of the Royal Commission, a small committee examined the nominations for honours, submitted by ministers, departmental chiefs, ambassadors and all manner of organisations. The list went from the committee to MacDonald and thence to George V, who "deleted about half a dozen names and added some".<sup>14</sup> The list was unusual in its brevity and for the fact that no peerages were granted. By all criteria but the most puritanical, the list was unexceptionable.

"Mr MacDonald's first list of honours is satisfactory both for what it omits and for what it includes...Not a single title..has been conferred as a reward for political services to our own Party...(We) find something reassuring in the barrenness and austerity of this first honours list."<sup>15</sup>

One name on the list, a name unknown to most, was to bring upon MacDonald the public derision and accusations of corrupt practices which he had condemned two years earlier.

A baronetcy had been awarded to Alexander Grant, the principal partner in the biscuit concern of McVitie and Price, and an old personal friend of MacDonald. Grant was a wealthy philanthropist who had, amongst other acts of generosity, donated one hundred thousand pounds towards the creation of the Advocates' Library in Scotland. For such good deeds, MacDonald recommended in April 1924 that Grant receive a baronetcy. In September 1924, the *Daily Mail* revealed that MacDonald had acquired thirty thousand one-pound shares in McVitie and Price during the previous March. MacDonald admitted that he had received the loan of a Daimler car from Grant, and maintained that the shares were to provide an income to pay for the running of this car. He vehemently insisted that the honour to Grant had been for public services. The embarrassment to MacDonald and the Labour Party was intense, and the matter was "flung in our teeth at every village green meeting.". <sup>16</sup> Within the Labour Party, MacDonald's explanation was accepted and his action defended, particularly as he had not made any secret of the award.

"Long before Sir Alexander Grant suggested his gift to Mr MacDonald, the Prime Minister had indicated to a Labour Party meeting in London that

outside the men whom it was necessary for Government purposes to send to the House of Lords he had no honours list, with the single exception of an old personal friend who the previous year had performed a great public service. That public service of course was the endowment of the Scots National Library with a gift of one hundred thousand pounds."<sup>17</sup>

Besides requiring a specific degree of government representation in the Lords, the constitutional convention was that the government's senior law officers receive knighthoods. In February 1924, Hastings and Slessor, respectively Attorney-General and Solicitor-General, were knighted. This produced mixed reactions in the party, but the leadership's position was that traditional practices should not be overturned. As in the matter of court dress, the Labour leadership sought to emphasise the party's fitness to govern by adhering to established tradition and practice. The *Daily Herald* gave its support to the leadership.

"This is in accordance with an old and very firmly founded custom. As long ago as 1873, the late Sir William Harcourt, on becoming Solicitor General, made great efforts to be excused from accepting a knighthood; but so strong was the effect of tradition that he was obliged to give way."<sup>18</sup>

If the leadership regarded the pressure of tradition as irresistible, the same was not true elsewhere in the party. At the first P.L.P. meeting following the

conferences, Maxton denounced them, in part because there was no constitutional necessity, but also, in the view of a later I.L.P. commentator, because he feared it represented a loss of values.

"..he saw much more in it; he saw that once this creation of false castes was established in the Labour Party, the old idea of comradeship would be gone for ever."<sup>19</sup>

In reply to this criticism, MacDonald's rather weak excuse was that the two men had acted on their own responsibility, and he did not attempt to argue that it had been a constitutional necessity. This particular practice was to continue in Labour governments until 1974.

Labour's second period of office saw a change in MacDonald's policy on honours and titles. In 1929 he was concerned to strengthen Labour's representation in the Lords, but appeared initially to be adhering to his practice of not giving hereditary titles to men with heirs. He persuaded the childless Sidney Webb to go to the Lords, despite Webb's reluctance and his wife's even greater reluctance. Then he abandoned his plan to send Adamson to the Lords as nominal Secretary of State for Scotland when a delighted Adamson told MacDonald he must at once break the good news to his son.<sup>20</sup> In November 1930 MacDonald asked Citrine and Bevin if they would help to strengthen Labour in the Lords. Bevin considered the request, but declined. Citrine also declined, partly because he had two sons, a fact which MacDonald knew. In

fact, MacDonald no longer applied the criterion of having no heirs to his selection of candidates for the peerage. He now seemed to regard the social status of the candidate and any potential heirs to be of greater significance. Thus when a trade union official approached him for a peerage,

"'I could see it was impossible,' MacDonald said, 'because when this man died his son would succeed to the peerage, and the position of an agricultural labourer as a peer would be impossible.'"<sup>21</sup>

In defence of MacDonald's apparent snobbery, it could have been that he was concerned about the financial difficulties for such an individual in taking his seat. Those peers who were politically active received no salary, except when holding a government post, and the annual cost of full-time work in the Lords might be two hundred to three hundred pounds. However, there was no obligation for anyone to take their seat in the Lords, so MacDonald's worry would seem to have been about social "suitability". Giving peerages to men with heirs seemed less of a problem when those men did not have humble origins. In January 1930, Arthur Ponsonby received a peerage. He had a son, but, more significantly, he had had a father who was private secretary to Queen Victoria. In June 1930, Noel Buxton, the Minister of Agriculture, was also made a peer. He had three sons, but this difficulty may have been tempered by the fact that Buxton had been to Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge.

By 1930, MacDonald's earlier distaste for conferring honours would seem to have vanished. In January of that year, he created eight new peers, only two of whom were needed as ministerial spokesmen in the Lords. One of the eight peerages went to Sir William Noble, chairman of the Cairne Line of steamships, and an ex-president of the Chamber of Shipping. Noble was no friend of the Labour movement, and the award brought a letter of protest from the Transport and General Workers' Union.<sup>22</sup> If he was prepared to reward individuals who were unsympathetic to Labour, it must also be said that MacDonald was increasingly generous in his treatment of Labour people. In January 1931, three current Labour M.P.'s<sup>23</sup> received knighthoods, and two Government whips received C.B.E.'s.<sup>24</sup> Numerous local Labour people received minor honours. All of these honours were "for public and political services", and whilst no-one suggested anything financially corrupt was happening, it was clear that the previous resistance to political honours had crumbled.

Indisputably, it was MacDonald who brought about this change in policy. He complained bitterly about the letters he received which begged for honours, but yet felt impelled to offer them to people in the Labour movement. Having offered an honour to Middleton, the party's Assistant Secretary, in 1930, he then wrote to congratulate him when he refused it. The letter expressed MacDonald's revulsion at the clamour to receive honours.

"It is disgusting and makes me even more of a cynic. I am glad that I refused everything offered to me whilst in opposition, that the solitary thing I have I could not avoid and yet take office, and that what is now said to me is that they would give me this or that, but that I know I would not accept it."<sup>25</sup>

However true he remained to his determination not to accept honours himself, MacDonald increasingly behaved just as his predecessors, in giving honours for political service. The practice grew most spectacularly after 1931, when MacDonald rewarded almost every parliamentarian who adopted the label "National Labour". MacDonald refused a peerage three times, declined to become a Knight of the Thistle and may well have declined a Privy Councillorship in 1923. In this regard, he was far more self-denying than any of his successors as a Labour Prime Minister. However, through the increasing use of his power of patronage MacDonald indulged the worst instincts of some Labour figures, and encouraged a tendency already recognised and deplored by Beatrice Webb.

"There is far too much snobbishness - far too much regard for rank and social status in the British Labour Movement. It is a good thing to set the example of not considering a title as honourable to the person legally entitled to use it."<sup>26</sup>

The accusation of snobbishness, levelled at recipients of honours from a Labour Prime Minister, was compounded by graver charges when the source of the honours was the National Government. The concerns of critics focused on several distinct aspects of the honours system. For Laski, honours constituted one aspect of an unhealthy accretion of powers to the Prime Minister, which also included the appointment and dismissal of ministers, the exclusive right to express the Cabinet's viewpoint to the monarch and to obtain a dissolution. Although he personally disapproved of the honours system, Laski foresaw its continuation under a future Labour government and suggested that the approval of candidates for honours be undertaken by the whole Cabinet rather than just the Prime Minister.<sup>27</sup> A more radical critique was offered by R.H. Tawney, who was less concerned with constitutional questions of patronage than with the moral effects of the system. Tawney rejected honours outright, except as a way of indicating stages in an official career. Like Beatrice Webb, he had detected a creeping enervation, a loss of will and direction, caused in part at least by Labour accepting their opponents' "livery".

"For Labour, knighthoods and the rest of it...there is no excuse. Cruel boys tie tin cans to the tails of dogs; but even a mad dog does not tie a tin can to its own tail. Why on earth should a Labour member? He has already all the honour a man wants in the respect of his own people."<sup>28</sup>

It was, as Tawney acknowledged, a puritanical argument, but not irrelevant to a political movement ostensibly committed to the ideal of social equality. In the early 1930's, debate on the matter of honours tended to reflect upon the experience of the second Labour Government, or else to consist of abstract discussions of the values they represented and alternative notions of honour. This debate was sharpened later in the decade by some particular cases involving Labour people.

Prominent Labour figures had been absent from honours lists after 1931, except for those who had defected with MacDonald. However, in June 1935, the King's Birthday Honours List contained several Labour names, as the Government attempted to give it a "national" character at the time of George V's Jubilee. As well as a Privy Councillorship for Attlee, there were knighthoods for Citrine, for Labour's Chief Whip, Charles Edwards, and for Arthur Pugh, General Secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. For some less prominent people, there were C.B.E.'s.<sup>29</sup> The knighthoods provoked some highly critical observations, as doubts were expressed about exactly what service, and to whom, was being rewarded. Dalton recorded his own horrified reaction at the "shocking news".

"To take these bloody titles at all (except the P.C.) is bad enough. But to take them from MacDonald!!...What the hell will decent people in the movement think? Citrine is by far the worst case."<sup>30</sup>

Citrine was sensitive to the criticism, and very resentful.

"It did not pass without comment that Pugh had been chairman and I had been acting secretary of the T.U.C. at the time of the national strike nine years earlier...In the Labour Party were to be found earls, barons, Privy Councillors, knights, C.B.E.'s and other bearers of distinction in not inconsiderable numbers. There had been no commotion about any of them, but I knew that I would be a target no matter how others had fared."<sup>31</sup>

There were various strands to the argument against acceptance of honours, and several of these were rehearsed in a commentary by a Birmingham Labour official.<sup>32</sup> First, the origin of the honours was unacceptable, i.e. a Government which had emerged from the events of 1931. Next, the honours themselves were historically connected with practices which the Labour movement held in contempt. Then, there was the fact that titles were the symbols and expressions of social values and class distinctions which Labour repudiated. Acceptance of them helped to perpetuate the status quo. Finally, the association of so many of the honours with the Empire should be unacceptable to a party which should not defend imperialism in even the slightest degree.

There were others in the party who not only had no objection to honours being conferred for service to the Labour movement, but who positively enthused about the business. Those who objected were characterised not as

principled upholders of the creed of social egalitarianism, but were to be bracketed, according to Ivor Thomas, with "vegetarians, nudists, free-lovers, theosophists".<sup>33</sup> To those such as Thomas, the honours system was no symbol of class division or symptom of snobbery, but a harmless and even pleasurable aspect of pageantry. This attitude was voiced by the leader writer of the *New Statesman*, commenting on the aforementioned Birthday Honours List.

"This list was so long and so varied that one must be content with congratulating all the recipients...It is good Jubilee stuff, typical of our British democracy, and inexplicable to anyone but a Briton."<sup>34</sup>

This view struggled against the tide of indignation in the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

In 1935, for the first time, and in response to the Birthday Honours rumpus, the Party was asked to define its attitude towards the conferment of honours upon its representatives. The debate at that year's annual conference was on a motion which deprecated the acceptance of honours except where necessary to ensure the passage of legislation. An amendment was then passed which called for a clearer definition of Labour's attitude towards "the ceremonial functions and so-called honours by which the decaying capitalist system seeks to maintain its prestige and influence over immature minds" and instructed the N.E.C. to "consider and report upon the conditions and restrictions under which it shall be permissible for members of the Labour

Party to accept 'honours' from capitalist governments."<sup>35</sup> A further point was raised in asserting that "Socialist participation in such functions and honours can be justified only in exceptional circumstances for the express purpose of frustrating the propaganda of the capitalist parties".<sup>36</sup> The N.E.C. attempted to sidestep the whole question by claiming that this was a matter for individual consciences. The Conference would have none of this. Of interest and relevance here was the connection made by the speaker opening the debate between the honours system, the monarchy, and, more specifically, Edward, Prince of Wales.

"We think that the question is not simply whether one or two of our own members are going to carry titles, but whether this Party...shall identify itself with those institutions and celebrations which are used by our opponents for propaganda against us. Are we to identify ourselves with ceremonial functions relating to a young man who will not hesitate to describe us as 'cranks' when we try to deal with the stamping out of militarisation in the schools?"<sup>37</sup>

Following the conference debate and its specific instruction to the N.E.C. to report on the subject, the party's constitutional sub-committee met to deliberate. Citrine was a co-opted member of this committee, and submitted a five-page memorandum dealing both with honours and attendance at ceremonial functions.<sup>38</sup> He was responding to a draft preliminary memorandum from the committee. The committee had sought to draw a distinction between

those honours which could, on practical grounds, be justified. By so doing, the memorandum condemned as being without justification the acceptance of honours such as Citrine's knighthood. Citrine defence was to challenge the distinction between an acceptable and an unacceptable honour. The draft dealt first with the hypothetical necessity of creating sufficient peers to abolish the House of Lords. Citrine dismissed this as a most unlikely prospect. Secondly, the committee observed that members of a Labour Cabinet automatically became Privy Councillors. Citrine responded that it was unnecessary for a Labour Cabinet minister to retain his membership of the Privy Council on leaving office, and that appointment to it had increasingly become a reward for public service. The committee had acknowledged that members of the party who were in senior positions in the Civil Service might receive honours from a capitalist government. Citrine found this a "fine distinction", particularly as some honours conferred upon members of the party were as a result of service on government committees or commissions. Turning to honorary degrees, freedom of the city or orders of merit, the committee saw these as reward for service and merit, conferred on persons of distinction. Citrine objected that it could not be wrong to receive honours from the government and right to receive them from a municipality. Generally, Citrine was able, with ease, to expose the weakness inherent in the committee's memorandum. To attempt to draw a distinction between types of honour, or between different recipients or donors, was fraught with difficulties. If the principal criticism of the movers of

the resolution at the 1935 conference had been that the honours system helped to maintain "the decaying capitalist system", then Citrine had a point:

"If the honours system is wrong, it remains wrong whether the honours are conferred by a Labour Government or a government of any other political colour. If it is right for members of the Labour Party to be prohibited from accepting honours from a capitalist government, it can scarcely be consistent for a Labour Government to confer honours on members of the capitalist classes."<sup>39</sup>

It would hardly be acceptable for the party to continue to use the existing honours system, but only when in government, and to reward only its own supporters. One could more easily take issue with Citrine's preference for keeping the status quo and respecting the rights of individuals to accept honours or not, and with his assertion that:

"The Movement is no more likely to be corrupted and deflected from its purpose because certain of its members participate in ceremonial functions...than is the government of the U.S.S.R. to lose its revolutionary characteristics because its representatives participate in ceremonials with their capitalist opponents, or because it has instituted an honours system and has conferred distinctions upon prominent capitalists".<sup>40</sup>

When, at the following annual conference (1936), the N.E.C. produced its report, it proved to be a predictably anaemic document. The diversity of ceremonial functions was cited as a reason for not attempting to apply general rules of conduct. In the case of those associated with local government, the decisions about accepting honours should rest with individuals or with local parties. The Parliamentary Party could not be expected to avoid all ceremonial functions, whether as the governing party or as the official Opposition. Finally, the N.E.C. felt that pageantry should be encouraged on the "right lines", and adapted to the purposes of the Labour movement. On the more immediate and sensitive question of the acceptance of honours, the report was equally evasive. By citing those instances where honours were needed to fulfil constitutional requirements, such as peerages or Privy Councillorships, or other cases such as honorary university degrees and the freedom of cities, the N.E.C. made the issue appear so impossibly complex as to defy attempts to apply rules of conduct.

"It would be impossible for the Labour Movement to lay down a binding rule which would bar individuals from accepting Honours. A ruling of this kind could only be enforced by expulsion from the Party, and if any Honours are to be recognised at all, the Movement would be called upon to differentiate between the Honours which could and which could not be accepted - a task which would not be without serious difficulties."<sup>41</sup>

The implication was that it was a task not worth performing. Not surprisingly, the report provoked animosity amongst some delegates and divided the conference almost equally for and against. Describing the report as "another exhibition of tight-rope walking", a delegate moved the reference back of the relevant section of the report. This was carried by 185 votes to 174, and was the clearest indication yet of continuing disquiet in the party over honours.

At the same time, the trade union movement was examining the problem. At the Trades Union Congress in 1935, a motion was debated regretting "that active leaders of the Trade Union Movement should accept honours at the hands of a Government which is not established in the interests of the workers".<sup>42</sup> The mover of this resolution anticipated the objections of her opponents by admitting that others had, in past years, received honours without controversy or criticism, but claimed that it was not until the present time that "the significance had been realised". It was the impact such conduct had upon the rank and file of trade unionists which was the concern.

"We are wasting the goodwill, the faith and the trust of the workers of the movement if we continue to accept honours on those lines."<sup>43</sup>

Clearly, the principal targets for attack were Citrine and Pugh. It was unfortunate for supporters of the motion that it should be Citrine who replied to it. His characteristically reasoned argument referred to the fact that the T.U.C. had never declared its position on the question; many others had accepted

honours over the years, with no ensuing rancour; it would be unfair to criticise individuals implicitly by passing the resolution; if it was wrong to accept honours, then it was wrong for Labour governments to distribute them. Citrine's finale was unusually emotional in tone, and a raw appeal to the delegates' sympathy.

"It is desperately hard to speak. I cannot think cogently because my feelings run deep. I have tried to serve the Congress, and I hope you will permit me to go on serving it."<sup>44</sup>

Following this powerful reply, the question was shelved and never resurrected at the Congress.<sup>45</sup> Having already plunged so deep into the mire of the honours system, it was easier and less divisive to continue on the same lines than for the movement to extricate itself.

The arguments about the acceptance of honours drew in even the Co-operative Party. Several prominent co-operators had received honours, the most notable being Fred Hayward, who, as a former chairman of the Central and United Boards of the Co-operative Union and the current chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Co-operative Congress, received a knighthood in January 1931. As this was conferred under a Labour government, it did not generate much ill-feeling, but later an award made under the National Government certainly did. The president of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, William Bradshaw, was knighted in the Coronation honours list of May

1937. At the 1938 Co-operative Party conference, the Birmingham and District Party moved a resolution arguing that the acceptance of honours by co-operators was not in the best interests of the movement and should be deplored. It was a Labour M.P., A.V. Alexander, who replied to this resolution, offering the weak and irrelevant argument that such a resolution might lead to the Labour Party being unable to send people to the House of Lords to fight the Government. The Co-operative Party was even more disinclined to grapple with this question than Labour or the T.U.C. It passed overwhelmingly a motion that no action be taken.

Despite the general failure of moves to prevent Labour's representatives from accepting honours, there is evidence that some potential recipients were deterred by the volume of criticism earlier awards had produced. At the time of George VI's Coronation, there was a very modest Labour representation in the honours list. Only Christopher Addison received a peerage and there were Privy Councillorships for Snell and Pethick-Lawrence. Two trade union general secretaries received minor honours, as did other trade unionists.<sup>46</sup> The modest proportions of Labour representation was viewed with a certain cynicism by commentators on the left.

"If there are not many Labour names on the list, we may be sure that this is not due to any lack of desire to make the list 'democratic'. It is a sign of recent controversy and the widespread feeling throughout the Labour movement over this question of honours."<sup>47</sup>

One side-issue raised by the Coronation list was the relative merits of different honours. Normally, within Labour circles the debate had been either whether or not to accept, or for what reasons they should be awarded or accepted. However, the Birmingham *Town Crier* gave its unconditional approval to the award of O.B.E.'s to local trade unionists, as this honour was "based more upon merit and service than any other of the Ancient and Noble Orders which have long since lost any significance as symbols of chivalry or dignity".<sup>48</sup> The fact that this honour had been given to many "simple folk" for service to their fellows made it compatible with the spirit of the Labour movement.

### Conclusion.

The attitude towards the honours system which prevailed in the Labour Party by the late 1930's paralleled the leadership's declarations concerning the monarchy. As described in Chapter Five, calls were made for reforms to the monarchy which would modernise and simplify its character. Similarly, it was claimed that a reformed honours system would be acceptable to Labour. Like the monarchy, it should be "democratised". There were claims that such change had already taken place.

"A comparison of yesterday's Honours List with those of a generation ago reveals the advance of democratic ideas and standards into what was once a closed preserve of a small class."<sup>49</sup>

The fact that the kind of scandalous abuse which had flourished earlier no longer seemed to occur, and that a proportion, albeit a tiny one, of the honours went to recipients outside the traditional ruling elite, induced Labour into acceptance of the system. A system inherently undemocratic and anti-egalitarian continued to flourish, reinforcing the social divisions and differences which Labour ostensibly sought to abolish. Its acceptance and continuation under successive Labour governments indicated the deep conservatism of the Party, not to mention the vanity of many of its leading figures. Of course, Labour always contained within its ranks those who perceived the moral malaise that participation in the Honours System both caused and reflected. Tawney argued this case most powerfully in the 1930's, condemning political honours in particular.

"The truth is that the whole business of political honours stinks - stinks of snobbery, of the money for which...a good many of them are sold, of the servile respect for wealth and social position which remains even today the characteristic and contemptible vice of large numbers of our fellow countrymen. It is precisely these things which are among the principal obstacles in the path of the Labour Party. Why on earth does it go out of its

way to strengthen their pernicious influence by allowing, without a murmur, its members to do obeisance to them?"<sup>50</sup>

To answer Tawney's question would mean exposing the contradictions at the heart of the Labour Party. Whilst espousing the case for social change, for greater equality, for democracy, for a new and better society, it gradually and simultaneously became incorporated into the old ways. MacDonald almost personified that contradiction. Refusing to participate as a recipient, he nevertheless dispensed honours with increasing generosity. Coming to terms with the Honours System, as with the increasingly warm regard for the monarchy, signified Labour's readiness to accept, and even to celebrate the conservative-national traditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p140

<sup>2</sup> Diary of Beatrice Webb, June 7, 1917, Passfield Papers

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- <sup>3</sup> Ben Turner, 1930, *About Myself*, London, p272
- <sup>4</sup> C.H. Norman, 1919, *The Conspiracy Against the People*, London, p18
- <sup>5</sup> Hansard 116 H.C. Deb. 5s 1362
- <sup>6</sup> Hansard 156 H.C. Deb. 5s 1778
- <sup>7</sup> *Forward*, July 8, 1922
- <sup>8</sup> *Socialist Review*, Vol XX, 1922
- <sup>9</sup> *Forward*, July 8, 1922
- <sup>10</sup> Royal Commission on Honours: Report, C.1789/1922, p14
- <sup>11</sup> Hansard 186 H.C. Deb. 5s 2619
- <sup>12</sup> ibid. 2625
- <sup>13</sup> Independent Labour Party, 1927, *How the Tory and Liberal Parties are financed*, p3
- <sup>14</sup> Clynes, *Memoirs*, Vol.2, p47
- <sup>15</sup> *New Leader*, June 6, 1924
- <sup>16</sup> Quoted in D. Marquand, 1977, *Ramsay MacDonald*, London, p360
- <sup>17</sup> *Forward*, September 20, 1924
- <sup>18</sup> *Daily Herald*, February 9, 1924
- <sup>19</sup> J. Scanlon, 1932, *The Decline and Fall of the Labour Party*, London, p71
- <sup>20</sup> See T. Johnston, 1952, *Memories*, London, p101
- <sup>21</sup> Cited in Lord Citrine, 1964, *Men and Work*, London, p312
- <sup>22</sup> Labour Party NEC Minutes, March 27, 1930
- <sup>23</sup> W. Jenkins, James Sexton and Norman Angell
- <sup>24</sup> Charles Edwards and J.A. Parkinson
- <sup>25</sup> Cited in Marquand, op.cit., p597
- <sup>26</sup> Diary of Beatrice Webb, June 20, 1929, Passfield Papers
- <sup>27</sup> Harold Laski, 1933, *The Labour Party and the Constitution*, London
- <sup>28</sup> R.H. Tawney, "The Choice before the Labour Party", in *Political Quarterly*, Vol.?, 1932, p342
- <sup>29</sup> D.R. Grenfell, M.P. for Gower, and Alfred Shaw, General Secretary of the National Union of Textile Workers
- <sup>30</sup> Diary of Hugh Dalton, June 3, 1935, Dalton Papers
- <sup>31</sup> Citrine, op.cit. pp313-4
- <sup>32</sup> *Forward*, June 15, 1935
- <sup>33</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. 9, June 29, 1935,
- <sup>34</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol.9, June 8, 1935
- <sup>35</sup> Labour Party Conference Report, 1935, p238
- <sup>36</sup> ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Labour Party Constitutional Committee, Memorandum, in Citrine Papers
- <sup>39</sup> ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Labour Party Conference Report, 1936, p293
- <sup>42</sup> Report of the 1935 Trades Union Congress, p427
- <sup>43</sup> ibid., p432
- <sup>44</sup> ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> The 'previous question' was moved and carried by 237 votes to 125.
- <sup>46</sup> The general secretaries were William Spence of the National Union of Seamen (a C.B.E.) and Thomas McKenna of the National Union of Blastfurnacemen (an O.B.E.).
- <sup>47</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol. XIII, No.325, May 15, 1937, p799
- <sup>48</sup> *Town Crier*, May 14, 1937
- <sup>49</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 11, 1937
- <sup>50</sup> *New Statesman*, Vol . IX, No.226, June 22, 1935, p922

### Conclusion to Thesis.

The themes analysed in this work constitute some crucial elements of Labour Party ideology. The latter was a complex which emerged from two interacting forces. The first was the set of political beliefs and attitudes which it derived from the nineteenth century. Labour did not begin its existence with an ideological *tabula rasa*, but drew upon an existing stock of radical, Liberal and social democratic ideas, amongst which were a variety of attitudes towards the monarchy and the Constitution. Neither the early I.L.P. nor the nascent Labour Party had official, programmatic positions on either issue, apart from the abolition of the House of Lords. However, there were elements and individuals who brought a range of radical ideas about both issues into these new parties.

From radical constitutionalism came a powerful faith in the capacities of the British Constitution (excluding the House of Lords) to facilitate Labour's reformation of society. Labour's rhetoric emphasised the uniqueness and openness of the Constitution, and constantly celebrated the progressive changes in British society which had occurred through its mechanisms. This Whiggish conviction that, under the Constitution, Britain had become a political democracy and would, in time, become a social democracy, made it unnecessary to break cleanly with the past. Worrying neither about its unwritten nature nor about its undemocratic features (other than the Upper House), Labour discourse

concerning the Constitution celebrated the protection of liberty and the facilitating of parliamentary democracy. Given this ideological framework, even an ancient, hereditary institution such as the monarchy could retain a place. This was a powerful enough factor to counterbalance any theoretical difficulties about a social-democratic government co-existing with a monarchy.

From the tradition of anti-monarchism came a republican rhetoric which never entirely disappeared from Labour's discourse. It was particularly evident in Scottish socialist circles, reinforced by a consciousness that the monarch was the King or Queen of England. Anti-monarchism never permitted Labour to forget some uncomfortable truths about the monarchy: that it was stupendously rich, whilst Labour purported to speak for the poor; that it drew its friends from the aristocracy and the plutocracy, and that such groups were no friends of Labour; that it exhibited more than its fair share of decadent or immoral behaviour; that Labour's political opponents found a sympathetic ear at Court, and that the prevailing ethos there was Conservative; that the hereditary principle was at odds with all Labour's democratic values; that the very concept of royalty implied the existence of a social hierarchy, which offended against Labour's egalitarian principles. It was a outlook which prevented Labour from establishing an entirely comfortable co-existence with an institution whose constitutional role unarguably became progressively less problematic. However, this anti-monarchist element

never sought to impose upon Labour a coherent programme of constitutional change to a republican system. Indeed, it never brought forth such a programme, which suggests that the prospect of change was never taken seriously. There was a tacit acceptance among anti-monarchists that the monarchy's strength and popularity all but ruled out such a change in the foreseeable future, although in the fever of 1917 a few republican hallucinations occurred.

From Labour's social-democratic convictions came a tendency to relegate purely political change below the economic. This had a long history in socialist politics, and played a part in Labour's self-conscious distancing of its own politics from the Liberalism and radicalism of the nineteenth century, regarded as being middle-class phenomena whose day was done. Throughout the period covered by this work, leading figures in the Party declared their belief that to attempt to replace the monarchy would make no difference to Labour's main objectives, and would, rather, provide a unnecessary distraction. Whilst this belief may have been genuinely held, it also provided a convenient pretext for avoiding confrontation on an electorally unpopular subject.

Interacting with this set of attitudes were a set of changing circumstances. Principal amongst these was the relentless growth of the monarchy's popularity. From its remote, exclusive and troubled image in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, the monarchy, partly by design and partly by force of circumstances, changed in fact and in perception.

The gradual (even if this was sometimes exaggerated) withdrawal from politics, enhanced its image as neutral arbiter and removed it from political controversy. When this process suffered occasional lapses, as in 1910, 1914 and 1931, Labour's reaction demonstrated that suspicions remained about the Crown's neutrality. The response to 1931 was considerably more restrained than on the other occasions, but that may, in part, have been due to a failure to appreciate the full extent of the King's involvement.

The transformation of royal celebrations into national, and even nationwide, events was a marked feature of the period. It perhaps reached its culmination in the 1935 Silver Jubilee. The degree of local participation was unprecedented, and even the most uncompromising anti-monarchists could not deny the tide of enthusiasm. A more visible, mobile monarchy brought it into contact with a wider public. The deliberate cultivation of the image of the domestic ordinariness of the royal family, and the projection of the national "family" metaphor, appealed to a wide audience. Labour could simply not, even if it had wished, have swum against this tide and hoped to increase its popularity.

A further change in circumstances that cannot be discounted was the development of personal relationships between Labour politicians and the monarch and other members of the royal family. There is no doubt that many hitherto sceptics on the subject of monarchy were influenced by the treatment received, as individuals and

as a government, at the hands of the monarch. There was a sense of flattery at being "accepted" at the highest social level. Without the steel of principled objection to the monarchical system, there was a tendency to succumb to the decency and humanity of the monarch himself, and to conflate the man with the system.

What were the consequences for the Labour Party of the attitudes taken and the positions adopted? It might be argued that in constitutional terms, Labour's confidence in the Crown was justified in the long run. The degree of political intervention continued to diminish, and the reforming programme of 1945 proceeded without the need to assume the Jacobin tactics envisaged by some in the mid-1930's. Until very recently, the popularity of the monarchy has remained consistently high, and there were relatively few high-profile provocations to the anti-monarchs. Labour politicians enjoyed good relationships with monarchs, and Labour prime ministers especially so. It may appear that Labour had done well out of its acceptance of the monarchy. However, there was a price. By turning its back so quickly and completely on republicanism, Labour sacrificed a political framework within which many of its social principles might flourish: its egalitarianism; its rejection of inherited privilege; its preference for citizenship rather than subjection; its dislike of snobbery and undue deference; its commitment to democracy and to rational politics. All of these were potentially or actually compromised by Labour's willingness to live with the old ways.

APPENDIX.A Note on Readership Figures for the Popular Press in the 1930's.

A study made in the early 1930's of newspaper readership, including three of those popular papers analysed in this thesis, divided households into three categories: Category A were families occupying eight rooms or more and whose main breadwinner earned six hundred pounds per annum or more; Category B occupied villas of six or seven rooms and were earning five to twelve pounds a week; Class C lived in five or fewer rooms and were "working class" in character.<sup>1</sup> Putting together results for three regions, Greater London, the West Midlands and the North West, the total penetration of four popular newspapers was as follows, in rounded percentages:

	A	B	C	Total
<i>Daily Mail</i>	37	28	9	14
<i>Daily Express</i>	20	19	10	13
<i>Daily Herald</i>	5	14	28	24
<i>News Chronicle</i>	10	15	14	14

The Political and Economic Planning (P.E.P.) report on newspaper circulation contained data collected in 1935 by the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers.<sup>2</sup> Dividing the population into five categories on the

basis of the annual income of the family's chief earner, the investigation offered the following relevant information:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>% of pop.</u>	<u>Most common papers</u>
3	250-300 pounds	14.3	<i>Mail &amp; Express</i>
4	125-250 pounds	57.4	<i>Express &amp; Herald</i>
5	under 125 pounds	24.0	overwhelmingly <i>Herald</i>

The *Herald*'s dominance of the working-class market should not lead us to ignore its share of the lower middle-class market. This was a point revealed by readership surveys conducted on behalf of advertisers, which led the latter to:

“...reassess stereotyped images of left publications as being ‘down at heel’. For instance the 1934 official readership survey showed that the *Daily Herald* was read by more middle-class people than *The Times*, (even though the *Herald*'s readership was predominantly working-class.)”<sup>3</sup>

As for the urban/rural divide, a study by P.E.P. discovered that in a South Wales mining town in 1937, the distribution of national dailies was:

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>Herald</i>	52
<i>Express</i>	32
<i>Chronicle</i>	12
<i>Mail</i>	3.5

The sample from a rural area straddling the Oxfordshire/Gloucestershire border revealed a virtually equal distribution between the *Herald*, *Express* and *Mail*. Two points which emerge from both the P.E.P. survey and a wartime (1942) Mass Observation are: that the readership of the *Daily Herald* was poorer than any other daily; and that its readership had a higher proportion of men than any other popular daily. A post-war (1948) Mass Observation survey revealed that the *Herald's* readership was unusually long-standing, with 32% having taken the newspaper for between six and ten years, and 40% having taken it for more than ten years. This fact enables us to regard other findings of the 1942 and 1948 Mass Observation surveys as having some evidential value even for the 1930's. Two tables are particularly relevant. The first is the 1942 analysis of the class composition of the readerships of four popular dailies. The social categories are crude, but provide a rough picture:

B – upper and middle class

C - artisan and skilled working class

D – unskilled working class

Table showing % of each class reading popular papers

	B	C	D
<i>Herald</i>	5	9	13
<i>Express</i>	19	18	16
<i>Mail</i>	15	19	8
<i>Chronicle</i>	13	14	11

The second table indicates the political affiliations of readers, and is taken from the 1948 survey.

Table showing % of readers who say they support these parties

	<i>Herald</i>	<i>Express/Mail</i>	All
None	10	17	18
Labour	80	32	42
Conservative	7	41	29
Liberal	2	7	6

One point worth bearing in mind is the fact that only one quarter of all Labour supporters in 1948 read the *Herald*. Even more significantly, in the

1942 survey, over half of the *Herald* readers questioned claimed to have no political attachment. Finally, the 1948 survey found that 92% of *Herald* readers had been educated only to elementary school level, compared to an all-dailies level of 72%. When Mass Observation generalised on the basis of its 1948 survey about the readerships of the national press, the *Herald* was set apart from the other popular dailies:

"It seems clear enough that the *Daily Herald* is most outstandingly read for its politics, and readers of this paper are most of all influenced by their class and political outlook, particularly the former, in making their choice of paper. In so far as the other dailies are concerned politics operate less directly as a determining factor, and are probably influential only within the wider set-up of general background of interest."<sup>4</sup>

Far more problematic to assess is the effect which a newspaper has upon its readers. The surveys cited above reveal a little, but they caution about the dangers involved in the self-reporting on which they depend for their findings. Two points made on this topic have bearing on the current work. The first deals with readers' perceptions of bias. Mass Observation found that 37% of all readers surveyed objected to their newspaper's political bias or unreliability, whilst only 25% commended their paper for truthfulness or agreed with the bias. A notably high level of

scepticism was recorded in the cases of two newspapers analysed in this thesis. There were,

"...a good many cases of people who like their paper because it is interesting and easy to read, though they disagree with its policy – the *Herald* and the *Express* both provoke this reaction."<sup>5</sup>

The extent to which readers looked at the "opinion-forming" features of their newspaper, i.e. leading articles, interested the P.E.P. investigators. They found that only one third of readers of national morning newspapers claimed to read completely the leading article. The figure was more than twice as high for men as for women, and decreased with the income of the reader. The 1948 Mass Observation study investigated how many readers liked and read the editorial. For the three dailies analysed in this thesis, the results were:

<u>NEWSPAPER</u>	<u>%LIKED EDITORIAL</u>	<u>%READ EDITORIAL</u>
<i>Daily Mail</i>	12	24
<i>Daily Express</i>	11	24
<i>Daily Herald</i>	4	15

<sup>1</sup> H.G. Lyall, 1934, *An Analysis of Press Circulation*, London

<sup>2</sup> Political and Economic Planning, 1938, *Report on the British Press*, London

<sup>3</sup> J. Curran, *Power Without Responsibility*, London, p65

<sup>4</sup> Mass Observation, 1949, *The Press and its Readers*, London, p100

<sup>5</sup> Mass Observation File Report, December 1938

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*The Times*

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